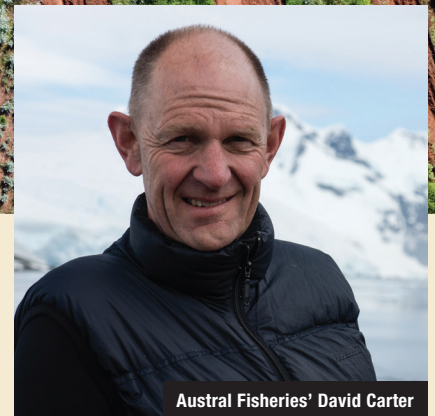


Going the **green** mile

Achieving net zero emissions can be a complex and resource-intensive exercise for a business of any size. **Beatrice Thomas** sat down with the leaders of four WA companies to discuss their carbon reduction journeys



Austral Fisheries' David Carter

Austral Fisheries

Annual revenue: \$120m | Employees: 40 | Est: 1977

It was a trip to Antarctica, a part of the world most impacted by climate change, in 2015 that set Austral Fisheries CEO David Carter on the path to creating a carbon-neutral business.

Already a leader in sustainability — Austral's major fishing operations and seafood brands had been independently certified by the Marine Stewardship Council — Carter recognised more could be done.

The Perth-based company was burning 9 million litres of diesel a year as its fleet of 15 vessels navigated three fisheries stretching from the sub-Antarctic to the northern tropics.

"It occurred to me that we had an obligation and an opportunity in taking the business carbon-neutral and really folding our commitment to the environment into the brands that we offer to our customers," Carter tells *WA Works*.

The next steps were by no means plain sailing — the company needed to calculate its Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions; determine how to offset them; and get the Austral Board to approve the cost.

But 402 days after Carter's "once-in-a-lifetime" trip to Antarctica, Austral became

the first seafood business in the world to be certified as carbon neutral under the Australian Government Carbon Neutral Program.

To abate the 40,000 tonnes of CO2 that it emits each year, Austral plants about 220,000 mixed native trees annually in the Yarra Yarra Biodiversity Corridor in Perenjori, about 400 kilometres northeast of Perth. It has planted more than 1 million trees to date in partnership with Carbon Neutral Pty Ltd.

Carter says accounting for Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions includes all emissions created by the business during its operations — from logistics and travel (including staff travel) to the emissions created by its suppliers and partners as Austral's products travel from ocean to plate.

To further its objectives, Austral invested \$50 million co-developing a diesel-electric hybrid fishing vessel with Norwegian shipbuilder Baatbygg that uses around half the diesel load of a similar-sized boat.

It has also partnered with blockchain-powered platform OpenSC to trace and track the entire supply chain journey of its products, and invested

heavily in new fishing gear to reduce its by-catch.

"The next step for us has to be to find ways to use either less or no diesel," Carter says.

"The business of offsetting can only be transitional, and the focus must be on the opportunities that zero carbon shipping solutions deliver."

A fishing industry veteran of more than 40 years, he says Austral's carbon-neutral status, which is accredited under the Federal Government's Climate Active program, has "opened doors" and "delivered shareholder benefit", but he remains frustrated that it stands alone among wild-capture fishing companies.

"We're not being well served by political, federal leadership ... and we're now seeing everyday examples of a frustrated industry stepping up and getting on with it," he says.

"Without a narrative around climate, and without being framed as part of the solution, then you're part of the problem and you will be denied access to capital and talent. And without that you're dead in the water." ●