

Chair summary

59th SRL Board Meeting and AGM 9 October 2020

New SRL member welcomed

South Australian Northern Zone Rock Lobster Fishermen's Association has become the newest member of SRL. Following a decision to split from SARLAC, SANZRLFA requested membership in its own right, which the Board has accepted.

IPA, Company management and roles of SRL

Our Industry Partnership Agreement with the FRDC ends in December and a renewal is currently under negotiation. Following a review of its consultative and partnership structures the FRDC has endorsed the continuance of its IPA structures, with some changes to the roles and responsibilities of the partners. With the recent launch of the FRDC's new Strategic Plan we want to be sure that our IPA is fit for purpose and that we are able to contribute to the national agenda.

The Board is mindful that our Executive Officer is spending an increasing amount of time dealing with issues that fall outside of the IPA such as IFAM and negotiations with the Oil & Gas sector. As such the Board is considering options to resource this work so as to achieve the best RDE and advocacy outcomes for our sector.

Sector Updates

South Australia

- 2020-21 season opened on the 15th of September 2020
- TACC for the 2020-21 season was retained at 1,246t (eleventh consecutive season at that level)
- There was an additional 43.5t of the TACC from the 2019-20 season carried over to the 2020-21 season
- Until the 8th of October 2020, just under 285t of the TACC had been taken (181t caught in the last 15 days of September)
- Catches of legal size and undersize lobsters have been strong
- Beach prices have been strong, far exceeding those predicted/expected by fishers (so far)

Victoria

- Seemed to be another 'late start' (fishing production wise over Dec / Jan) in the WZ. This potentially relates to water temperature. This has been noted for several years now.

- Note that monthly fishing stats for Victoria are publicly available here <https://vfa.vic.gov.au/commercial-fishing/rock-lobster/interactive-stock-assessment-report>
- TACCs for 2020/21 year have been set at same levels to previous season (246t for WZ and 40t for EZ).
- Lobster fishing pretty much stopped at end Jan. Has picked up since but it's been a mixed bag with some increased local demand for 'special days' like Father's Day but export markets still unstable.
- VFA response to Covid-19 was to allow rollover of uncaught quota.
- There has been no waiving of license fees for 2020/21 (as has been done in many other jurisdictions), however, the VFA has allowed for monthly instalments of fees over 10 months.
- Some fishers have had berth fees waived or reimbursed (eg where berths are managed by Parks Victoria) but others with different port / marina managers have not.
- As of 1 July 2020, all Victorian Lobster fishing vessels must now have VMS installed and registered with VFA. Fishers have also migrated onto a new "e-Catch" electronic reporting for both daily fishing records and catch disposal records.
- As the current Vic RL Management Plan (2017) is due for review next year, discussions have started with the VFA regarding the review process and development of a new plan.

Tasmania

- Still investigating a Deed of Agreement, independent report on industry value and return to community due for completion soon.
- New TRLFA President to take office on October 27, Karl Krause.
- Recreational sharing issues on East Coast persisting.
- Below average recruitment may result in adjustments to spatial catch cap areas.
- 10-year strategic stock rebuilding plan for east coast is off track due to continued over-catch of recreational notional limits and recruitment issues.
- 50% of TACC caught this season so far including 70% of carried over uncaught quota from 2019/20 year.
- Continuing opposition to Conoco Phillips seismic proposal off NW Tas.

ARLEA

- Season 2020/'21 in the South Australia Southern Zone fishery opened early, on Sep 15t, with PIRSA reporting to Sep 30th some 181,360kg (or 15% of the TACC) was caught.
- IFAM support of key flights and financial contribution to freight rates on foreign carriers has proved critical for Exporters to serve overseas customers.
- Fishers have averaged 130kg per catch and benefited from attractive Beach Prices during Sep, in the lead-up to the combined National Day and MoonCake Festival on Oct 1st.

AGM

The Annual Report for the 2019/20 financial year was presented to the meeting.

Chairman's summary

Without a doubt the 2020 financial year will be remembered as our *annus horribilis*, a year like no other in the Company's history.

The global pandemic that is Covid-19 has filled every newspaper and evening report in Australia since January and has been the single most influential factor impacting the seafood sector since national borders were shut on 20 March 2020.

Even prior to this, our Industry had lived through almost two months of severely impacted trade. Southern Rocklobster was often been referred to as the 'canary down the mine' as mass cancellations of customer orders occurring on 24 January 2020 led to a zero beach price whilst domestic markets remained comparatively unaware of the issue that our Chinese customers were facing.

However, I am pleased to note that Industry is bouncing back and at the time of writing the beach price has gone past \$100/kg in South Australia. It is a testament to the resilience of our industry but is in no small measure thanks to the support of government at both State and Federal levels and the hard work of many behind the scenes, not the least of which has been our Executive Officer. Tom has done a power of work keeping his finger on the pulse of the pandemic and working to keep our export lines open and freight moving.

SRL financial statements for the year ending 30 June 2019 show that the organisation remains on a sound financial footing. Due to the timing of grant payments we recorded a loss of \$77, 477, however, our cash balance at 30 June 2020 was \$342, 674 which exceeds forwards commitments to projects and other liabilities.

One aspect of the 'new normal' that has resulted from the pandemic is the increased use of digital platforms to conduct business. An example has been the use of Zoom to conduct Board and RDE Committee meetings, with considerable savings to the company in terms of flights and accommodation.

Our research activities are summarised in the Executive Officer's report which shows we are facilitating 12 research and business development projects at present. Through our partnership agreement with the FRDC we have been intimately involved in the development of Vision 2030 and the development of the FRDC's new 5-year strategic R&D Plan. Following extensive review, the FRDC plans to continue the Industry Partnership Arrangements and we look forward striking a new partnership later this year. We thank our various research partners, especially the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) and the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) for their contributions to the program.

On behalf of the Board I would like to thank our member organisations, South Australian Rock Lobster Advisory Council (SARLAC), the Tasmanian Rock Lobster Fishermen's

Association (TRLFA), the Victorian Rock Lobster Association (VRLA) and the Australian Southern Rock Lobster Exporters Association (ARLEA) for their support during the year. Our thanks also go to the state representatives on the RD&E Committee and to the FRDC for their ongoing support of SRL. My thanks also go to our Executive Officer, Tom Cosentino, for his support and tireless efforts in representing the interests of our members.

The full report is available on our website. Go to <https://www.southernrocklobster.com/assets/SRL-2020-Annual-Report.pdf>

Appointment of Directors

Roger Rowe (SANZRLFA), John Sansom (TRLFA) and Michael Blake (ARLEA) were re-appointed to the SRL Board.

Clive Perriman advised that as his term as President of TRLFA was due to cease he would be standing down from the SRL Board. We thanked Clive for his contributions.

Professor Colin Buxton - SRL Chair
October 2020