



Victorian Rock Lobster Committee (VRLC) Meeting #5 – 15 December 2022

Location: Zoom Meeting

Chairperson's Summary

This was the fifth meeting of the Victorian Rock Lobster Committee.

Key items discussed included:

- 12-month workplan
- SIA Submission to the House Standing Committee on Agriculture Inquiry into Food Security
- Eastern Zone TACC

12-month workplan

- There are a range of specific actions the new SIV CEO is required to complete in providing exec support to the VRLC.
- The VRLC Chair and SIV Chair will agree on draft KPI's to be discussed with incoming SIV CEO.

SIA Submission to the House Standing Committee on Agriculture Inquiry into Food Security in Australia

- The VRLC provided detailed feedback on the draft SIA submission.
- Unity amongst the commercial fishing industry is important in the narrative to State and Commonwealth decision-makers.
- Noted that:
 - 70% of the seafood consumed in Australia is imported, mainly from SE Asia and New Zealand.
 - total of seafood production in Australia is insufficient to feed the population.
- Sustainable wild-caught fisheries are essential to Australia's food and nutrition security.
- Closure of commercial fishing grounds, removal of historical fishing methods and the impacts of covid-19 are taking a heavy toll on the viability of the commercial fishing industry, and by extension, the supply of fresh, high-quality seafood to Australia's population.
- This inquiry provides an opportunity for the Federal Government to improve resource access through stronger fishing rights, and to support aquaculture growth.
- Support is required for the development of secure and resilient supply chains to guarantee domestic seafood supply through Australia's National Food Security Strategy.

Eastern Zone TACC

- The EZ a complicated fishery, with warming oceans, patches of the ocean floor that are barren and the Eastern Rock Lobster migrating further south.
- The RL Management Advisory Committee has been discussing a stock rebuild trajectory and time frame for the EZ which has concerned some industry members.
- The VFA advised that all rebuild options are based on available science to hit agreed targets.
- Concerns from some licence holders primarily about the financial viability of their businesses based on pressure from Covid-19, closure of some export markets and fees per kg of catch.
- There are some licence holders that support a faster rebuild of the stock. Generally speaking, these licence holders are the larger operators that can absorb the financial pressure in the short-term that would occur as a result of a lower TACC.

- A critical examination of services provided by the VFA to industry no longer occurs following the disbandment of the Fisheries Cost Recovery Standing Committee.
- Noted that shifting to a %GVP cost recovery model would likely result in some fisheries paying lower levies and others paying more than they currently do, akin to a royalty tax.
- VRLC to write to the RL RAG, advising that support for a reduction in the EZ TACC could only be given if there was a reduction in the levies applied to licence holders.

Next meeting: February 2023

Wayne Dredge
VRLC Chair