



WA's Western Rock Lobster

INDUSTRY GROWTH PLAN

TO CREATE WA JOBS

Western Rock Lobster is Western Australia's premier seafood resource. The McGowan Government has plans to grow the Western Rock Lobster industry, while returning greater benefits to the Western Australian community.

The State Government has been working with representatives of the peak industry group, Western Rock Lobster, to create an industry development package. This package will assist the industry to grow to \$1 billion gross value of production within the next decade.

The western rock lobster resource is currently worth over \$5 billion, however the net return to the Western Australian Government through licence fees for this community resource is only \$10 million per annum.

Currently more than 95 per cent of commercially caught WA rock lobster is exported to China, meaning little flows into our local market for the enjoyment of Western Australians and tourists.

The McGowan Government's plan will also increase the supply of lobsters for Western Australians and tourists, create hundreds of WA jobs (particularly in the regions), and significantly increase economic return to the benefit of every Western Australian.

Growing the industry has a range of potential benefits for the fishery and WA community, including:

- The creation of up to 500 jobs, many in regional areas;
- Increased local lobster supply for international tourists and WA restaurants;
- A new international lobster festival in WA, which will be a first for the Asia-Pacific region;
- Growing tourism opportunities for WA by leveraging this unique lobster resource to attract overseas visitors;
- Greater economic returns to the Western Australian community for investment in essential public services;
- Improved certainty of fishing access rights for fishers;
- The establishment of a science-based Spiny Lobster Research Institute; and
- Increased investment into industry and market development.

A sustainable community resource

The western rock lobster fishery was the first fishery in the world to be certified as ecologically sustainable by the international Marine Stewardship Council. Since then it has been re-certified three times, most recently in 2017.

Recent scientific studies have confirmed the WA resource is in excellent shape.

This presents us with an opportunity to increase the level of fishing to return greater benefits to industry and the WA community.

A snapshot of the industry

In 2016-17 there were 878 direct jobs and 1,558 indirect jobs including in direct fishing, processing, boat building and tourism.

The western rock lobster resource is currently worth over \$5 billion. The net return to the Western Australian Government through licence fees for this community resource is only \$10 million per annum.

Currently more than 95 per cent of commercially caught WA rock lobster is exported to China. There is high demand for more lobster to flow into the local market for the enjoyment of Western Australians and tourists. This plan will help meet this demand.

Over the past few decades the Western Rock Lobster industry has innovated to increase catch rates while overheads have reduced such as the number of boats required to fish and the number of people employed in the fishery.

Opportunity for growth

Currently 6,300 tonnes per annum of lobster is fished, yet the sustainable limit is 8,000 tonnes per annum. The State Government has a plan to progressively increase the annual catch by 1,700 tonnes – from 6,300 tonnes to 8,000 tonnes per annum which is well within sustainable limits. This increase will be gradually released over a period no shorter than five years.

Through the plan, of the 1,700 tonne increase, 315 tonnes will be issued to current licence holders in 2019.

The remaining 1,385 tonnes will be available to the Western Australian Government, which will have identical terms and conditions as existing quota units.

The new units will be transacted by the State Government to achieve the objectives of the plan, and will be gradually released over a period no shorter than five years.

The management of the resource will continue to be underpinned by robust science and will continue to be sustainably managed.

This plan comes at an opportune time for the industry to seize upon recent trade changes with key export markets. On 1 January 2019, as part of the China Free Trade Agreement, the original 15 per cent tariff on rock lobster will be completely eliminated. This will support more direct market access to Chinese consumer for high quality WA rock lobster and improve our export competitiveness.

The State Government has a plan to progressively increase the annual catch by 1,700 tonnes, creating up to 500 jobs - many in regional WA

A plan for industry development

The State Government has worked with the industry peak body, Western Rock Lobster, to develop a benefits package for the fishery. This benefits package is the most comprehensive industry development plan ever seen for this highly-prized fishery in Western Australia. As part of our plan to grow the fishery and improve benefits to every Western Australian, the State Government will work with industry to:

- Establish a new governance arrangement for the Western Rock Lobster Fishery. A expert working group will be formed in 2019 to finalise the new arrangements;
- The State Government will invest \$27.5 million over a five-year period to develop the industry, which will deliver:
 - The creation of a Spiny Lobster Research Institute to invest in, manage and coordinate research, development and innovation to improve the productivity and competitiveness of the Western Rock Lobster industry.
 - Market development and education initiatives;
 - Industry digitisation and innovation initiatives; and
 - Industry leadership and professional development initiatives.
- Transfer management of the WRL resource to the new Aquatic Resources Management Act 2016 as a priority.

Benefits for the Western Australian community

In addition to the significant benefits this plan will have for the Western Rock Lobster industry, every Western Australian will also benefit from this plan. Benefits to the Western Australian community will be:

- Creation of up to 500 WA jobs, many in regional areas;
- Increased local lobster supply;
- The Asia-Pacific's first-ever international lobster festival will be created to celebrate WA's iconic and unique community resource;
- Growing tourism opportunities for WA, by leveraging this unique lobster resource to attract overseas visitors;
- Greater economic returns to the Western Australian community for investment in essential public services.

There will be no changes to the recreational lobster fishing rules as a result of these proposed new arrangements for the commercial fishery.