

**ASSESSMENT OF
WESTERN ROCK LOBSTER
STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OPTIONS
(4 volumes)**

**A SOCIAL ASSESSMENT OF
COASTAL COMMUNITIES HOSTING THE
WESTERN ROCK LOBSTER FISHING FLEET
Volume 3**

By Veronica Huddleston, Institute for Regional Development

A REPORT PREPARED FOR
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Development Corporation**

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COASTAL COMMUNITIES HOSTING THE
WESTERN ROCK LOBSTER FISHING FLEET**

December 2005

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Analysis of the socio-economic trends and patterns in 17 communities that host the Western Rock Lobster (WRL) fishing fleet show the inter-relatedness of the economic, social, environmental and cultural facets of communities and regions. Most of the communities experienced substantial population growth between 1991 and 2001. Although still dependent on fishing, the communities now have a broader outlook. The median age increased because of aging *in situ*, and the attraction of retirees from inland communities and larger centres. Some communities exhibit a large seasonal population change that affects business activities. Except for Yanchep, Jurien Bay, Geraldton and Fremantle, the communities exhibit low to moderately-diversified economies. The smaller fishing communities have unemployment rates almost double the national average and high levels of part-time employment.

Some communities are better able to handle change (i.e., they are more resilient) and others less so. More resilient communities are Two Rocks, Yanchep, Busselton, Ledge Point, Mandurah, Lancelin and Fremantle. Less resilient communities are Geraldton, Cervantes, Bunbury, Augusta, Green Head and Jurien Bay.

The decline in the proportion of rock lobster fishers in these communities is accompanied by a change in the mindset of younger fishers who are often becoming less concerned with community activities. But they spend most of their income in their community of residence and contribute to the financial well-being of their communities.

The fishers' perceptions of the problems and issues confronting them and the WRL fishery, and their views about these communities, are put forward in this paper in the fishers' own words. The fishers' perceptions on the impacts of fishery management at the economic, social, environmental and institutional levels are also recorded.

A key recommendation is the adoption of a workable arrangement for an intensive and open consultation process between those involved in the fishery and the rest of the community. Such a consultation process is necessary to ensure that the changes introduced in the WRL fishery will result not only in a sustainable fishery but also in viable and contented communities.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In October 2004, the Institute for Regional Development received a grant from the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation for a project entitled *A Scenario Analysis of the Social Impact of the Western Rock Lobster Industry Management Options on Fleet Hosting Communities*. This three-year project will address the social dimensions of management arrangements governing the Western Rock Lobster¹ (WRL) fishery. Support from both Western Australian fishers and industry representatives for this project underscores the increasing recognition of the need for a comprehensive social impact analysis of management practices in the WRL fishery. Such analysis will inform managers and industry on the likely social consequences of changes to the existing management rules and practices (particularly a change from input to output controls) to the communities hosting the WRL fleet (see Figure 1).

The research project has three key objectives:

1. To assist in the formulation of policies and strategies concerning the management arrangements in the WRL fishery;
2. To establish a database of social indicators that will contribute to the assessment of alternative management options; and
3. To participate in the formulation of a predictive sustainability model, integrating the social aspects into fisheries management, along with economic and environmental parameters.

This report is on work-in-progress and is based on the research and data collection undertaken in the first two phases of the project. These two phases focused on the audit of available secondary data and collection of primary data that were used in preparing the profiles of the 17 communities included in the study. A further analysis of the interview transcripts on the views of other stakeholders will be undertaken. A telephone survey focusing on measuring social capital and cohesion in the 17 communities has also been undertaken and is currently being analysed. Additional consultations focused on specific issues, and a more detailed analysis of the impacts of the alternative management arrangements will be undertaken in specific communities as the project advances to the next stage.

Report Outline

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Chapter 2 - Research Methodology and Data used in the Analysis

Chapter 3 - The Socio-Economic Environment of Rural Australia

Chapter 4 - An International Perspective on Fishery Management Arrangements

Chapter 5 - Profile of Communities hosting the Western Rock Lobster Fleet

Chapter 6 – Initial Research Findings and Trends

Chapter 7 - Conclusion

¹ Colloquially known as crayfish, the Western Rock Lobster fishery is an important component of commercial fishing and a significant contributor to the Western Australian economy. The total catch for the 2002/2003 season was valued at \$278 million, exported mostly to Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong/China, and the United States and Europe.

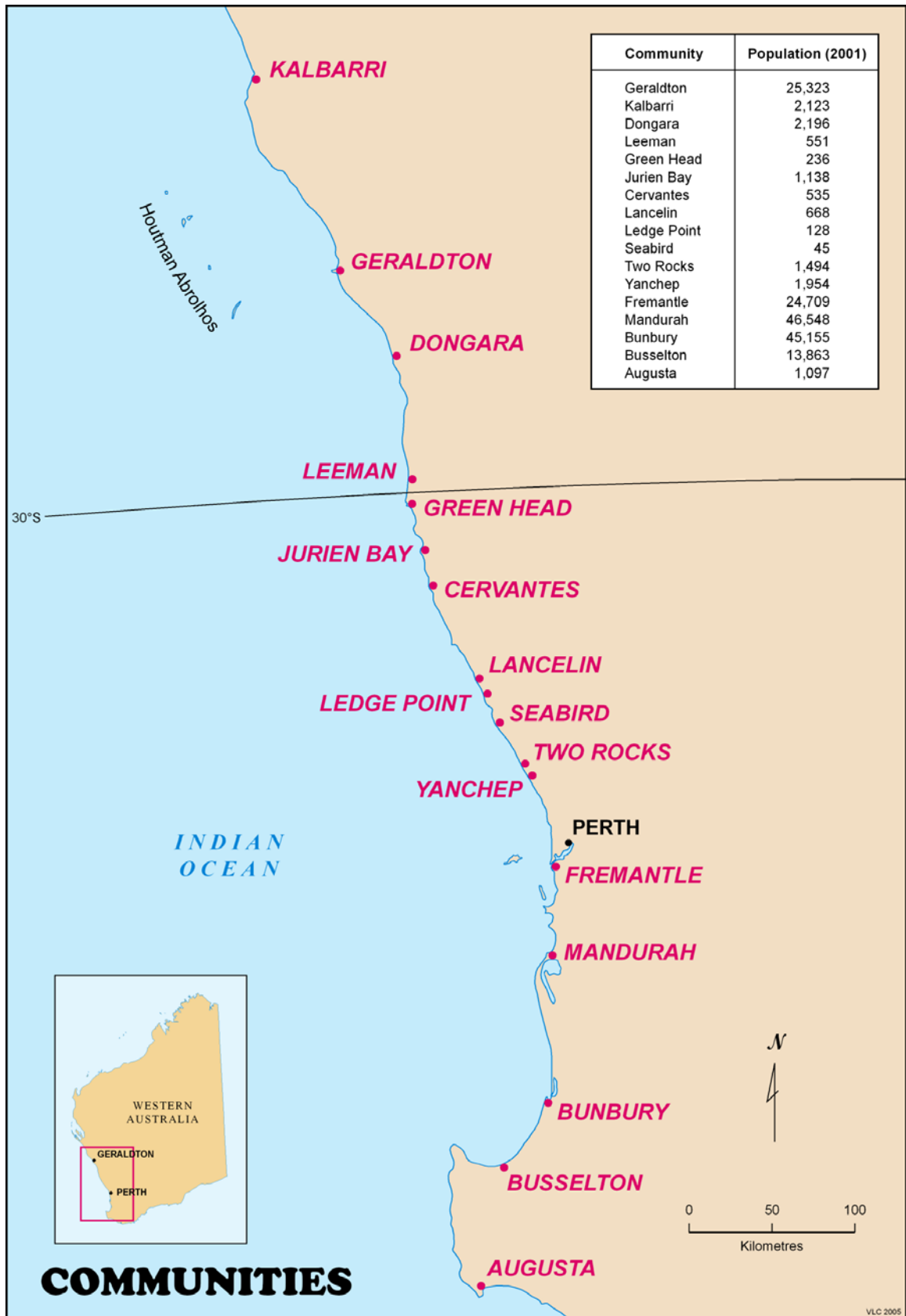


Figure 1: Locations of the 17 Communities

2.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The core process in sustainability consists of finding a strategic vision of the future which is the desired outcome for a majority of the community based on common good principles and setting out practical steps that integrate economic, social and environmental outcomes relevant to that vision and which can be taken through every element of development (Government of Western Australia, 2002, p. 55).

In undertaking the research, an extensive literature review of government, academic, institutional and internet sources was completed. The review included the analysis of relevant studies to develop the contextual and methodological frameworks that will link changes in fishery management arrangements with the socio-economic adjustments experienced by coastal communities. It also included a review of the literature relating to other fisheries in Australia and overseas that have experienced changes in management arrangements and practices in order to provide comparative context. Available documents containing community histories, issues and dynamics were also reviewed.

Primary data² in the form of the results of a postal survey of WRL license holders, undertaken by the author in the second quarter of 2004, were also analysed and included in the project database. These postal survey results were complemented by semi-structured interviews conducted in most of the 17 communities. The individual and group interviews (most of which were taped after permission was granted by the interviewees) were transcribed and are, at present, being analysed by the author.

Community profiles for each of the 17 communities included in this study were prepared. In compiling these profiles, existing or secondary sources of data collected by organisations such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics were used. Secondary sources include data from the 1991, 1996 and 2001 Censuses conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)³ on demographics, employment, labour force characteristics, and income.

Other secondary data used in the community profiles include data compiled by regional development commissions and local governments. Historical perspectives of how the towns were created and the current settlement patterns vis-à-vis growth of rock lobster fishing were also incorporated.

² Current project activities aimed at primary data collection include telephone survey focusing on measuring the social capital and the social cohesion in the 17 communities as well as additional consultations in the form of focus group discussions with business and community groups.

³ It must be noted that most of the census data produced by the ABS is based on place of enumeration which counts people where they are on census night. The data thus excludes those who normally live in the area but were away on census night. The ABS also produces data based on the place of usual residence. These are important to note since the WRL fishery is a seasonal one (November 15 to June 30) and rock lobster fishers may be away to work elsewhere or be on holidays at the time of the census data collection.

