



3 October 2019

WRL disappointed with lack of consultation on trial charter arrangements

The Western Rock Lobster Council was once again surprised by the Minister for Fisheries, the Hon Dave Kelly MLA, when he released a media statement yesterday to announce a new three-year lobster trial for WA's fishing charter sector. The Western Rock Lobster Council is disappointed that it was not included in discussions regarding the trial, given the commercial lobster industry is the most invested in the community resource and have proven to be excellent custodians for more than 80 years.

In fact, the sacrifice of the commercial lobster fishers in 2010 by asking to halve their commercial catch when they requested the fishery transition to quota is what has produced the abundance of western rock lobsters that makes the current commercial and recreational fisheries so productive, valuable and successful. This together with Government decisions in previous decades to remove resource access without compensation is why the commercial lobster industry have a sense of entitlement in the opportunities of the resource and why the industry reaction was so strong to Minister Kelly's intended policy to create a 17.3% State ownership of Australia's most valuable single species fishery at zero cost to Government.

This lobster charter allocation is the second policy by Minister Kelly that directly impacts on the commercial lobster industry's highest priority of resource access security. This security is fundamental to financial institutions lending money to our industry, an industry that employs over 2400 West Australians and contributes more than \$505 million to the State economy every year, with particular benefits to our regional communities.

In addition to the impact on resource access security and not being included in discussions regarding this new policy, the Western Rock Lobster Council is concerned that this three year trial for the commercial take of lobsters by the charter industry has no cap on the total take and is being administered under the 505 tonne recreational allocation which is widely believed to already be exceeded without including the unaccounted for black market. The Western Rock Lobster Council is unaware of details beyond the Minister's media release so we are not in a position to comment further at this stage on the proposed trial.

Minister Kelly ceased all communications with the western rock lobster industry in May 2019. The Western Rock Lobster Council has been seeking a reopening of the communication channels and for Government to work with industry on a strategic and coordinated plan for managing the rock lobster resource including local supply to boost tourism, hospitality and regional development.

Terry Lissiman

Chair, Western Rock Lobster

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