

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Adrian Pederick MP JP**

Member for Hammond

**Shadow Minister for**

**River Murray – Sustainability and Climate Change**

**Agriculture, Food and Fisheries – Forests**

Wednesday February 4th, 2009

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### **Opposition calls government to account on oyster licence fees**

The state opposition has foreshadowed a disallowance motion on aquaculture regulations that have raised oyster licence fees by an average of 450 percent.

Following a meeting today between representatives of the industry and opposition MPs, Shadow Fisheries Minister Adrian Pederick, Liz Penfold, and Graham Gunn and MLCs Caroline Schaefer and Robert Lawson, Mr Pederick said the oyster growers were asking for fairness and equity.

‘They are happy to pay their fair share under the cost recovery system introduced. The problem is there is no evidence that the share apportioned to them is fair,’ he said.

‘Some of the increases are staggering – fifteen to twenty times what they previously paid. Some growers with several licences for small sites covering a small total area are paying substantially more than others with one large lease of greater area. Some of them were forced into this position by complying with earlier departmental policy.

‘As a further example of the system’s complete inequity, one small group of five oyster growers has been billed more between them, (\$104,723), which is more than any other sector of the industry. Another single operator has been billed some \$74,000,’ Mr Pederick said.

‘As we understand it, there have been no industry specific costings done, just general estimates based around what appears to be a deeply flawed model. Oyster growers’ numerous requests to the Minister and the department have been ignored.

‘The Rann government demands accountability from everyone else, but they themselves have none. As usual, it looks like they’re hiding something, probably their own incompetence. If the figures prove their point, let’s see them. If they don’t, let’s get back to something more equitable.’

Mr Pederick said in light of the government’s unwillingness to be open about the administration costings for the oyster industry relative to other aquaculture sectors, the opposition has called for the Legislative Review Committee to look into the matter.

‘Business, established markets, jobs and regional economies are on the line here. Given the current economic climate, the government’s attitude to a young, developing industry is unfathomable.’