



FRDC

FISHERIES RESEARCH &
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

FINAL REPORT

Western Rock Lobster (WRL) Communications Program

**Increasing community understanding, trust, and acceptance for the
Western Rock Lobster industry**

Matt Taylor

August 2022

FRDC Project No **2020-058**

© 2022 Fisheries Research and Development Corporation.
All rights reserved.

ISBN 978-0-6488948-2-7

**Communications Program – Increasing community understanding, trust, and acceptance for the Western Rock Lobster industry
2020-058**

2022

Ownership of Intellectual property rights

Unless otherwise noted, copyright (and any other intellectual property rights, if any) in this publication is owned by the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation and the Western Rock Lobster Council Inc.

This publication (and any information sourced from it) should be attributed to Taylor, M., Western Rock Lobster Council Inc. (WRL), 2022, *Communications Program – Increasing community understanding, trust, and acceptance for the Western Rock Lobster industry*, Fremantle, August. CC BY 3.0

Creative Commons licence

All material in this publication is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Australia Licence, save for content supplied by third parties, logos and the Commonwealth Coat of Arms.



Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Australia Licence is a standard form licence agreement that allows you to copy, distribute, transmit and adapt this publication provided you attribute the work. A summary of the licence terms is available from <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au/>. The full licence terms are available from <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/au/legalcode>.

Inquiries regarding the licence and any use of this document should be sent to: frdc@frdc.com.au

Disclaimer

The authors do not warrant that the information in this document is free from errors or omissions. The authors do not accept any form of liability, be it contractual, tortious, or otherwise, for the contents of this document or for any consequences arising from its use or any reliance placed upon it. The information, opinions and advice contained in this document may not relate, or be relevant, to a reader's particular circumstances. Opinions expressed by the authors are the individual opinions expressed by those persons and are not necessarily those of the publisher, research provider or the FRDC.

The Fisheries Research and Development Corporation plans, invests in and manages fisheries research and development throughout Australia. It is a statutory authority within the portfolio of the federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, jointly funded by the Australian Government and the fishing industry.

Researcher Contact Details

Name: Matt Taylor
Address: 28 Mews Road, Fremantle WA 6160
Phone: 08 9432 7722
Email: matt@westernrocklobster.org
Web: www.westernrocklobster.org

FRDC Contact Details

Address: 25 Geils Court
Deakin ACT 2600
Phone: 02 6122 2100
Email: frdc@frdc.com.au
Web: www.frdc.com.au

In submitting this report, the researcher has agreed to FRDC publishing this material in its edited form.

Contents

Contents	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
Executive Summary	v
Introduction	1
Objectives	2
Method	3
Results, discussion, and conclusion	5
Implications	10
Recommendations	11
Further development.....	11
Extension and Adoption	12
Project coverage	12
Project materials developed	13
Appendices	13

Acknowledgments

WRL gratefully acknowledges the support and collaboration of the following people and organisations whose work and contributions made this research and report possible:

The Western Rock Lobster commercial fishers and their families profiled in the multiple activities completed under this Program who generously shared their time and personal stories.

The scientists who offered their time and research information in support of this Program; especially Simon de Lestang, Principal Research Scientist at the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD).

Anna Gabriel, MSC Oceania Program Director, who allowed us to interview her on the meaning and relevance of the MSC certification for the fishery, and Sascha Brand-Gardner, MSC Program Manager at Bio-Inspecta, for sharing her expertise in the assessment and certification process.

The many chefs for their willingness to create recipes, share their knowledge and take part in cooking demonstrations and events.

The multiple partners involved in the delivery of this Program for their expertise, professionalism, and guidance; especially Nicky Munro at Research Solution; Daniel Smith at CGM Communication; Brendan Hutchens at VAM Media; and Liz Poustie and Kelly Trepkowski at Seven West Media.

Executive Summary

Purpose

The original intention of the Western Rock Lobster (WRL) Communications Program was to deliver its communications and engagement activities over four years from 2021 to 2025. However, as investigations progressed additional information about the communication and engagement needs of stakeholders were revealed, while at the same time the industry experienced on-going pandemic and severe trade disruptions, requiring the delivery of these activities to be accelerated. This resulted in the Program delivering its planned activities ahead of schedule, while also presenting new opportunities for stakeholder and community engagement, including developing a revised communications and engagement strategy and activities plan.

This Report outlines the activities undertaken in the accelerated Program.

Before 2020 The WRL Board agreed that WRL must continue to improve communications within and outside the industry if it is to attain its goal of creating a highly professional organisation and industry by 2022.

WRL's Strategic Plan Priority 1 is to "proactively manage internal industry and external community communications and stakeholder relationships". This program investigates, develops, and implements WRL's strategies to engage with community and industry stakeholders to increase the community's trust, respect, and value for the Western Rock Lobster industry.

While the fishery has long had a significant positive impact on Western Australia, WRL has historically maintained a low profile for the industry, instead focusing on behind-the-scenes, business-as-usual activities for the benefit of industry members, largely the fishers. Recent changes, such as increased scrutiny of commercial fishing and increasing economic and environmental risks, have prompted the need for WRL to take a more proactive approach to community and stakeholder engagement. Government intervention and changing economic drivers for the State have also created an opportunity for WRL to take a strong leadership position on behalf of the industry.

Background

The WRL Board agreed that it must continue to improve communications within and outside the industry if it is to attain its goal of creating a highly professional organisation and industry by 2022. WRL must have the means to inform the industry of RD&E that may influence day-to-day operations and longer-term planning for individual enterprises and the industry as a whole. Equally, WRL must be in a position to provide the community with information that increases trust, respect and value for the Western Rock Lobster industry and its members. Of note, it is important that the wider community is aware of the RD&E that underpins the environmental record of the industry, innovation and its value to Western Australia (particularly to regional WA) and Australia.

WRL currently requires greater capacity to manage its RD&E communication methods efficiently and effectively with the industry and the wider community. This program has generated that capacity by and for WRL itself.

WRL has long acknowledged that one of its roles is to support the broader industry's (not only the fishermen) RD&E. This can be developed through increased collaboration and encompassing of the diverse stakeholder groups within the industry, which can be achieved through greater engagement and improved communication. WRL must be perceived by its stakeholders as being relevant, accessible, responsive and a credible provider of RD&E to the industry.

Aims and objectives

The Program's aims were to:

- Investigate how to increase community trust, respect for the industry and value its contribution by engaging with communities to understand their views of the Western Rock Lobster industry.
- Develop efficient and effective channels of stakeholder communication and engagement to share and increase awareness of the benefits and RD&E
- Increase knowledge and awareness of the western rock lobster industry
- Develop opportunities for WRL members, fishers and crews to become better informed and empowered to offer feedback and input into WRL's stakeholder engagement and communication activities.

Methodology

WRL undertook to first gather intelligence through the development and implementation of a community perceptions survey. The survey measured the industry's social licence performance.

The results of the community perception survey were combined with the results of WRL's annual member survey (not in the scope of this Program) to revise and update WRL's Communications Strategy and Plan.

The activities of the Plan were then delivered:

- Materials such as short films, video clips and still images were created to be used in engaging the community to better inform the community about the Western Rock Lobster industry and its contribution to WA.
- WRL designed and implemented educational materials aimed at making the community aware of the joint WRL and Government 'back of boat sales' program which has proven to provide an opportunity for fishers to connect with their local communities.
- WRL developed high quality materials to help make the community aware of safety and responsible fishing practices as required through the "Snag It! Tag It!" and whale entanglement code of practice programs.
- WRL sponsored high visibility community events such as Geraldton's Shore Leave Festival and Fremantle's Blessing of the Fleet to engage with the wider community and further increase the community's connection and understanding of the industry.
- WRL coordinated two photo competitions to engage fishers and the broader community in the industry. The photos were used to create calendars which provide a continual reminder of the iconic Western Rock Lobster and its contribution to the regions.
- Technologies were investigated and tested to determine the most effective tool to support engaging and communication with such a diverse range of stakeholders, from members to vessel crews to employees of supporting industries, to consumers via back of boat lobsters.

Key Findings

1. Develop and implement a community perceptions survey

The Western Australian community is supportive of the WRL industry with 77.5% of the community supporting the industry with 49.2% very supportive. The results are similar for measures of trust, though recreational rock lobster fishers are a little less supportive (66.0%) of the industry as a whole.

The industry is perceived by the community to perform strongly in terms of overall economic contribution (86.1%), as an export industry (88.9%) and as an important source of employment (84.0%), this is one of its great strengths.

The WRL Industry was perceived to operate sustainably (81.6%), this is also a strong tenet. The industry is perceived to be more sustainable than 10 years ago, and more sustainable than other fishing industries around the world. However, sustainability is strongly influenced by being a premium Western Australian

product rather than by the Marine Stewardship Council logo in the local market. The community look for or ask if the rock lobster is from Western Australia or assumed it is Western Australian when they buy or eat it, and this was important to over ninety percent of Western Australians.

Regional, including the coastal, communities are less willing to trust the industry to support the community overall and whilst 61.5% trust the industry, almost one in four do not. The lack of feeling of reciprocity arising in coastal communities is due at least in part to almost half of these people perceiving that the WRL Industry make little to no contribution to jobs in their communities, economic activity in their town, and giving back to the community.

Availability of Western Rock Lobster was considered good by 72.6% of respondents and availability at a reasonable price by 61.8% of respondents. By comparison just over half of the regional people outside coastal communities felt that there is reasonable availability and that it is well priced compared to other premium foods.

Just over 40% of the community say that they consume Western Rock Lobster at least occasionally, the majority of people who consume Western Rock Lobster at least once a year view it as an affordable luxury; however, as frequency of consumption declines, it becomes a special occasion food.

In conclusion, the WRL Industry has a positive base to build on but there is a need to raise the profile of the industry so that the community has a strong foundation of information to support their beliefs and for the industry to work with and address the concerns of particular segments including coastal communities in terms of reciprocity, availability in country communities and support from recreational fishers.

2. Education for the community on the availability and preparation of western rock lobster for consumption

The implementation of the many activities under this Program WRL has learnt that establishing strong partnerships with organisations and people is one of the most effective tools to communicate with a wide audience while at the same time strengthening relationships with stakeholders and partner organisations. In order to reach so many different types of people with such a small team, WRL developed key strategic partnerships with organisations such as Buy West Eat Best, and Seven West Media as well as renowned local chefs, food journalists and influencers. Strategic collaborations have proven to be crucial to expanding reach and gaining the trust of the community. They have also provided a new source of high-quality content and initiatives to further extend the message.

3. Safety education activities: 'Snag it, tag it' and Whale Entanglement code of practice

It is too early to evaluate the success of these activities but once the learnings are known they will be incorporated into a new communications strategy to further increase awareness and adoption of safe recreational fishing practices that impact commercial lobster fishers, and enhance community awareness of how our fishers care for other species while fishing.

4. Community events

After a successful experience in 2021, WRL has agreed to be an official partner and support the Shore Leave Festival again in 2022 and 2023, committing to an event that has proven to provide excellent opportunities to reach large audiences with manageable resourcing commitments. Creating activations at events like these provide opportunities for awareness building, but also provide excellent opportunities for engagement with the community and other industries.

5. Communications and stakeholder engagement management platforms.

Implementation of HubSpot as a CRM and electronic communication platform. The software has proven to be a truly user-friendly system for managing membership and stakeholders contact information. HubSpot as a CRM organises and brings together all the information relating members and stakeholders

in a single section. It allows entering notes, segmenting by groups, and exploring interaction history with WRL electric communications and website. The system's GDPR compliant online forms have also allowed WRL to collect data and update contact information. Keeping these important details updated has improved how WRL effectively provides general updates, critical information and conducts surveys to measure members' support for key issues to assist WRL Board decision making on behalf of industry. Link to form here. Since its implementation in 2020 WRL Industry Updates Subscriber list has grown from just over 400 (June 2020) to 833 in May 2022.

Implications

The depth and adaptability of the 2020-058 Communications Program demonstrates the effectiveness of co-ordinated effort towards clear goals that can be achieved to enhance a fishery's value and social licence in regional and urban communities. This approach also demonstrates that while industry and community stakeholders benefit immensely, benefits also accrue to the state government and increase opportunities for co-management of the resource.

Situational Analysis

This Communications Program has been implemented at a significant challenging and unique time for the industry and a number of unpredictable reasons have led to the efficiency of the delivery process (three years before schedule).

Shortly after the Proposal was approved and the Agreement signed, WRL entered a 12-month campaign with Seven West Media. Seven West Media is one of Australia's most prominent media companies, with a market-leading presence in content production across broadcast television, publishing and digital. Being so dominant in Western Australia provided a very efficient way to achieve the Program's objectives given their dominance in the print and digital sector. WRL's partnership with WA's most powerful media family allowed the achievement of 30% of the projects under the Program in the most timely, accurate and effective manner.

The success and efficiency of the Program is also a result of great partnerships. The WRL team undertook a thorough process to find different partners in areas which they excelled. Selecting the right partner for each individual research project has been vital for creating value in the collaborative work and supported the overall high-performance of the Program.

The closure of the China market since its approval resulted in a greater emphasis of the Program for the local benefits. WRL found industry in the need to devote efforts to developing a closer connection with the local community. Furthermore, the unexpected and overwhelming success of the new Back of Boat Program in engaging and creating authentic connection with the community required time and resources to leverage its benefits.

Recommendations

Having completed the initiatives under current Program, WRL acknowledges that it must continue to improve communications within and outside the industry, building upon the foundations set by the 2020-058 Program. The new Communications Strategy and Plan 2022-2025 is forward-looking, builds on the successes and learnings from the 2020-058 Program, and its aspiring yet achievable and crucial objectives will require investment under a new program of work.

While the indications for achieving a Social Licence to Operate (SLO) for the Western Rock Lobster industry are currently positive, consolidating and maintaining that support depends on the evolving social and political landscape. Through the implementation of its updated Communication Strategy, the industry will strengthen its connection to the community and consolidate its SLO.

Introduction

The Western Rock Lobster Council Inc. (WRL) is an incorporated association that represents the western rock lobster managed fishery licence holders in the commercial fishing sector. The Australian Western Rock Lobster fishery is the world's first Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certified fishery and the largest commercial fishery in Western Australia. The fishery harvests one species (*Panulirus cygnus*) between Shark Bay and Cape Leeuwin with approximately 250 active vessels using baited pots, with the harvest being set annually by quota (6,615 tonnes in 2020/2021). The industry contributes \$505 million dollars to the Western Australian economy (ACIL Allen, 2017) and supports regional communities (including creating 2,437 direct and indirect FTE jobs in 2017).

Despite this significant positive impact of the fishery, WRL has historically maintained a low profile with the community, instead focusing on behind-the-scenes, business-as-usual activities for the benefit of industry members, largely the fishers. Recent changes, such as increased scrutiny of the fishing industry and increasing commercial and environmental risks, have prompted the need for WRL to take a more proactive approach to community and stakeholder engagement. Government intervention and changing economic drivers for the State have also created an opportunity for WRL to take a strong leadership position on behalf of the industry. The WRL Board agreed that WRL must continue to improve communications within and outside the industry if it is to attain its goal of creating a highly professional organisation and industry.

There is an opportunity for WRL to increase community trust and respect for the Western Rock Lobster industry, following recent positive news of government providing support for the industry following the outbreak of COVID-19 and strong industry support for a Lobster Research Network to develop technology and innovation for the industry.

WRL's Strategic Plan Priority 1 is to "proactively manage internal industry and external community communications and stakeholder relationships". This program investigates, develops, and implements WRL's strategies to engage with community and industry stakeholders to increase the community's trust, respect, and value for the Western Rock Lobster industry.

WRL must have the means to inform the industry of RD&E that may influence day-to-day operations and longer-term planning for individual enterprises and the industry. Equally, WRL must be able to provide the community with information that increases trust, respect and value for the Western Rock Lobster industry and its fishers. Of note, it is important that the wider community is aware of the RD&E that underpins the environmental record of the industry, industry innovation, and its value to Western Australia (particularly to regional WA) and Australia.

WRL has long acknowledged that the role of WRL is to support broader industry RD&E through collaboration and be encompassing of the diverse stakeholder groups within and around the industry, which can be achieved through greater engagement and improved communication. WRL must be perceived by its stakeholders as being relevant, accessible, responsive and a credible provider of information to the industry and its stakeholders.

For the sake of clarity, WRL does not engage in the promotion or selling of lobster as a product. WRL's role is to inform the community and stakeholders of the existence of industry wide programs such as Back of Boat Lobsters, RD&E outputs and environmental custodianship endeavours. Any education and extension activities undertaken by WRL relate to the Western Rock Lobster industry and exist to increase the industry's social licence so that the community and stakeholders form a connection with fishers and therefore support the industry.

Objectives

- Engage with and understand the community's views of the Western Rock Lobster industry to determine how to increase community trust, respect, and value for the industry.
- Provide efficient and effective channels of communication to stakeholders to share the benefits of RD&E.
- Increase education within (knowledge) and awareness of the Western Rock Lobster industry.
- Keep WRL industry, fishers, and crew well-informed and provide opportunities for feedback and input into WRL's activities.

Method

1) Intelligence gathering: Develop and implement a community perceptions survey

WRL engaged experts to develop and implement an inaugural community perception survey to determine what percentage of the community are aware of, have an association with, trust the industry's custodianship, understand, and respect the operation of the Western Rock Lobster industry. This survey measured social license performance and guide what and how WRL communicates with the community to better educate and increase the community's knowledge of the industry.

2) Revise and update WRL's Communications Strategy and Plan

In order to produce the new Communications and Engagement Strategy for WRLC, CGM undertook extensive consultation with internal and external stakeholders. CGM's approach involved: a) A desktop review of a range of WRLC documents and communications tools; b) in-depth interviews with internal stakeholders including WRLC Directors and executive team; c) two industry workshops with active fishers and processors; d) in-depth interviews with external stakeholders including representatives from Austrade, Mid West Development Commission, Office of the Hon. Don Punch MLA, WAFIC, AHA WA, DPIRD, Tourism WA, Seafood Industry Australia, Department of Agriculture (Commonwealth) and financial institutions such as CBA and ANZ; e) an online members' survey; and f) a focus group of nine members, drawn from survey respondents, expanding on key issues identified in the online survey.

3) Develop materials and roll out projects

- a) Development and creation of mixed media so that the community are better informed about the Western Rock Lobster industry. WRL engaged communication experts to develop and create artefacts to educate the community about the Western Rock Lobster industry and underpin industry's social license by raising the community's awareness, respect, and trust in how the industry operates. These materials include short films, video clips and still images to be distributed via WRL's social media platforms, newsletters, industry awareness activities and community events.
- b) Education for the community on the availability of Western Rock Lobster for consumption. The WA Government has recently announced a new "back of boat sales" (BOBS) program for the sale and purchase of local lobster to the wider community. The BOBS program was developed to make western rock lobster more readily available and accessible to the wider community. WRL designed and implemented material to make the community aware of the program's existence. The material and extension also aimed to inspire and empower the community to create more lobster meals and be more comfortable with purchasing, storing, humanely despatching, and preparing live Western Rock Lobster. The strategy and messaging were designed based on new comprehensive consumer research which identified the core target audience and the insights into consumer attitude towards western rock lobster. Elements include where and how to purchase western rock lobster; the high quality of western rock lobster; and how best to handle, prepare and cook western rock lobster. This includes a series of videos showcasing quick and easy lobster meals prepared by fishing families, local chefs, and cooking influencers. WRL has also developed content such as fact sheets and recipes to encourage and support the purchase and consumption of western rock lobster. The integrated program run across several channels, including via the WRL website and newsletters, and be available for distribution at community events. The features of this program will be available for use and implementation by other fisheries, particularly other lobster fisheries.
- c) Safety education
 - i) WRL communicates industry safety measures and programs to raise awareness and educate its stakeholders as to safe fishing practices, such as whale entanglement mitigation measures and the SeSAFE and Snag it! Tag it! programs. This includes WRL meeting the costs for stakeholders to undertake training within these programs.
- d) Community events

- i) WRL sponsored, hosted, presented, and participated in select community events and activities (such as Blessings of the Fleet, Perth Royal Show, Shore Leave Festival, and food festivals) to raise the community's awareness of the western rock lobster industry and in turn increase respect and value for the industry. These events afforded industry participants the opportunity to engage with the wider community and educate the community on the core values of the western rock lobster industry, which are sustainability and traceability that's deeply rooted in tradition. WRL developed educational and industry awareness materials, as required for specific community events.
- e) Western Rock Lobster photo competition and calendar.
 - i) This initiative engaged both industry and community around the subject of sustainability. WRL hosted a photo competition with a call to action for western rock lobster members, stakeholders, and the wider community to create and submit photos that represent sustainability to them. The best photos featured in an annual calendar available for distribution to industry and the wider community. The calendar highlighted important western rock lobster industry dates such as community events (Blessings of the Fleet, Chinese New Year, Shore Leave Festival) and science and research dates (such as lobster recruitment and whale mitigation periods).
- 4) Evaluate and refine
 - a) The community perception survey (as outlined under "Intelligence gathering, industry and community") is used to review WRL's performance, gauge how WRL has improved and where WRL can improve. WRL also undertakes an annual Members and Stakeholders Survey for the same purpose however, that survey falls outside the scope of this program.
 - b) Communications and stakeholder engagement management platforms.
 - i) The development and improvement of these platforms is a critical component to determine whether this program can be deemed successful. The purpose of these platforms is to facilitate communications with industry stakeholders, to enable WRL to measure stakeholder engagement and determine preferred methods of communication and engagement. This will allow:
 - (1) more effective communication to keep WRL industry, fishers, and crew well informed.
 - (2) more effective communication with and education of the wider community.
 - (3) WRL to receive industry and stakeholder feedback.
 - (4) provide WRL industry, fishers, and crew the opportunity to offer feedback and input as to WRL's activities.

Results, discussion, and conclusion

Community and Stakeholders Perception Survey

In September 2020, WRL commissioned senior research consultants Research Solutions to conduct a Community Perceptions Survey and extended it to include processors and exporters of western rock lobster and members of the hospitality industry through the Australian Hotels Association.

This community perception survey is the first such study undertaken by WRL, and the results provide support for strategic decisions when preparing for the WRL Communications Strategy and Plan and helps to inform more targeted engagement of Community and industry stakeholders. The study establishes a benchmark against which the success of WRL's communication activities and the industry's social licence will be measured in the future.

The 2020 Community and Stakeholder Perceptions Report is available in the Annexure.

The community perception survey (as outlined under "Evaluation and update") is used to review WRL's communication and engagement performance, gauge how WRL has made progress and identify areas of improvement.

Key Findings

The Western Australian community is supportive of the WRL industry with 77.5% of the community supporting the industry with 49.2% very supportive. The results are similar for measures of trust, though recreational rock lobster fishers are a little less supportive (66.0%) of the industry as a whole.

The industry is perceived by the community to perform strongly in terms of overall economic contribution (86.1%), as an export industry (88.9%) and as an important source of employment (84.0%), this is one of its great strengths.

The WRL Industry was perceived to operate sustainably (81.6%), this is also a strong tenet. The industry is perceived to be more sustainable than 10 years ago, and more sustainable than other fishing industries around the world. However, sustainability is strongly influenced by being a premium Western Australian product rather than by the Marine Stewardship Council logo in the local market. The community look for or ask if the rock lobster is Western Australia or assumed it is Western Australian when they buy or eat it, and this was important to over ninety percent of Western Australians.

Country people, including the coastal communities, are less willing to trust the industry to support the community overall and whilst 61.5% trust the industry, almost one in four do not. The lack of feeling of reciprocity arising in coastal communities is due at least in part to almost half of these people perceiving that the WRL Industry make little to no contribution to:

- Jobs in their community
- Economic activity in their town
- Giving back to the community

Availability of western rock lobster was considered good by 72.6% of respondents and availability at a reasonable price by 61.8% of respondents. By comparison just over half of the regional people outside coastal communities felt that there is reasonable availability and that it is well priced compared to other premium foods.

Just over 40% of the community say that they consume western rock lobster at least occasionally, most people who consume western rock lobster at least once a year view it as an affordable luxury; however, as frequency of consumption declines, it becomes a special occasion food.

In conclusion, the WRL Industry has a positive base to build on but there is a need to raise the profile of the industry so that the community has a strong foundation of information to support their beliefs and for the industry to work with and address the concerns of segments including coastal communities in terms of reciprocity, availability in country communities and support from recreational fishers.

Revision and updating of WRL's Communications Strategy

The objective of the updated strategy is to grow the social license of the industry within Western Australia and nationally and build and maintain the level of community and stakeholder support necessary for the sustained success of the industry.

In May 2021, WRL engaged CGM Communications to undertake a review of the existing communications strategy developed in 2017, engage with stakeholders to identify needs, and develop a communications strategy and plan that aligns with the WRL 2021-2023 Strategic Plan.

The Communications & Engagement Strategy for the Western Rock Lobster industry 2022 to 2023 resulted from this engagement is attached.

Mixed media Communications project: Our Lobster

In July 2020, WRL engaged video expert VAM Media to deliver a creative mixed media kit titled 'Our Lobster', telling stories from the iconic Western Rock Lobster industry to educate, engage, and enlighten a broad community audience through a diverse range of characters, places, and anecdotes.

The primary objective of this initiative is to create engaging and versatile content to show why the western rock lobster is a world leading sustainable fishery and why it is also a part of what it means to be West Australian, educating the community on how the commercial fishing industry operates and raising community awareness, respect, and trust as a result.

The 'Our Lobster' project includes a six-part short documentary series, 11 informative social media videos and an album of compelling still photographs which will be distributed through YouTube, social media platforms including Facebook and Instagram, sponsored articles on relevant websites, streaming services, industry presentations and community events.

Content Breakdown:

A six-part documentary series where each short film is driven by the theme: "the different perspectives of western rock lobster".

1. Industry Introduction
2. Pioneers
3. Fishing Operation
4. Science and Sustainability
5. Culture
6. Economic Contribution

Social Media shorts which look to answer some FAQs and reveal some 'did you know's'

1. The Pot Maker
2. Western Rock Lobster Pot Drop
3. Western Rock Lobster Pot Pull
4. Underwater
5. The Boat Builder
6. The Western Rock Lobster Fishery
7. This is the Western Rock Lobster
8. Western Rock Lobster Lifecycle
9. How is the Western Rock Lobster Fishery Managed?
10. MSC Certification
11. Where to Buy Western Rock Lobster

Education for the community on the availability and preparation of western rock lobster for consumption

Based on learnings gained from conducting the initial activities in the Program, WRL implemented the following activities to improve the outcomes of the Program:

1. Live Lobster Preparation Education.

WRL developed content such as flyers and social tiles with accessible information for transporting, handling, storing, humanely dispatching lobsters as well as basic cooking methods.

Live Lobster Handling Flyer (print and digital). [Link here to view the digital version on the flyer.](#) Print version has been distributed to fishers and Professional Fishermen Associations (PFAs) so that fishers participating in BOB sales can make use of them and have available on their boats to give to their customers. To date, 3,000 copies have been printed and distributed through fishers, seafood retailers and events.

Furthermore, the education drive used local chefs and cooking influencers to educate the community on the high quality of western rock lobster; and how to safely handle, humanely despatch and cook live western rock lobster.

Examples of educational and informative content developed include:

[Lobster rolls with Rob Broadfield](#)

[Erin Larkin pairing wine with the western rock lobster](#)

[Ronny Dahl's barbecued western rock lobster](#)

2. Immersive Experiences.

The immersive feature designed with high impact visual storytelling, including imagery, video and interactive elements has been implemented to:

- i) Raise community understanding and awareness of the western rock lobster industry's role in WA
- ii) highlight the industry's values and sustainable practices
- iii) Educate the community to remove misconceptions about local availability
- iv) Build a long-term relationship with local communities.

[Link to view Immersive Content.](#)

3. Recipes.

WRL engaged local chefs to create quick and easy lobster recipes and organised professional photo shoots to capture the step-by-step cooking process to inspire and empower the community to create lobster meals and be comfortable with safely handling, despatching and preparing western rock lobster. This content is available for multiple uses including website, social media, email, and other communication activities.

4. Our State on A Plate.

WRL engaged Guru Productions to produce a 3-minute Our State on A Plate story for series 7. The story features western rock lobster, with Bib & Tucker Executive Chef Scott Bridger demonstrating how to humanely dispatch, prepare and cook fresh lobsters at home. The story runs for 4:50 minutes and has been broadcasted on the Nine Network. It was aired on Sunday 17th of April on Channel9, and available on YouTube and 9Now.

[Link to view the story.](#)

Safety education:

1. Snag It? Tag It! Communications Plan 2022

Snag It? Tag It! is a safety initiative collaboration with Recfishwest to mitigate the dangers posed by snagged fishing gear on rock lobster pots.

The initiative provides recreational fishers with waterproof caution tags to tie to ropes and floats if they accidentally snag fishing gear on a lobster line or pot. This means deckhands on commercial fishing vessels face less risk of injury when pulling in pots at high speed.

From 2020 to 2021, WRL printed and distributed 8000 caution tags to local tackle outlets along Western Australia's coastline. To raise awareness of the program and education within the community, WRL produced and distributed signage for display in locations that are highly visible and easily accessible to recreational

fishers. Multiple digital assets were also created and distributed via e-newsletters and social media platforms from both WRL and Recfishwest.

The learnings from these activities will be incorporated into a new communications strategy to further increased awareness and adoption of safe recreational fishing practices that impact commercial lobster fishers.

2. Whale Interactions Code of Practice

In 2021, WRL and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) developed a simplified and updated version of the Whale Entanglement Code of Practice (CoP) designed to reduce interactions with whales in Western Australian waters. The new CoP is specifically aimed at minimising entanglement of whales in rock lobster pot lines. It summarises legal requirements and additional steps fishers should take to minimise interactions with whales.

WRL engaged a creative studio to design the infographics which were printed and distributed amongst active fishers at members meetings including the DECK Program and the WRL AGM. WRL will continue to distribute them at Coastal Tours and other meetings with fishers throughout the year.

Community events

In 2021, WRL participated several community events and activities that provided opportunities to increase community awareness and understanding of western rock lobster which in turn generated trust, respect, and value for the industry.

1. Shore Leave Festival in Geraldton

WRL was one of the major partners and supporters of the inaugural Shore Leave Festival. The event took place in Geraldton from 24-27 September 2021 and one of its main objectives was to celebrate and raise awareness about the premium regional produce including the iconic western rock lobster.

One of the flagship events at the Shore Leave festival was the Abrolhos Long Table Lunch, which WRL was the exclusive sponsor. WRL also supported the Beach Price Markets (seafood markets which included a Back of Boat activation area), Blessing of the Fleet and the AFL Grand Final screening with free lobster BBQ.

Key Finding:

After a successful experience in 2021, WRL has agreed to be an official partner and support the festival again in 2022 and 2023, committing to an event that has proven to provide excellent opportunities to reach large audiences with manageable resourcing commitments. Creating activations at events like these provide opportunities for awareness building, but also provide excellent opportunities for engagement with the community and other industries.

Full Shore Leave 2021 Post Event Report is available in the Annexure.

Other smaller/local events in which WRL took part in 2021-22 of as part of this Program include: Coogee Live Festival, WA Day Cray Day at Hillarys', Fremantle Blessing of the Fleet.

2. Western Rock Lobster photo competition and calendar.

Launched in 2020, the WRL Photo Competition and Calendar is an engagement initiative that encourages fishers and the local community to express their connection to industry in a creative manner. The inaugural competition was hosted in 2020 with over 100 images submitted -mostly by industry members- with the most representative and evocative being selected to be featured in the high-quality wall calendar. The competition was primarily communicated via the WRL newsletter, website and social channels.

Ahead of the holiday season, one thousand calendars were distributed to restaurants, chefs, seafood retail shops, Back of Boat lobsters' customers, farmers markets, community centres, tourism offices and stakeholders including every member of WA Parliament and representatives of the tourism, hospitality and banking sectors.

In 2021, WRL opened the photo competition to the wider community, further enhancing community engagement. To reach a broader audience, the initiative was launched with an editorial story in the Outdoor

Explorer in The Sunday Times, followed by multiple plugs on media outlets to further encourage members of the community to take part. The winning photographs were also announced with an article in this publication.

In this second edition, over 200 images were submitted and a desk calendar featuring the 12 winning photographs was produced. The winners also received a \$150 voucher to a seafood restaurant serving western rock lobster of their choice.

Calendars were distributed to stakeholders including every member of WA Parliament and representatives of the tourism, hospitality, and banking sectors.

3. Communications and stakeholder engagement management platforms.

WRL has identified the need to increase and improve how it communicates research and IPA outcomes to members and stakeholders.

Some of the activities undertaken under this Program to address the RD&E communications gap between WRL and its membership are:

- WRL provides regular updates to the Board of Directors on the progress of its communications activities including the initiatives under the Communications IPA. Informed Directors then communicate this information to members so that updates flow into the membership.
- WRL provides regular updates to the Board on the progress of its IPAs projects. Informed Directors then communicate this information to members so that updates flow into the membership.
- WRL communicates RD&E outcomes to members and stakeholders via email blasts, monthly Council newsletter, Research/Industry News section on WRL website, Coastal Tours, AMMs and PFA Meetings.
- Implementation of HubSpot as a CRM and electronic communication platform. The software has proven to be a truly user-friendly system for managing membership and stakeholders contact information. HubSpot as a CRM organises and brings together all the information relating members and stakeholders in a single section. It allows entering notes, segmenting by groups and exploring interaction history with WRL electronic communications and website. The system's GDPR compliant online forms have also allowed WRL to collect data and update contact information. Keeping these important details updated has improved how WRL effectively provides general updates, critical information and conducts surveys to measure members' support for key issues in order to assist WRL Board decision making on behalf of industry. Link to form [here](#). Since its implementation in 2020 WRL Industry Updates Subscriber list has grown from just over 400 (June 2020) to 833 in May 2022.
- As a part of the process for updating WRL's Communications Strategy, an online members survey on communications and engagement and 2 focus group discussions were conducted to investigate how communications with members and industry stakeholders can be more effective. 133 members and stakeholders took part. Respondents to the survey were predominantly MFL holders, with just under two thirds being active fishers. Two focus groups discussions followed the survey with respondents who had agreed to be contacted for further feedback. Groups were segmenting by level of engagement. Each has been given an engagement score, where in-person engagements over the last year rank higher than electronic engagements. One group included the more engaged and one group the less engaged.

Results from this study are strictly confidential but its findings will inform the final version of WRL's Communication Strategy.

Implications

Assessment of the impact of the outcomes of the Program on WRL stakeholders

Activity outcome	Program Objectives	Benefits to		
		WRL fishers	Community	Government
Community and Stakeholders Perceptions Survey	1-2-3-4	X	X	X
WRL Communications Strategy and Plan	1-2-3-4	X	X	X
Mixed media Communications Campaign: Our Lobster	1-3	X	X	
Live Lobster Preparation Education content	1-3	X	X	
Immersive Experiences	1-3	X	X	
Chef's recipes	1-3		X	
Our State on a Plate partnership	1-3	X	X	
Snag it? Tag It! Safety Campaign	3-4	X	X	X
Whale Interactions Code of Practice	3-4	X	X	X
Sponsoring Shore Leave Festival - 2021-2022	1-3	X	x	x
WRL photo competition and calendar	1-3	X	X	
Communications and stakeholder engagement management platforms	2-3-4	X	X	X

Recommendations

Setting Benchmarks by developing and implementing a Community Perception Survey to a) determine how industry is currently perceived by the local community; b) understand and monitor community and stakeholders' priorities; c) assess the effectiveness of communication and engagement mechanisms currently being used, and d) to gain a better understanding of the community views on how industry can best contribute to the community where it operates.

Developing and implementing an Annual Members Survey to garner feedback from members and assess how that sentiment on the role and performance of the organisation changes year to year.

Developing a communications strategy that clearly outlines a) who are you communicating with; b) why you are talking to them; c) what message do they need to hear; d) how and when you will talk to them, and e) what form of communication the content should take and what channels you should use to share it.

Establishing and maintaining a curated stakeholder database. An updated and well-maintained stakeholder database is fundamental to effective stakeholder communications activities.

Highly visible presence at community events. Looking for opportunities to be involved at community events as a way to engage with the community and educate them about the produce and the broader industry.

Leverage strategic partnerships to reach a broader audience through collaboration. Identify areas of strategic alignment and opportunities for engagement and collaboration.

Further development

Having completed the initiatives under the current program, WRL acknowledges that it must continue to improve communications within and outside the industry, building upon the foundations set by this project. The new Communications Strategy and Plan 2022-2025 is forward-looking, builds on the successes and learnings from the previous strategy and plan, and its aspiring yet achievable and crucial objectives will require investment under a new program of work.

While the indications for achieving a Social Licence to Operate (SLO) for the Western Rock Lobster industry are currently positive, consolidating and maintaining that support depends on the evolving social and political landscape. Through the implementation of its updated Communication Strategy, the industry will strengthen its connection to the community and consolidate its SLO.

WRL will do this to a) Increase the full participation by internal stakeholders in Council activities, to best enable the Council to represent the industry to government and other stakeholders; b) Broaden and deepen relationships with external stakeholders from government and other industries to make the Council and the industry more resilient; c) Build awareness of the significant contribution the industry continues to make to coastal communities, and the state; d) Ensure the industry is getting maximum social licence benefits from its Marine Stewardship Council certification as a sustainable fishery.

Informed by the strategy, WRL will prioritise and implement actions to achieve the outlined goals over a three-year period.

Extension and Adoption

In order to communicate the progress, outcomes and learning of the initiatives under this Program:

Board Reports. WRL provides regular updates to the Board of Directors on the progress of the Communications Program. Informed Directors then communicate this information to members so that updates flow into the membership.

Industry meetings. WRL presents and provides updates on the progress and key findings of the current Communications Program at Coastal Tour meeting, AMMs and PFA Meetings.

Monthly newsletter. WRL includes updates on key elements of the Program in its monthly newsletter which is sent not only to members and stakeholders but also members of the community who subscribed via the website.

Milestone Emails. Additional ad hoc updates on specific elements of the Program are provided to members and stakeholders via email blasts. These are shared with relevant members on an as-needs basis to keep them informed.

Social Media and Website. WRL utilises its social media channels as well as its website as platforms to communicate and distribute content produced under the Program such as videos, fact sheet and articles. Members and partners are encouraged to share content on their own channels to achieve increased exposure.

Project coverage

Seven West Media campaign preliminary reports can be found in the Annex – Final report including Panel Survey results will be provided with Final Report once it becomes available.

Key findings of the Community and Stakeholders Survey were published on the 2019/2020 Annual Report that was distributed to Members and stakeholders including members of the WA Parliament. [Digital version of the Annual Report is available here \(page 20\).](#)

Progress on the WRL Communications Strategy was communicated to industry and stakeholders via summary on the 2020/2021 Annual Report. [Digital version of the Annual Report is available here](#) (page 29). WRL email blasts for key aspects funded by the Program [Shore Leave 2021, WA Cray Day campaign including inaugural WA's Best Lobster Restaurant competition. Shore Leave 2021 Post event summary](#)

Project materials developed

See the Annexure of this Report – a set of files supplied with the report.

Appendices

See the Annexure of this Report – a set of files supplied with the report.