



3RD NATIONAL ROCK LOBSTER CONGRESS

2003

Compiled By

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FINAL REPORT

Project Number 2002/314



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1 NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The Third National Rock lobster Congress was hosted by the Western Rock lobster Council (WRLC), with funding received from registrations and sponsors. The Principal sponsor for the event was the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC). Gold sponsors of the event were RaboBank and the Western Rock lobster Development Association (WRLDA). Silver Sponsors were the Geraldton Fisherman's Co-Operative Ltd (GFC), Telstra Country Wide and Taylor Marine.

The Congress was a single day event held on Tuesday the 16th September 2003, at the Esplanade Hotel, Fremantle, Western Australia and run in conjunction with the FRDC Rock lobster Enhancement and Aquaculture subprogram and FRDC Post Harvest Subprogram workshops. The Lobster Congress was followed by the three days of the Seafood Directions Conference 2003, the biennial Australian seafood industry's premier forum for discussions and presentations relating to the seafood business in WA.

The Congress is primarily aimed at the catching and processing sector of the Australian lobster industries, with more than 200 delegates attending the Congress including representatives from all the lobster producing states of Australia as well as a delegation from New Zealand.

The theme of the Congress was "Where we have been, where we are, and where are we going", essentially a look at the progress of the lobster industry to date and the expectations for the future. The program mix was specifically designed to raise industry awareness of key issues that require managing both now and into the future for both the catching and processing sectors of the industry.

The program was divided into five main topics:

- **A nostalgic look at lobster fishing**
- **Markets in Japan, Asia and European Union**
- **The state of the fisheries**
- **Measuring and improving value of lobster fisheries in an ESD framework**
- **Options for improved business management**

Within these five broad headings, the 18 presenters with industry, management and Governmental backgrounds covered a variety of topics including the perspective on the industry from a major business in the finance sector; the market opportunities in Asia, Japan and the European Union; information on gear technology; triple bottom line reporting and the social impact of management change; marine protected areas: resource access and ownership of fishing rights.

The opening session of the Congress set the scene for the industry with a nostalgic look at how far the lobster fishery has come from with its humble beginning as a small cannery based fishery, with snapshots of the boats, people and practices that made up the industry in the early years.

The delegates were then given a brief profile of where the industry is now, with an interesting perspective on the issues relating to finance and debt servicing from Rabobank, followed by presentations from the peak industry bodies of each of the commercial lobster fisheries in Australia.

Marketing issues are also recognised a major challenge for lobster fisheries, at the moment and the two key note speakers outlined the opportunities and challenges for the industry in established and emerging markets, providing an international perspective on the challenges faced by the various sectors.

Speakers in the afternoon addressed key issues in relation to managing the lobster resources into the future, along with challenges the industry may face with Marine Protected Areas (MPA's), input vs output control management regimes and the costs and benefits of both. Ownership of access rights in the fishery and the impact of changes to ownership of those rights were also addressed in this session.

There was also the opportunity for delegates to socialise and enjoy the hospitality of Fremantle and Western Australia, including factory tours, and associated industry based events. There was also an extensive social program that accompanied the Lobster Congress and the networking opportunities and discussion between fishers was a highlight of the Congress for many.

Keywords: Rock lobster Congress, Fremantle, market opportunities

2 BACKGROUND

The lobster fisheries are, collectively, the most valuable fisheries in Australia. Each fishery is managed on a State by State basis. The need for a national forum was recognised in the 1990's by the commencement of the Tri-State Rock lobster Conferences. This activity evolved in 1999 into the 1st and 2nd National Rock lobster industry Congresses. The success of those events lead to the proposal to host a 3rd Congress, this time in WA, in conjunction with the national Seafood Directions Conference in 2003. During 2001 and 2002, consultative meetings and discussions were held between representatives of the various State lobster fisheries to develop the outline plan for the 3rd National Rock lobster Congress.

The purpose of the 3rd National Rock lobster Congress was sharing information, exploring new technologies, discussing common problems and examining possible solutions to critical issues affecting the lobster industry Australia wide and across the Tasman Sea.

Given the size and value of the industry in Australia, information exchange between and across jurisdictions is emerging as an impediment to development and value adding. The geographical spread of the industry has meant communication between the various Australian and New Zealand fisheries has been poor. The National Lobster Congress is seen within the industry as a way of improving communication and facilitating the valuable exchange of ideas.

Western Australia, and in particular Fremantle, as the host of the Lobster Congress, provided an opportunity for fishers from other states to observe the scale and magnitude of the infrastructure associated with the Western Rock lobster Fishery. Even though the event was held outside the season, many fishers from interstate and overseas took the opportunity to travel to other parts of the state to observe the facilities involved in the WA fishery.

3 NEED

While essentially State based, all lobster fisheries have significant common interests that affect their commercial operations, industry and fishery management, including resource access, marketing and promotion challenges and research and development. To date the various State fisheries tend to be viewed and managed in isolation, and particularly at the "grass roots stakeholder" level, there has been very little communication between the fishers in the various states, and the need to address these issues and discuss and exchange information from a united front was identified.

The 3rd National Lobster Congress provides an opportunity for the stakeholders in the various fisheries to communicate, share ideas and discuss possible solutions that have been successful in each of the jurisdictions. Management of the lobster resources and marketing issues for each of the fisheries is rapidly changing. Keeping up to date on changes in the different fisheries is very important for grass root fishers. The National Lobster Congress provides a forum for fishers to keep up to date on the many changes and challenges in the industry.

4 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the project were to

1. Plan and deliver the 3rd National Rock lobster Congress
2. Distribute the results of the 3rd National Rock lobster Congress

Objective 1 was successfully completed on the 16th of September 2003, with the conclusion of the final speaker at the Congress, and the culmination of the associated social program, with the Great Australian Lobster Tasting Dinner. The preparation and planning of the Congress resulted in a program that addressed the key issues affecting the industry at the time, with the execution of the project being delivered in a sufficiently timely nature to ensure the smooth functioning of the event.

The second objective was achieved through dissemination of the information to industry through newsletters, the website, and further discussion at Professional Fisherman's Association meeting throughout the fishery in Western Australia.. This final report completes the second objective.

5 METHODS

The initiative to hold the 3rd National Rock lobster Congress was derived following the 2nd Congress, held in Geelong, Victoria. A Congress Steering Committee comprising Steven Gill (Executive Director WRLC), Max Ball (Consultant) and Ian Taylor (Chair of the WRLC), was established to bring together a program that would provide interest to stakeholders from all lobster fishing jurisdictions using the experiences and feedback from the previous Congresses. The committee undertook extensive consultation with the peak industry bodies from other States and jurisdictions in the development of the program, including expected delegate numbers, sponsorship information, budgets and promotional information.

Event Edge, a specialist Perth based conference organising company, was engaged to manage the logistics of the Congress and the day to day event organisation, as well as promote the Congress to the target audience. Event Edge were also organising the Seafood Directions program. Copies of the promotional material and registration brochures are attached as appendix 1 and 2.

5.1 REGISTRATION FEES & ENTITLEMENTS

Registration for the Congress was organised on two tiers, 'Early Bird' (for delegates registering prior to 18th July 2003), and 'Regular' (for delegates registering from the 19th of July 2003 onwards); the benefits and entitlements for each tier being the same. Registrations were available via postal or electronic means, with payment by EFT, credit or cheque accepted. Registrations were also allocated to the Sponsors at the event depending on the level of sponsorship.

Early Bird Registration: \$265

Entitlements- Entry to all sessions

- Fully catered morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea
- 1 ticket to the MSC sponsored Welcome Reception
- 1 ticket to the Great Rock lobster Tasting Dinner
- Name Badge
- Conference Bag and materials

Regular Registration: \$310

Entitlements- Entry to all sessions

- Fully catered morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea
- 1 ticket to the MSC sponsored Welcome Reception
- 1 ticket to the Great Rock lobster Tasting Dinner
- Name Badge
- Conference Bag and materials

5.2 PROMOTION & PUBLICATIONS

Conference Promotion

Promotion for the Congress occurred through several avenues. Initially, a database was developed by the Steering Committee and Event Edge using information mostly from returned preliminary announcement expression of interest cards, and follow up promotion was addressed through this means. Advertisements were placed in industry publications including Pro-West Magazine, the WAFIC website, and at industry and stakeholder meetings

Conference Publications

Jaz Creative, a Perth based printing and design company was commissioned to design all publications relating to the 3rd National Rock lobster Congress; Jaz Creative also undertook all artwork associated with Seafood Directions 2003. Promotional publications developed by Jaz Creative included:

➤ **Announcement/ Expression of Interest x 1000 copies** **Cost: \$459.80**

A postcard previously designed for WAFIC was utilised by overprinting the details of the conference onto this card as a cost saving method. The announcement promoted both Seafood Directions and the 3rd National Rock lobster Congress and included the dates and venues for both events.

Delegates were encouraged to express their interest in the Congress via an online expression of interest form and had the opportunity to also receive information on sponsorship and exhibition opportunities.

➤ **Sponsorship and Exhibition Opportunities Proposal x 75 copies** **Cost: \$1788.46**

A Sponsorship and Exhibition Opportunities proposal was designed and distributed in February 2003. Only 75 of these publications were produced as Max Ball had been liaising with these organisations prior to the distribution of the proposal. The proposal was colour printed at a local printer, Print'n'Post.

➤ **Registration Brochure x 3000 copies** **Cost: \$4464.56**

A 4-page full colour registration brochure was produced which included a program information, accommodation details, social events as well as information regarding the pending Seafood Directions Conference. A registration form was inserted into the brochure. The brochure was produced and distributed from 15 April 2003 onwards.

➤ **Program Handbook x 250 copies** **Cost: \$3606.90**

A 12-page saddle stitched program handbook was produced- the cover was full colour and the inside pages were two colours. The handbook included the full program, social events, keynote speaker biographies and other general information.

➤ **Web Site** **Cost: \$4303.20**

The Congress web site was designed by Jaz Creative subsidiary, Power Creations, and hosted under the WAFIC site at <http://rocklobster.wafic.com.au>. The web site was designed using a new technology called 'site box'. This allowed the organiser to add and amend information as it came to hand, and thus reduced the costs of uploading information that are usually charged by a web designer. The website was used as a source of information on the Congress including speakers, program information and for electronic registrations.

6 RESULTS

The hosting of the 3rd National Rock lobster Congress in Fremantle, Western Australia documents the first time this biennial premier stakeholders' forum has been held in WA.

The Congress was held the day prior to the Seafood Directions 2003 Conference hosted by the WA Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC). Holding the Congress prior to Seafood Directions proved to be a very successful arrangement and encouraged attendance by fisherman at both Seafood Directions 2003 and the 3rd National Rock lobster Congress, and allowed for cross promotion opportunities we believe assisted in cost reductions and limited duplication. The information relating to the attendance, program and financial information is shown below.

6.1 DELEGATE INFORMATION

In total, 231 national and international delegates registered to attend the 3rd National Rock lobster Congress. The attendance level met the expectations of the Congress Steering Committee and the Western Rock lobster Council. Included in the 231 were the 18 speakers in attendance and 8 presentations on display, numbers within the range expected and planned for by the Steering Committee. This ensured the catering, seating and workshop arrangements were adequate without being excessive.

The details of the registrations were as follows:

Registration Type	Number of Delegates	Total Registrations
Early Bird	116	\$30,740
Regular	57	\$17,670
Sponsor's Delegates	32	\$
Speakers	18	\$
Presentations (posters/booths etc)	8	\$
Total	231	48,410

The distribution of paying delegates by State was as follows:

State of Registration	Number of Delegates	% of Delegates
Australian Capital Territory	15	7.31
New South Wales	6	2.92
Queensland	8	3.90
South Australia	27	13.17
Tasmania	21	10.24
Victoria	18	8.78
Western Australia	94	45.85
International (including NZ)	16	7.80
Total	205	100

6.2 SPONSORSHIP & INDUSTRY EXHIBITION

Sponsorship packages offered by the Congress occurred in several categories; Principal Sponsor, Gold Sponsor, Silver Sponsor and Support Sponsor, as well as sponsors for various aspects of the program,

including sponsorship of materials and social functions etc. The sponsorship drive for the Congress was very successful, with the following sponsorship packages providing support:

Organisation	Sponsorship Category	Amount
Fisheries Research & Development Corporation	Principal	\$20, 000
Western Rock lobster Development Association	Gold	\$16, 500
Rabobank	Gold	\$11, 000
WA Department of Fisheries	Support	\$11, 000
Geraldton Fishermen’s Co-op	Silver	\$5, 500
Telstra Countrywide	Silver	\$5, 500
Taylor Marine	Silver	\$5, 500
Marine Stewardship Council	Welcome Reception	\$2, 750
Seafood Services Australia	Satchel insert	\$500
Total Sponsorship Contributions	-	\$78, 250

All gold, silver and support sponsors were provided with the opportunity to set up a display in the foyer area adjacent to the registration desk of the venue. Of the nine sponsors, 8 took up the opportunity to hold a display in the foyer area. Sponsorship was offered to those organisations who responded with an expression of interest in the Congress at the preliminary promotion round, and where extra sponsorship was required, the Steering Committee approached industry stakeholders. Sponsorship packages were co-ordinated by Event Edge and Max Ball.

6.3 CONGRESS PROGRAM

Steven Gill coordinated the program for the Congress and the two Keynote Speakers invited were Grant Hunt from Austrade Japan, and Robert Fisher AM, West Australian Agent General in the UK. The Congress was fortunate in that both speakers were visiting Australia already and therefore travel reimbursement was not required. The Congress did provide accommodation for both Keynote Speakers.

Funds from the Congress were also used to cover the costs of attendance for Guy Manthorpe from South Australia to speak at the Congress – he was provided with accommodation for 2 nights and a return economy class airfare from Adelaide.

The program for the Congress was as follows:

MONDAY 15 SEPTEMBER		
Time	Activity	Venue
2.00pm – 6.00pm	Registration	Foyer, Esplanade Hotel
6.00pm – 8.00pm	Welcome Reception	Poolside, Esplanade Hotel
TUESDAY 16 SEPTEMBER – Islands Suite, Esplanade Hotel, Fremantle		
8.30am – 8.35am	Official Opening	The Hon Kim Chance, Minister for Fisheries
	Welcome	Mr Peter Dundas-Smith, Executive Director, FRDC
8.35am – 8.45am	Nostalgia Session including launch of “Best Practice” video	Mr Richard Stevens, Research & Development, WAFIC
8.45am – 9.00am	Rock lobster Research Program	Ms Fiona Boal, Rabobank
9.00am – 11.00am		
9.00am – 9.30am	The Japanese Market NOW!	Mr Grant Hunt, Australian Trade Commissioner, Australian Business

		Centre, Japan
9.30am – 10.00am	Markets Asia & Europe	Mr Robert Fisher AM, WA Agent General to the UK
10.00am – 10.30am	Question & Answer Session	
<i>10.30am – 11.00am</i>	<i>MORNING TEA</i>	
11.00am – 12.45pm	The State of the Fisheries	
	Western Australia	Mr Steven Gill
	South Australia	Mr Roger Edwards
	Tasmania	Mr Rodney Treloggen
	Victoria	Mr Nick Polgeest
	New South Wales	Mr Scott Westley
	Queensland	Mr Jim Fogarty
	DISCUSSION	
12.45pm – 1.00pm	New Technologies	Mr Ivan Martinovich, Taylor Marine
<i>1.00PM – 2.15PM</i>	<i>LUNCH – ATRIUM GARDEN RESTAURANT</i>	
2.15pm – 3.45pm	Measuring and Improving Value of Lobster Fisheries in an ESD Framework	
2.15pm – 2.30pm	Overview – Triple Bottom Line	Mr Neil Drew, Assoc Professor, Institute of Regional Development, UWA.
2.30pm – 2.45pm	Improving Economic values through changes to Fisheries Management	Mr. Kim Skeer Southern Zone South Australian Lobster Fishery
2.45pm – 3.00pm	Marine Protected Area's -Tasmanian Marine Park's provision to protect industry from MPA's	Mr Neil Stump, Tasmanian Rock Lobster Federation
3.00pm – 3.15pm	DISCUSSION	
<i>3.15pm – 3.45pm</i>	<i>AFTERNOON TEA</i>	
3.45pm – 5.00pm	OPTIONS FOR IMPROVED BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND FINANCIAL STRUCTURES FOR ROCK LOBSTER FISHERMEN.	
3.45pm – 4.00pm	Who owns the pots calls the shots? Who owns the pots in Lobster fisheries? What control do we have?	Mr Kim Colero, Western Rock lobster Managed Fishery Licence Holder
4.00pm – 4.15pm	Is it enough to think the fisherman's job is complete at the end of the wharf?	Mr Guy Manthorpe
4.15pm – 4.30pm	What happens when rights go wrong?	Mr Daryl Sykes
4.30pm – 5.00pm	DISCUSSION	
<i>7.00pm – 11.00pm</i>	<i>THE GREAT ROCK LOBSTER TASTING DINNER – Fremantle Sailing Club</i>	

6.4 SOCIAL PROGRAM

The social program attached to the 3rd National Rock lobster Congress was designed to provide stakeholders with additional opportunities to establish connections, nurture new business relationships and discuss industry issues in an informal, yet accessible and cohesive forum. The social program commenced with the Marine Stewardship Council Welcome Reception immediately following the registration process, and culminated with the Great Rock lobster Tasting Dinner. The social program for the Congress also tied in with the social program for Seafood Directions 2003 without duplication. Extracts from the invitations are below:

Marine Stewardship Council Welcome Reception

Monday 15 September;

Time: 6.00pm – 8.00pm

Venue: Poolside, the Esplanade Hotel, Fremantle

Dress: Smart Casual

“An opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones in a relaxed informal environment prior to the commencement of the Congress the following day, finger foods, beer, wine and soft drinks will be served”.

The MSC Welcome reception created an opportunity for stakeholders to familiarise themselves with the Marine Stewardship Council,

The Great Rock Lobster Tasting Dinner

Tuesday 16 September;

Time: 7.00pm – 11.30pm.

Venue: Ward Room, Fremantle Sailing Club

Dress: Smart Casual

“Renowned West Australian chef Don Hancey will provide the “cook off” for the evening with recipes as selected by each state”

7 ROCK LOBSTER TASTING DINNER

The Tasting Dinner is a light hearted look at the wares of the Australian lobster industry and provides an opportunity for each state to promote their product in a fun way. The use of a ‘celebrity chef’, as well as the comedic stylings of local Australian entertainer assisted to attract the interest of the media, assisting to create positive publicity – the Western Rock lobster was the decisive winner of the 2003 cook off.

8 BENEFITS AND ADOPTION

The direct benefits of the Congress are not quantifiable, but can be described. The nature of the program saw delivery and consideration of information from around the country and from New Zealand in a number of key areas including market opportunities, fishing rights, resource access, marine protected areas, and different management regimes.

This information is directly beneficial to the catching sector (commercial and to a lesser extent, the recreational sector) and the post-harvest sector Australia-wide, allowing them to streamline their business decisions in conjunction with current management practices and future trends. Having an industry that is informed and proactive is essential for maintaining best practice business and fishing techniques, while also recognising the significant role past management and performance have had on those techniques. This allows industry to benefit from the experiences of other fisheries, and the experiences of the past thereby increasing the efficiency of the learning process and forgoing the need for trial and error. These benefits and beneficiaries were as expected and described in the original application (namely, primarily targeting Western Australia as host State, but with benefits flowing to interstate delegates) with informed discussions addressing the key areas being generally applicable to all delegates. The majority of the delegates were able to contribute to the discussion either during the open discussion periods or during networking sessions as part of the social program.

9 FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

As the Congress is a biannual event, it is essential to maintain contact with the industries around Australia between events, to ensure the discussions and presentations at the following Congress are relevant and progressive. This will allow the industry to see the benefits of the congresses in a timely matter, and will avoid duplication of themes and presentations in future. It is also essential to maintain communication between the various hosting States to provide advice and assistance with planning future Congresses.

Dissemination of information presented at Congress is also paramount to ensure maximum benefits are derived from the process, and the Western Rock lobster Council utilised forums such as news letters, Professional Fishermen's Associations, and the website to communicate the outcomes and information presented to industry members unable to attend. The production of a Congress specific 'newspaper' following the event containing presented information, pictures and photos, interviews etc could also be provided to delegates immediately following the event. This would give them an extra source of information in relation to speakers and presentations and encourage further participation by delegates.

The use of a suggestion box/feedback card on the Congress, its organisation, social events and themes/presentations could also be implemented immediately following the Congress to maintain communication channels between organisers and delegates, ensuring the program reflects the requirements of industry.

10 PLANNED OUTCOMES

The outputs from the project in terms of presentations by speakers, website information and newsletters delivered after the Congress provided a significant amount of up to date, relevant facts and experiences, addressing key issues faced by industry. Having information presented to them in an interesting, interactive way, with several opportunities to discuss the information amongst their own industry members, national stakeholders and with the presenters throughout the Congress and social functions was instrumental to facilitating potential solutions and future directions. This contributes to having an industry that is well informed, proactive, and with a common focus, able to address changes and work together to achieve

outcomes. While the planned outcomes are not quantifiable, we believe the industry has become more informed as a result of greater information sharing capacity, reflected in the diversity of discussion at subsequent events (such as the 2004 Geraldton Fishermen's Coop Western Rock lobster Congress and the 4th National Rock lobster Congress in Tasmania in 2005).

11 CONCLUSION

The desired outcome from the project was to host a high quality, financially viable event, which actively engaged delegates and was informative and enjoyable. The measure of these objectives can be summarised by the following measures:

Number of participants –

The number of delegates met with the host organisation's expectations, however the level of participation from local Fremantle based fishers was a little disappointing.

Relevance of the program –

The feedback on the content of the program was mostly positive, with some comments the program may have been more focused on the issues relevant to the WA industry, rather than to all States. However, given these comments, most delegates found the program informative and of relevance, due to the impact the Western Rock lobster Fishery has on other Australian and New Zealand lobster fisheries.

Participation in the social program –

Attendance levels were high and feedback very positive, with some jesting comments received about the impartiality of the judging panel in the Great Lobster Cook off!

Venue Suitability –

Venue staff was extremely professional and the location adjacent to Fremantle Fishing Boat Harbour provided an ideal setting for the Lobster Congress.

Event Management Team –

Feedback on the performance of the event management team was very positive and no problems experienced during the event.

Catering –

Food was well presented both at the venue and at the social functions with no negative feedback received on the issue.

Final comments from fishers about the Congress were it should continue to be a bi-annual event and support and sponsorship for the event should continue.