

# THE INAUGURAL TRANS TASMAN ROCK LOBSTER INDUSTRY CONFERENCE



**Marlborough Convention Centre  
Blenheim, New Zealand**

**SUNDAY 28 AUGUST TO TUESDAY AUGUST 30 2011**



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# **FINAL REPORT**

## **7<sup>th</sup> ROCK LOBSTER CONGRESS**

**BLENHEIM NEW ZEALAND**

August 2011

# **PRODUCTIVITY**

**Improving the Business of Fishing**





**TRANS TASMAN  
ROCK LOBSTER  
INDUSTRY CONFERENCE**

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Blenheim, New Zealand

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**PRODUCTIVITY – Improving the business of fishing** [www.nzrocklobster.co.nz](http://www.nzrocklobster.co.nz)

**Enabling productivity and efficiency gains in Australian rock lobster fisheries - the 2011 Trans-Tasman 7th Rock Lobster Congress.**

**Author: D R Sykes**

**FRDC Project No: 2011/402**

**Date September 2011**

**NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

**2011/402**

**Project Title**

Enabling productivity and efficiency gains in Australian rock lobster fisheries – the 2011 Trans-Tasman 7<sup>th</sup> Rock Lobster Congress.

**Applicant**

NZ Rock Lobster Industry Council Ltd (NZ RLIC) in association with and on behalf of the Australian lobster industry peak bodies

**Contacts**

Administrative

Name	Helen Regan	Phone	+64 4 802 1504
Position	Business Manager	Fax	+64 4 385 2727
Organisation	NZ RLIC	email	<a href="mailto:reganh@seafood.co.nz">reganh@seafood.co.nz</a>

Principal Investigator

Name	Daryl Sykes	Phone	+64 4 802 1509
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Position Executive Officer fax +64 4 385 2727  
Organisation NZ Rock Lobster industry Council Ltd email [lobster@seafood.co.nz](mailto:lobster@seafood.co.nz)

Address NZ Rock Lobster Industry Council  
Private Bag 24-901  
Wellington 6142  
New Zealand

### **Objectives:**

- Australian and New Zealand rock lobster industry participants who are better informed of the range of biological and economic options and opportunities which may arise as a consequence of ongoing information sharing and market coordination.
- Enabling Australian and New Zealand lobster industry participants to gain a hands-on experience of harvest and stock monitoring technologies which can increase productivity; reduce operating costs; and improve sustainable utilisation.

## **NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

### **OUTCOMES ACHIEVED TO DATE**

Project outputs have contributed to or will lead to the following outcomes:

The proceedings of the Trans-Tasman 7<sup>th</sup> Rock Lobster Congress have been compiled and distributed to all delegates as e-documents. The proceedings are also be held as reference material on the NZ Rock Lobster Industry Council web site [www.nzrocklobster.co.nz](http://www.nzrocklobster.co.nz)

Outcomes of the plenary session are documented and will be followed up as agenda items for future industry conferences and seminars in Australia and New Zealand.

A working group will be established to maintain the momentum of increased cooperation between the Australia and New Zealand export sectors and to evaluate opportunities for greater coordination of harvest strategies and market supply.

### **Planned Outcomes and Benefits**

Australian and New Zealand rock lobster fisheries operating sustainably in a secure and profitable manner by ensuring the productivity of their respective lobster stocks; the efficiency and effectiveness of their commercial harvest and marketing strategies; within cost effective and efficient science and compliance services partnerships with their relevant Government agencies.

**In August 2011 New Zealand hosted the 7<sup>th</sup> Rock Lobster Congress in association with a Trans-Tasman Rock Lobster Industry Conference. The Australian Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) was the principal sponsor of the event.**

The NZ Rock Lobster Industry Council Ltd (NZ RLIC) coordinated the conference and the CRA 5 Rock Lobster Industry Association (CRAMAC 5) provided delegate support locally.

The conference event was the seventh in a series of bi-annual Lobster Congresses which have routinely attracted the best and most informed of the Australian State lobster industries. New Zealand industry personnel were occasional participants until 2009 when The NZ RLIC coordinated a large delegation to the very successful 6<sup>th</sup> Lobster Congress held at Glenelg in South Australia.

The theme of the 2011 event was "productivity" - with underlying themes of quality, sustainability and environmental awareness. There were 180 delegates and 34 partners registered for the event and 14 sponsors and/or their associates.

When planning the event it was decided to revisit the roles and responsibilities issues inherent in rights-based management regimes and to spend some time exploring the "permission to fish" issues which characterize various Government and NGO interventions in the businesses of rock lobster fishing.

Also, a course was set for this event which would reinforce the concept of closer cooperation with Australian lobster industry to ensure that the trans-Tasman lobster producers enhance the reputation of our products and obtain best prices in domestic and export markets.

The organising committee believed the need exists to catch, handle, process and promote trans-Tasman rock lobsters as premium seafood – a quality product that is special, desirable, and memorable.

The organising committee intended that delegates should come away from the conference having renewed their commitment to fishing sustainably and responsibly, to environmental performance, and to quality and consistency of grading and presentation.

## **Conference Programme**

The event programme had two principal streams – The first stream ran under banner of research, science and technology and extended from harvest to post-harvest activities. The technology content was specific to stock monitoring, registry functions, gear design, and post harvest procedures.

The science content was directed at rock lobster fisheries stock assessment, use of management procedures to guide TAC and sustainability decisions; an exploration of predictive indices; and possible 'manipulation' of available stocks to take best advantage of abundance and/or market opportunities.

Several presentations also made references to the lobster industries being able to front-foot environmental challenges.

A keynote science presentation gave a preview of new DNA marker technology which potentially has multiple applications for the lobster industry; more particularly in regards to product traceability which could be linked to new seafood quality standards being developed by Chinese health authorities.

The second stream related to exporting and export markets.

When planning the event the organising committee recognised that in general, the majority of exporters have good networks to understand the markets and the players in those markets; that is their job.

Fishermen, investors and fishery managers however are usually those most left in the dark. Discussion forums and conferences are absolutely essential for those specific groups as they can be the best places for the wider industry to become informed and to be better able to understand the bigger picture.

The disruption and uncertainty of Australian lobster exports to China and ill-informed speculation as to the nature of the New Zealand/China Free Trade Agreement were hot issues in the lead-up to Congress.

A panel of leading New Zealand lobster exporters and the conference delegates explored the risks and rewards (current and future) inherent in the Asian live lobster markets and considered whether or not there are synergies, benefits or otherwise in trying for and/or quickly moving to a more cooperative and coordinated effort on the part of New Zealand and Australian lobster exporters.

Congress delegates agreed that New Zealand and Australia have great lobster products – industry likes to think they have the best, but must be respectful of those seeking to compete with southern and western rock lobsters and the choices that our markets are asked to make. Their ultimate purchase is not guaranteed, there are always other choices.

Congress delegates noted that Australian lobsters come rushing into markets at certain times of the year because lobster fishermen have been starved of cash flows during months of mandatory closed seasons and need to get out and land quantity to get some money in the bank to pay bills.

And because some of the State catch limits are still not set as well as they could be, some Australian lobster fishermen are still rushing to land as much as they can as quickly as they can – many of them do not have the same confidence in their ability to land their catch entitlement when and how they choose – they are still in a race for fish. In the New Zealand lobster fisheries this is not the case.

The purpose of the panel session was to ensure that the catching sector has a greater awareness of markets and market conditions and preferences. The session emphasised why they need to be working closely with processor/exporters and be paying attention to grades, quality, and quantity.

It was reluctantly concluded that the politics of the Chinese economy and the various agencies controlling product flow across borders would likely contribute to considerable exporting uncertainty for some time to come. Whole of Government trade negotiations and high-level diplomatic approaches to China were agreed to be necessary in the first instance.

The panel discussion also provided a very useful reference for the stock assessment science personnel at the conference to better appreciate that fishing behaviour determined by market preferences is changing the way that we have historically viewed commercial catch per unit of effort - CPUE – data which underpin stock assessments and management procedures.

### **The “Take-Home” Messages**

The notion of productivity addressed by the 7<sup>th</sup> Lobster Congress presentations was directed at making the most productive use of opportunity, of technology, of knowledge and of experience.

That line was pursued because the limits to productivity in rock lobster fisheries are biological and regulatory. In regard to the biology there are sufficient time series of data to understand that the wild fisheries are dynamic, subject to cyclical variations in abundance, and strongly influenced by environmental factors over which managers (including industry) have no direct control.

In New Zealand at least it is recognised that wild fisheries have a finite productive capacity – currently in the order of 2,800 tonnes. Industry participants are unlikely to ‘manufacture’ significantly more commercial catch but overall productivity is dependent on retaining access to fishing grounds and maintaining high stock abundance as a buffer against recruitment variability.

Regulatory constraints on productivity are something else again. Spatial exclusions in favour of marine protection agendas driven by eco-cults; or the spatial ‘separations’ with which some politicians intend to solicit votes from the recreational fishing communities are damaging the productivity of rock lobster and other inshore fishing industries.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Lobster Congress agreed to strengthen working relationships between the Australian States and New Zealand industries in support of the rights-based fisheries management regimes in which all operate. Every one of the rock lobster fisheries represented at the 7<sup>th</sup> Lobster Congress has a rights-based system relying on output controls.

The important take home message from this stream – from abundance flows all benefits. Invest in good science and show confidence in the outcomes of it. Maintain high stock abundance – take a step up and stop living on (or below) the edge.

The next take home message – and a most important one – continued Trans Tasman cooperation and collaboration.

The final chapter of the 7<sup>th</sup> Lobster Congress was a presentation made to delegates at the 2011 Seafood Directions Conference in Queensland in October 2011 at which the theme of “productivity” was extended across a much wider jurisdiction.

### **Future Interactions**

What can the Trans Tasman lobster industries do for each other? They can share information. Congress delegates acknowledged that the Australians have a wonderful asset called the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation.

For a relatively modest investment the Australian lobster industries have access to quality rock lobster fisheries research which is useful to them and applicable to New Zealand as well.

One example of that is the FRDC funded work on the effects of rock lobster pots on benthic environments. The research work was done in South Australia in the late 1990s – and remains the benchmark for both Australian and New Zealand lobster fisheries benthic impact standards.

In New Zealand the CRAMAC 5 recently used it as part of the audit process for *Friends of the Sea* Certification. CRAMAC 5 also used the Western Australian lobster fishery marine mammal code of practice as the basis for their marine mammal interaction code of practice.

Results of other FRDC-funded projects in Tasmania have informed r advocacy in relation to marine reserves and marine protected areas.

So the New Zealand industry is willing to share knowledge and experience of industry organisation, stock assessment models, management procedures and decision rules in return for the practical assistance derived from work which the Australian lobster industries have funded and/or contributed to.

The agreed conference goal is that industry representatives continue to routinely work together to the extent that they can better protect and enhance the Trans Tasman rock lobster industry share of export market access and reputation – and importantly, value.

Both countries are in the business of fishing and the success of the New Zealand rock lobster industry business need not come at the expense of any Australian lobster industry.

To that end the NZ Rock Lobster Industry Council has agreed to coordinate a series of executive officer workshops to be convened in Melbourne at which representatives from all rock lobster industry organisations across Australia and New Zealand will be invited to participate and continue the sharing of knowledge and experience.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Lobster Congress was a successful and productive one. The organising committee again offer their sincere gratitude to the principal sponsor – FRDC – and to all other sponsors. To the delegates



who registered and actively participated, the event organising committee extends appreciation for the support and camaraderie. New Zealand looks forward to the 8<sup>th</sup> Lobster Congress in Sydney in 2013.

***The NZ Rock Lobster Industry Council Ltd (NZ RLIC)***  
***CRA 5 Rock Lobster Industry Association (CRAMAC 5)***

November 2011

# TRANS TASMAN ROCK LOBSTER INDUSTRY CONFERENCE 7<sup>TH</sup> LOBSTER CONGRESS

**SUNDAY AUGUST 28<sup>TH</sup>**

<b>4.00 pm to 9.00 pm</b>	<b>ELECTRONIC NAVIGATION LTD WELCOME AND REGISTRATION SOCIAL FUNCTION Marlborough Convention Centre – Albert Street Blenheim</b>
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**MONDAY AUGUST 29<sup>TH</sup>**

**Morning**

<b>8.00am REGISTRATION</b> Marlborough Convention Centre – Albert Street Blenheim		
8.45 am	Richard Bradley/Andrew Branson	Official Welcome & Housekeeping
9.10 am	Crispian Ashby <i>Australian Fisheries Research and Development Corporation</i>	Official Opening Principal sponsors address
9.30 am	Dennis Burkhart <i>Burkhardt Fisheries Ltd</i>	Closer Economic Relations – Trans Tasman Productivity and Profit
10.00 am	<b>Morning tea sponsored by NZ RLIC</b>	
<b>STATE OF THE STATES – West to East</b>		
10.30 am	James Paratore	Western Australia
10.55 am	Daryl Spencer	South Australia Northern Zone
11.20 am	Joel Redman	South Australia Southern Zone
11.45 am	Rodney Treloggen	Tasmania
12.10 pm	Scott Westley	New South Wales
12.30 pm	<b>LUNCH sponsored by NZ RLIC</b>	

**MONDAY 29<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST**

**Afternoon**

1.30 pm	Wayne Hoskings <i>Geraldton Fishermen’s Co-operative</i>	60 years of hindsight – the costs and benefits of the Geraldton Fishermen’s Cooperative
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## RESEARCH SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

2.00 pm	<b>Geoff Liggins</b> <i>Industry &amp; Investment NSW</i>	Gear technology – ghost fishing and acoustic releases
2.30 pm	<b>Greg Fletcher</b> <i>Electronic Navigation Ltd</i>	WASSP and Navigator – offering productivity gains for the lobster industry
3.00pm	<b>Afternoon Tea sponsored by CRAMAC 5</b>	
3.30 pm	<b>Geoff Basher</b> <i>CRAMAC 5</i>	The digital revolution – improvements in industry-generated data collection
3.50 pm	<b>Simon Anderson</b> <i>Lat 37 Ltd</i>	Industry-generated data – what can it tell us that we need to know?
4.10 pm	<b>Dr Paul Breen</b> <i>Breen Consulting</i>	Management Procedure Development and Implementation – timely and cost effective guides to TAC/TACC setting.
4.40 pm	<b>Q &amp; A session</b> <b>Stock monitoring, data collection and use; and stock assessment.</b> <b>Delegate participation.</b>	
5.00 pm	<b>Conference Closes for the day.</b> <b>Evening at leisure</b> Happy Hour 5.30 pm – 6.30 pm – NZ RLIC and trade display participants	

TUESDAY 30<sup>th</sup> AUGUST

Morning

8.45 am	<b>Housekeeping and Announcements</b>	
<b>STATE OF THE NATION</b> <b>Snapshots of New Zealand Lobster Fisheries</b>		
9.00 am	<b>Gordon Halley</b>	<b>Tairawhiti – CRA 3 Rock Lobster</b>
9.30 am	<b>Jeff Clark</b>	<b>CRAMAC 6 – an offshore experience</b>
10.00 am	<b>Morning Tea sponsored by CRA 8 Management Committee Inc</b>	
10.30 am	<b>Larnce Wichman</b>	<b>CRAMAC 5 – A lesson in productivity</b>
11.00 am	<b>Nici Gibbs</b> <i>Policy Manager</i> <i>New Zealand Seafood Industry Council</i>	<b>Building on cooperation and collaboration - establishing a stronger framework for collective management</b>
11.30 am	<b>Wayne Lowther</b> <i>Commercial Fisheries Services</i> <b>FISHSERVE</b>	<b>Balancing the books – registry services in support of the fishing industry</b>
12.00	<b>Dr John Hedley</b>	<b>Looking after Number One</b>
12.30 pm	<b>LUNCH sponsored by Quality Equipment Ltd</b>	

**TUESDAY 30<sup>th</sup> AUGUST**

**Afternoon**

1.30 pm	<b>Malcolm Lawson</b> <i>CRA 8 Management Committee Inc.</i>	Post-harvest research – CRA 8 industry partnerships with Seafood Innovations Ltd.
2.00 pm	<b>Dr James Bell</b> <i>Victoria University Wellington</i>	Unraveling the DNA code – where did that lobster come from?
2.30 pm	<b>Alastair Macfarlane</b> <i>Manager Trade and Information</i> <i>NZ Seafood Industry Council</i>	Traceability? Will product certification and traceability be mandatory requirements for future lobster exports?
<b>TRADE and MARKETING</b>		
2.50pm	<b>Cameron Bagrie</b> <i>ANZ Bank New Zealand</i>	The Challenges of International Trade and Foreign Exchange Markets
3.30 pm	<b>Afternoon Tea Sponsored by Moana Pacific Fisheries</b>	
4.00 pm	<b>The Honourable Phil Heatley</b> <i>New Zealand</i> <i>Minister of Aquaculture and Fisheries</i>	Keynote speech to Trans Tasman Rock Lobster Industry Conference
4.25 pm	<b>PANEL DISCUSSION</b> <i>Lobster exporting personnel</i>  <i>Mike Burnett</i> <i>Alan Buckner</i> <i>Peter Creighton</i> <i>Andrew Harvey</i>	Asian Markets – Risks and Rewards
5.15 pm	<b>NZ RLIC/FRDC</b>	Outcomes and Tasks.  Where to from here? – 8 <sup>th</sup> Lobster Congress
5.30 pm	<b>CONFERENCE CONCLUDES – THANK YOU TO DELEGATES AND GUESTS</b>	
7.00 pm to 11.30 pm	<b>ANZ BANK SOCIAL EVENING</b>  Lobster Taste-Off Master of Ceremonies <i>Mr. Jon Gadsby</i> Entertainment	