

Western Rock Lobster Council Inc.



Australian Government

**Fisheries Research and
Development Corporation**

**Further Development of an Employment Web Page for the
Western Rocklobster Industry
(FRDC Project Number 2007/307)**

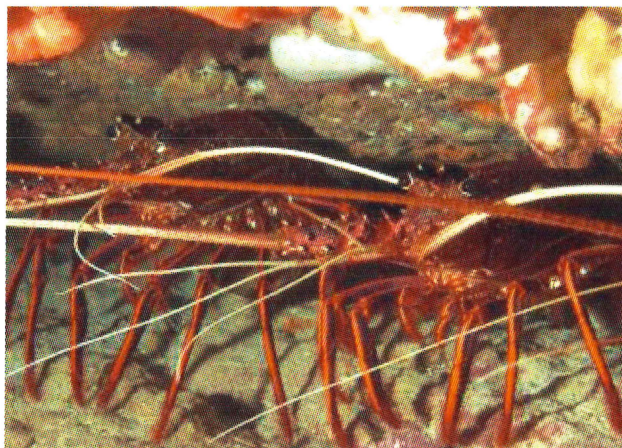
FRDC FINAL REPORT

OCTOBER 2009

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**Further Development of an Employment Web Page for the
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WESTERN ROCK LOBSTER COUNCIL

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Non technical Summary

2007/307	Further Development of an Employment Web Page for the Western Rocklobster Industry
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OBJECTIVES:

- 1 Increased numbers of advertisements on the web page
- 2 Increased placings of crew with fishers looking for employees
- 3 Opportunities for training and employment agencies to network with the fishing industry for employment purposes
- 4 Identify the potential for using the Job Search site to create a template for the wider fishing industry (feasibility study).

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED TO DATE

The WRLC Employment website was re-launched prior to the commencement of the 2008/9 commercial season. Input on website design from the project steering committee and WRLC Board of Directors improved the functionality of the website which has since been linked to another popular fishing industry website –www.crayzone.com.au. Contact with potential employees from local and regional TAFE colleges was also made.

Unfortunately the employment website in its current form has not been as successful as first hoped in placing skilled workers within the WRLF. Lessons learnt from this initiative will be used to compile a more extensive national seafood industry employment website.

The Western Rocklobster industry is experiencing a labour shortage, with many fishers experiencing difficulty obtaining skilled crew, particularly as returns on investment decrease and labour shifts to other primary and resource industry sectors. To address these issues, the Western Rocklobster Council (WRLC) developed a job search web page on the WRLC website, with the ability for fishers to place advertisements, search for crew, and crew to search for jobs. The aim of the webpage was to make it easier for crew to find fishers offering work, provide an opportunity for fishers to advertise positions available free of charge and to provide an avenue for fishers to increase the profitability

of the industry, by reducing down time and being able to search for crew with the required experience.

This project also addressed the challenge of people development in the industry, providing crew with additional opportunities to maximise employment potential through streamlining their job applications to fishers who are looking for employees with their particular sets of skills, while also providing fishers with the opportunity to become more familiar with electronic media. The project also built profitability in the industry, by providing a simple, cost effective mechanism to address labour issues, reducing the amount of time fishers spend with sub-optimal crew numbers.

KEYWORDS: Western Rocklobster industry, employment website

Acknowledgements

Thanks go to the project steering committee; Jo-Anne Ruscoe, Peter Horvat, Steve Hall, Steve Gill and Alice Hurlbatt. Thanks also go to Alex von Schweintz from Echidna web design for his patience and the WRLC Board of Directors for their comments.

List of Acronyms

WRL	Western Rocklobster
WRLC	Western Rocklobster Council
WRLF	Western Rocklobster Fishery

List of Appendices

- I WRLC Advertisement in ProWest magazine
- II WRLC advertisement in ProWest magazine

Background

The Western Rocklobster industry (and the fishing industry in general) is experiencing a labour shortage, with many fishers experiencing difficulty obtaining skilled crew, particularly as returns on investment decrease and labour shifts to other primary and resource industry sectors. To address these issues, the Western Rocklobster Council (WRLC) developed a job search web page on the WRLC website, with the ability for fishers to place advertisements, search for crew, and crew to search for jobs. The aim of the webpage was to make it easier for crew to find fishers offering work, provide an opportunity for fishers to advertise positions available free of charge, and provide an avenue for fishers to increase the profitability of the industry, by reducing down time and being able to search for crew with the required experience.

This project addressed the challenge of people development in the industry, providing crew with additional opportunities to maximise employment potential through streamlining their job applications to fishers who were looking for employees with their particular sets of skills, while also providing fishers with the opportunity to become more familiar with electronic media. The project also built profitability in the industry, by providing a simple, cost effective mechanism to address labour issues, reducing the amount of time fishers spend with sub-optimal crew numbers.

Industry members also discussed the project with regional employment agency Employment Plus, as well as the Challenger TAFE, who believed there was scope for including the use of the Job Search page in current employment and educational facilities.

Aspects of challenges 4 and 5, of the Fishery Research and Development's Program 3 (people development), were addressed in this project by ensuring the industry has the required skilled crew, and the community considers employment in the fishing industry as a valuable and viable opportunity.

Consultation

The provision of the Jobsearch Web page was discussed with WAFIC staff and in particular with Steven Hall (WAFIC Safety Training and Education Officer), who saw potential for the inclusion of the WRLC Jobsearch Web page in the WAFIC fishing industry careers pathway (which has since been developed). It was also discussed with the Western Rocklobster Council Board of Directors, who identified it as a priority for the 2006-07 season.

The web page was also raised at meetings of the Professional Fishermen's Associations in WA and fishers were supportive of the concept. The WRLC also discussed the project with the Fishing Program Manager at Challenger TAFE, Ms Jean Menzies and with the TAFE lecturer in Fisheries Management, Katie Gill, who were extremely supportive of the project. Support for the project was also received from the WA Rocklobster Fishers

Federation (WARLFF), who also offered in-kind assistance to the further development of the project.

Need

The Western Rocklobster industry is facing a labour shortage, with many crew opting to work in the mining sector for significantly higher returns than are available from the fishing industry. This has resulted in skilled crew moving away from the fishing industry, with labour shortages being filled by relatively inexperienced crew, which in turn leads to safety implications, a high crew turn over, and less efficient fishing operations. Consequently, fishers have been looking for ways to find skilled crew, in a timely, cost effective manner, to reduce down-time resulting from crew shortages.

The current cost-price squeeze has an additional impact on fishing operations, as fishers are forced to spend more time advertising, training, and managing crew shortages at a time when many fishers are already facing significant income reductions.

The WA Fishing Industry Council has also recognised the need to identify a career pathway for employees in the fishing industry to improve employment opportunities, and this web page program has assisting in linking the career pathway with these employment opportunities in the fishing industry.

The employment web page project was initially funded by the Western Rocklobster Council. However due to a reduction in the value of the GVP of the fishery, funding to the Council was significantly reduced, with funding for “non-core” business, such as the web page, no longer available. This project assisted with providing the funds for increasing awareness and use of the web page by employment agencies, as well as technical support for updating the website to accommodate additional fisheries at a later date (if needed).

Objectives

1	Increased numbers of advertisements on the web page
2	Increased placings of crew with fishers looking for employees
3	Opportunities for training and employment agencies to network with the fishing industry for employment purposes
4	Identify the potential for using the Job Search site to create a template for the wider fishing industry (feasibility study).

Methods

The expansion of the current web page commenced with an initial consultation with the WRL Board and industry as to what was required to make the web page more user-friendly for fishers.

Identification of training providers and employment agencies relevant to the fishing industry who can link to the web page then followed, to ensure that those organisations who deal with industry are aware of the web page and can provide input into it.

This primarily involved consultation with those training providers and employment agencies to determine changes required to make the web page more user-friendly for employees and crew.

The third step involved updating the website to incorporate the changes suggested by the above stakeholders. This required the assistance of a website developer, Alex von Schweintz from Echidna web design who was contracted to complete the job.

Following the updating of the website, the WRLC placed regular advertisements in the media and industry publications to notifying fishers and crew of the services and opportunities on the web page to increase industry use of the service.

Ongoing management and administration of the web page occur as required, including surveys of fishers and crew to identify employment rates.

This work was initially carried out by the Project Officer of the Western Rocklobster Council (Principal Investigator), Alice Hurlbatt who managed the development of the initial Jobsearch web page. Following Ms Hurlbatt's departure from the WRLC, the new project manager, Andrew Winzer took on the project until completion in September 2009.

Related Projects

There were no related projects undertaken by the Western Rocklobster Council or other researchers into employment in the Western Rocklobster industry.

The WA Fishing Industry Council has had discussions with training providers to identify career pathways in the fishing industry; however this concept was not developed any further. In the event that the career pathways project can be integrated with any aspects of this project, the WRLC plan to work with WAFIC to formalise that process.

Outputs and Extension

Outputs for the project include a more functional web page, that is user-friendly and allows industry members and job seekers the opportunity to cost effectively and quickly

search and place advertisements for crew. It also provided the WRLC with an increased understanding of the employment rates in the industry through the results of surveys of job seekers and advertisers using the database..

The primary output is the web page, while secondary outputs were advertisements and fliers/ brochures identifying the web page and its function.

Results

Prior to and during the 2008/9 west coast rocklobster commercial season, the WRLC employment website successfully placed approximately 12-15 young, skilled job seekers on boats and processing factories across all zones of the fishery. However, the employment website was not as functional and/or an attractive option to job seekers or prospective employers as originally hoped. It appears that the great majority of stakeholders in the WRLF are still reluctant to log onto the internet to check emails, so it would seem that expecting large groups of employers and employees to 'surf the net' to log on and register on the WRLC employment website was probably unrealistic.

However, having recognised this shortcoming, this project did allow for links between the WRLC website and the more popular WA industry driven website www.crayzone.com.au to be created. This has attracted more interest in the WRLC website and the prospect of a greater use of the WRLC Job Search function. . The WRLC also sponsor the crayzone website, which has resulted in the WRLC logo appearing on their homepage which can simply be double clicked on to move to the WRLC website.

Advertising of the WRLC website in the ProWest industry magazine has occurred for the past six months (see attached).

However, the direct link with industry has apparently provided little encouragement for prospective employers to use the WRLC Job Search function.

Discussions have also taken place with numerous members of the project steering committee i.e. Jo-Anne Ruscoe, Peter Horvat, Steve Hall on the refinement and use of the Job Search function. Justin Clay, State Coordinator of the National Harvest Labour Information Service, was also contacted to get his view on the most effective point of contact with Australian graduates and how this could be built into the functionality of the site.

Consultation with WRLC board members and Professional Fishermans Associations also took place and they were in support of measures which facilitate increased exposure for the Western Rocklobster Fishery and also the WRLC website.

Contacts have since been made with training providers around WA, namely Challenger TAFE, Batavia Coast training institute and WA Primary Industry training council. Graduates from these institutions are made aware of the WRLC employment website and

encouraged to log on and join if they are interested in putting their skills to work in the western rocklobster fishery.

Due to the mixed results of the WRLC Job Search web page, a significant investigation into the national feasibility component of the project (objective 4) has not occurred. Recent discussions held with FRDC People Development Manager, Neil Garbutt and R&D Manager, Jo-Anne Ruscoe have suggested that some of the lessons learnt from the development of the WRLC website might be incorporated into a nationwide effort aimed at encouraging young graduates to enter the seafood industry.

Presentations were also given to students at the Batavia Coast maritime institute in Geraldton. This involved a brief rundown on the WRLF and employment opportunities within the WRLF. Another presentation was also given to TAFE WA students in Fremantle.

Outcomes

The outcomes of this project were:

- 1) The highlighting of the need to look for other mediums to bring together employees and employers. Another option may be to compile a database (using similar employment websites, TAFE colleges, mail outs of school graduates in fishing towns or other regional areas etc) of young, skilled job seekers in the fishing industry and then engage with employers through another medium i.e. face to face or mail out.
- 2) An increased awareness of the Jobsearch Web page by community employment agencies and training facilities through consultation with the relevant agencies and training providers in relation to the employment process and career pathways.
- 3) An increased ability for fishers to select crew based on the skill requirements of their operation, reducing the risks associated with fishers needing experienced crew resulting in employing inexperienced staff by providing data on crew with specific skills, experience and qualifications.
- 4) The provision of additional avenues for job seekers to find work through links with employment agencies and advertisements in the media for the Jobsearch web page.

These outcomes have directly benefited the commercial Western Rocklobster fishery and there is the potential to expand the site to the WA fishing industry, as well as providing added benefits to the wider community through increased avenues of employment opportunities and career pathways in the fishing industry.

Conclusion

As mentioned in the results above, the WRLC Employment website has not been as successful as originally hoped. Two factors that are beyond the control of the fishery, namely a fleet attrition rate of 15-20% each season for the past two seasons and the ongoing resources boom in the Pilbara region of WA, have significantly impacted on the potential use of the website.

Maintaining skilled employees in the WRLF and indeed all seafood industries Australia wide is reliant upon engaging with young graduates and increasing their awareness of the various opportunities which exist within such a diverse Agricultural sector. Establishing an effective pathway to communicate with employers is still in it's infancy and relies on direction from the WRLF representative bodies (WAFIC, WRLC) and local associations.

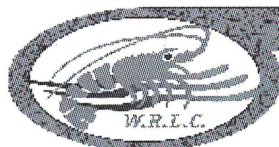
The success of the crayzone site discussed earlier in this report with over 22,000 hits in around six months is indeed a positive result and underlines the fact that members of the seafood industry are slowly but surely embracing the internet. This suggests that in the future, the industry may see more potential in the WRLC Job Search function and may make greater use of its options.

At the same time, the Chairman of the WRLC now sits on the board of Agrifood Skills Australia which has identified the need to establish specific mechanisms or pathways that align young graduates, i.e. potential employees, with the fishing industry. This initiative is a national wide collaborative effort which will provide young skilled graduates with a medium allowing them to search for employment throughout the entire seafood industry.

The WRLC employment website will continue to operate during the 2009/10 commercial season in tandem with the sponsorship of the Fremantle or southern zone industry initiative, www.crayzone.com.au

APPENDICES

WRLC update



WESTERN ROCK LOBSTER COUNCIL Inc.

WRLC research update

If you have any further queries after reading these updates or have any ideas for projects please contact Andrew Winzer email: andrew@wrlc.com.au or phone: 9340 5002.

Recently completed projects

Pilot study into improved pot design for the western rocklobster fishery
FRDC project number: 2007/249
Start date: 9/07; End date: 12/08

A group of fishermen from each zone, Dr Simon de Lestang (Department of Fisheries), Kevin Donohue (RLIAC executive officer), Professor Bruce Phillips (Curtin University) and a pot manufacturer decided to trial two new pot designs for the 'red' phase of the 2007/8 season.

One of the constraints which the committee took into account when deciding on any new design was the costs associated with a fisher having to purchase new pots.

Consequently, it was decided that if a more efficient pot was to be taken up to any real extent by the WRLC it would have to be a modification of the existing traditional batten pot.

Early in the New Year, prototypes of each pot design underwent a preliminary trial in C zone. After the results were compiled, it was decided to conduct the pilot phase trial using one design only. This design comprised two side entrances and a parlour which prevented animals from escaping.

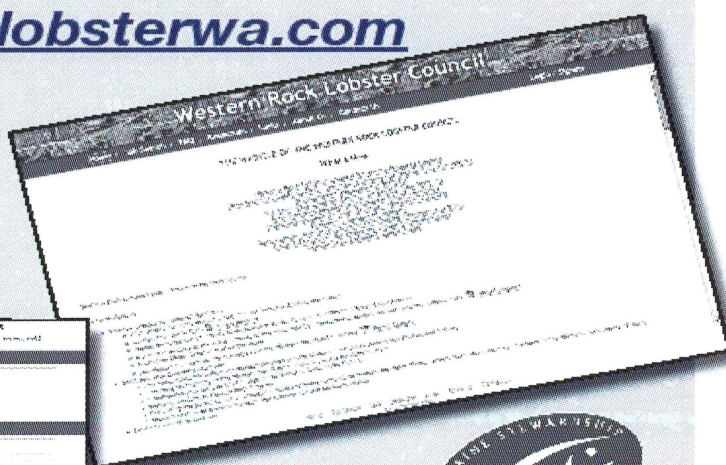
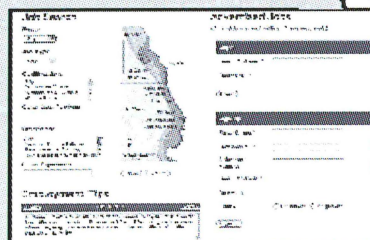
A total of 70 pots were constructed and the pilot phase trial commenced across all zones in early February. These new design pots were found to catch less lobster than traditional pots possibly due to their smaller volume. One fisher was permitted to trial a number of 48 inch lobster traps over the remaining few months of the 2007/8 season. These traps were found to catch more lobster than traditional pots over extended soak times.

Biodiesel for the WRLC

FRDC Project number: 2007/241
Kondinin Group for the WRLC

In 2007, in response to increasing fuel prices the industry representatives requested that the Western Rocklobster

www.rocklobsterwa.com



Take a look



WRLC update



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What's new on the WRLC's website?

- Employment page
- Research & management updates

Take a look at...

www.rocklobsterwa.com