

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Adrian Pederick MP JP**

Member for Hammond

**Shadow Minister for**

**River Murray – Sustainability and Climate Change**

**Agriculture, Food and Fisheries – Forests**

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### **Cautious optimism at oyster fee rethink**

News that Fisheries Minister Rory McEwen has admitted his error in calculating oyster lease and licence fees has been greeted with cautious optimism.

‘The Minister was quite insistent that the oyster industry bill of \$750,000 compared to last year’s bill of \$178,000 was fair and reflected true costs,’ said Shadow Fisheries Minister Adrian Pederick.

‘The industry never accepted these figures were fair or accurate.

‘In fact, bearing in mind that the new fees were gazetted last November, the first time the oyster industry received the full breakdown of aquaculture industry costs was about a week ago. Yet the Minister insisted all along that the consultation process was open and accountable.

Mr Pederick said the fee backdown highlighted that Minister McEwen is out of touch with his department.

‘It seems the primary objective of the minister and his department in introducing a cost recovery system was simplicity – not fairness, not reason, not equity.

‘The very nature of the oyster industry precipitates a large number of small sites and that does increase administrative costs.

‘But to expect the oyster industry to bear three quarters of the entire aquaculture industry’s research and development and bio-security costs for example is ludicrous.

‘The state Liberal party will maintain a close watch on the progress of this matter. Economies can be made in the way leases and sites are managed and other aquaculture industry cost components can be more fairly proportioned.

‘We await with interest the outcome of the Legislative Review Committee’s enquiry.’