

# Environmental changes and cultural impacts: Women's perspectives from a fishing community in Western Australia

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Gender AquaFish  
Yeosu 2013



# Acknowledgements

*Special thanks to the Rock Lobster Fishers and the Abrolhos Islands community who participated in this project*

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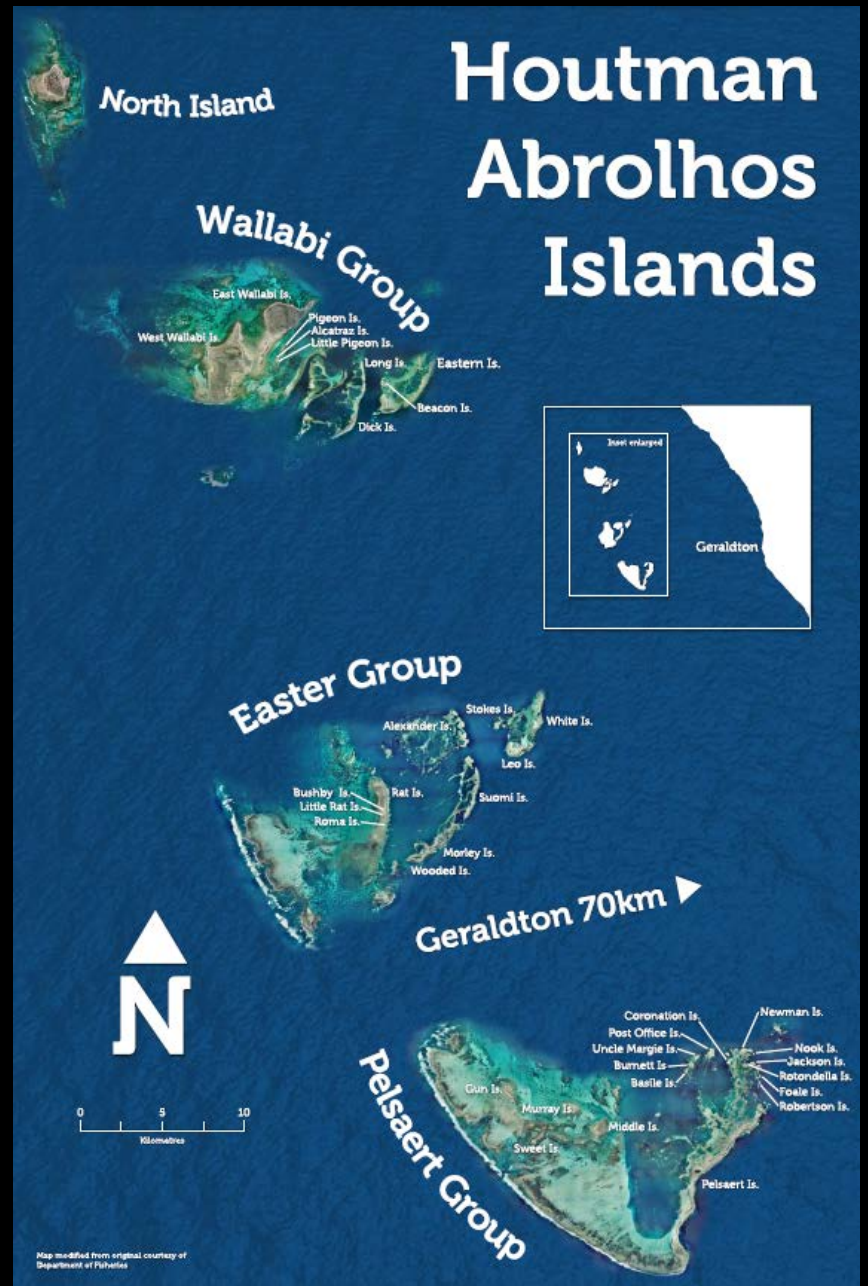


# Note from Author

- This presentation has been significantly modified from that presented at the GAF4 Yeosu Korea.
- Most of the images have been removed as the paper was part of a larger project using fishers photos.
- Only those images taken by the authors have been included in this version.
- The methodology for the larger project was presented at the 10AFAF Conference Yeosu Korea



WAM



# New era? (1990s)

- Female Premier (WA first)
- Increased representation of Women on Boards (National and State)
- New Fisheries Act (FRMA 1994)
  - i. addressed habitat & environmental issues
  - ii. embedded community consultation in legislation

# Perspective from Abrolhos fisher

## ‘Friends of the Abrolhos’

- Predominantly female membership (first 50+)
- Environmental campaigns (clean-ups, trails & walkways)
- Increased awareness of industry (talks: schools & visitors)
- Hosted researchers (esp collaborative research)
- Published information (visitor guides, signage)
- Representation & advisory role (AIMAC, DoF, PSSA, CoC, development & heritage)
- Community & social focus (nursing post, emergency evac, community events)
- Fundraising for community (schools, nursing & health, telecommunications, community events)
- Increased community stewardship and community cooperation
- Voice of the Abrolhos Islands





# CARING FOR THE ABROLHOS ISLANDS

The Abrolhos Islands and surrounding waters are home to combinations of animals, plants and marine life found nowhere else in the world.

The Abrolhos Islands have internationally significant heritage values. The islands are an 'A' Class Reserve and the State territorial waters are a declared Fish Habitat Protection Area. Reef Observation Areas within the island group help protect sensitive sites, vulnerable species and vital habitat.

This is a special place that needs your protection.

**Be careful:** Keep to the water's edge or marked trails to protect nesting seabirds and fragile vegetation.

**Be courteous:** Make sure you don't spoil someone else's enjoyment of the islands. Please respect the private property of fishing families.

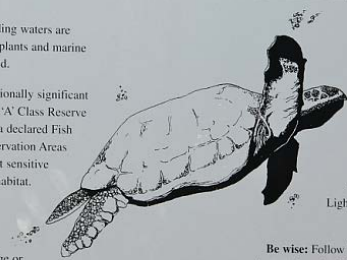

**Be clean:** Take your rubbish away with you when you leave.

**Be content:** Our history is unique and irreplaceable. Please leave historical sites and artefacts as you find them.

**Be responsible:** Open cooking fires are prohibited - use gas for cooking. There are no provisions for camping. No domestic pets are allowed on vessels or at the islands. Lighting fires, camping and firearms are banned on uninhabited islands.

**Be wise:** Follow Department of Fisheries regulations that apply to the islands and abide by guidelines shown on all signs. They are here to help you enjoy and protect the islands' natural and cultural values.

**Be aware, take care and enjoy the Abrolhos Islands**


# SEABIRDS ON THE ABROLHOS ISLANDS

The Abrolhos Islands support the largest seabird colonies in Western Australia. Every spring, more than three million birds return to the islands from their oceanic feeding grounds to breed.

Fourteen species of seabirds can be found here including terns, gulls, shearwaters and noddies. One of these, the Lesser noddy, is listed as a threatened species.

When disturbed, ground-nesting seabirds may abandon their nests - leaving unguarded eggs and chicks vulnerable to lizards and gulls.

Walk along the shoreline (preferably at low tide) rather than across an island and keep to marked trails to avoid destroying seabird nesting burrows.

**Help protect Abrolhos seabirds:**

- Please keep well clear of nesting birds.
- Pass nesting areas at low tide only and keep to the water's edge and marked trails.
- If you disturb nesting birds, backtrack to allow them to re-settle.
- No domestic pets are allowed on vessels or at the islands.




# Rock Lobster Industry Advisory Committee (RLIAC)

- Advice to Minister on all things Rock Lobster
- Male membership on RLIAC and sub-committees
- 2003: 2 female members appointed
- Equity for smaller operators (shift from pot reductions to overall effort reductions)
- Increased focus on community and social issues (Sundays off, early seasonal closures, crew safety)



# Community (prior 2006)

Strong community

Inter-island sporting events

Regular community events

Schools on each Island group (5)

Carrier boats for each group (4)

House proud

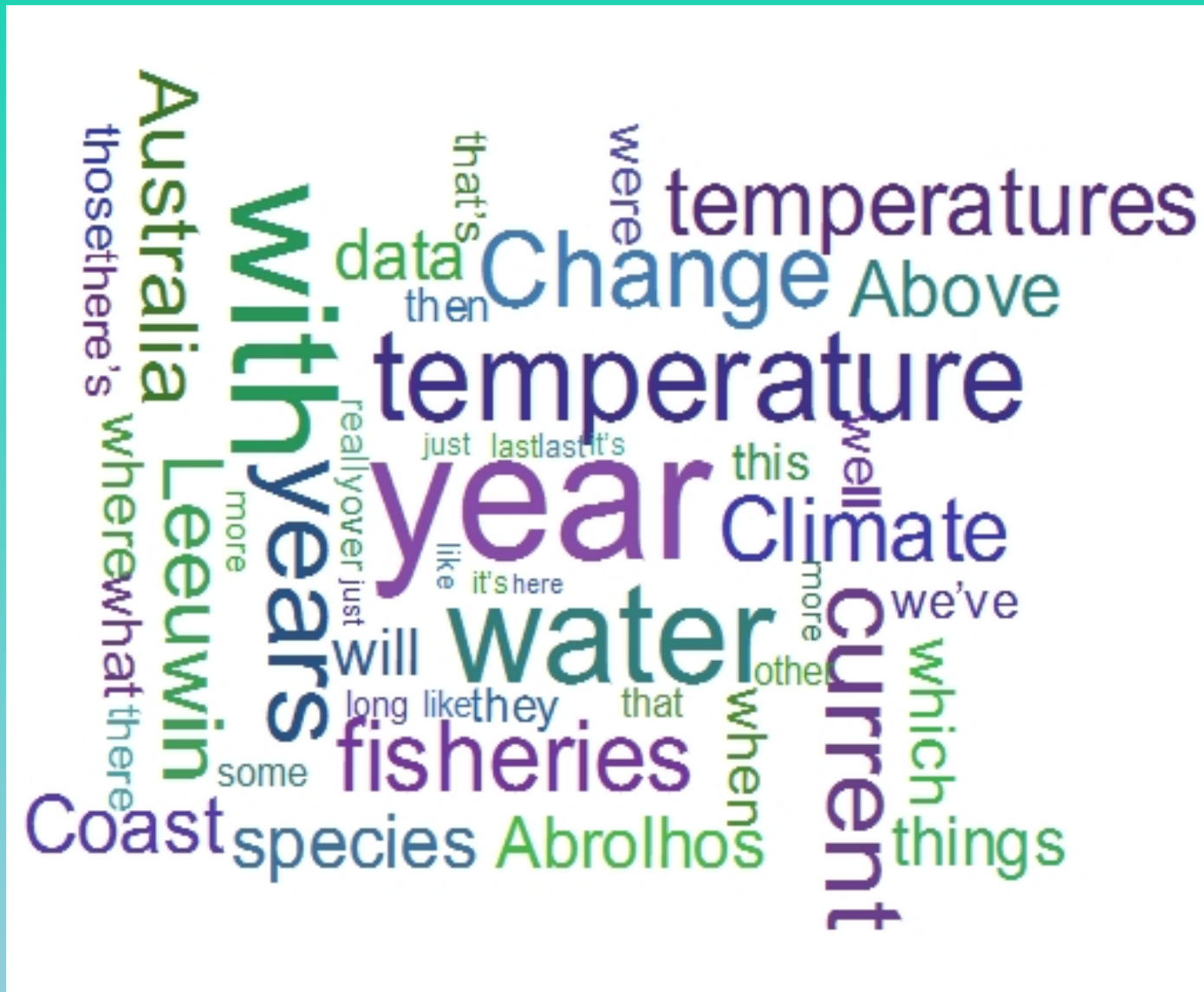
Art works

Community clean-up days

Families lived and worked together (inter-generational)



# Scientists



# Fishers



# Community (2012)

- No schools (from 5)
  - Only 2 carrier boats (from 4)
  - Community halls closed
  - Reduced air service
  - No sporting events
  - No community events
  - Families staying on the mainland
  - Camps and houses in decay
  - Suicides and mental health issues
- 
- Community collapse















# Affect on women

- Most women work on mainland (2+ jobs to maintain income)
- Families no longer raised on the Islands
- Loss of inter-generational connections
- Husbands away for long periods (fishing season over 12 months)
- Declining stewardship on Islands
- Reduced services (nursing, transport, supplies)
- Stress issues (men and women)
- Community breakdown



# Could the situation have been averted?

- Difficult to know (environment, stock protection)
- Submissions by fishers (AIMAC, Body Corporates) to Fisheries Dept and Fisheries Minister to maintain shorter season length. Input not heeded
- Limited community consultation and input in management decisions
- Appears to be limited consideration of social outcomes in management decisions

**To consider social impacts, representation from the fishing community, and particularly women, is required in all management and decision making processes**

# References

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Thank you