

OYSTER INDUSTRY FEES – 19 February 2009

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (15:09): Will the government refund to oyster lease and licence holders any fees already paid that are in excess of amounts required? As a result of regulations gazetted last November, oyster lease and licence holders were collectively billed approximately \$750,000. Growers were sent bills in December with a request for prompt payment.

On 17 February 2009, the minister admitted that he was wrong about the amount of fees previously paid by the oyster growing industry and promised that their combined bill would be—I quote the minister's words on ABC Radio that day—'to double from their base of around \$176,000'. It is understood that some growers have already paid their bill under protest, denying them funds vital to the continuation or development of their enterprises.

The Hon. R.J. McEWEN (Mount Gambier—Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Minister for Forests, Minister for Regional Development) (15:10): I thank the member for Hammond for his question and also for the role he plays as the shadow. I think he has followed on from the member for MacKillop in terms of dealing with many of these issues to solve the problem rather than play politics. So, I compliment him on the way he has done the job.

However, early on, of course, the member for Hammond learnt a very good lesson, that is, if you do not dance to the tune of Martin Hamilton-Who and the Headlocks—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. R.J. McEWEN: We'll get to that. But the member for Hammond learnt that you will get rolled like a raw rissole if you do not dance to the tune of your party.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. R.J. McEWEN: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Rolled like a raw rissole—and there is a culinary one now as well. In fairness to the member for Hammond, on most occasions, he does the right thing: he works in a professional way to resolve issues. It is only when his own party interferes, because they have another agenda. Remember the tune. Remember Martin Hamilton-Who and the Headlocks; remember his tune.

Mr PEDERICK: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Agriculture needs to answer the substance of the question.

The Hon. R.J. McEWEN: Thank you. The fact of the matter—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. R.J. McEWEN: The only thing that is disingenuous about the member's question is that I did not have the opportunity to personally ring him and apologise when I had made a mistake, so I sent him a text. I told him that I had made a mistake. He has it in his text; he might like to read it to the house.

Mr Pederick interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, the member for Hammond!

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I have called the house to order.

The Hon. R.J. McEWEN: The fact of the matter is quite simple—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. R.J. McEWEN: In relation to the starting point for cost recovery from the oyster industry, I made a mistake and, as a consequence—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. R.J. McEWEN: I have said that on the radio. I have apologised personally to the member, I have apologised to the president of the oyster association and, of course, if I have made a mistake and incorrectly billed them, I will re-invoice them for the appropriate amount. You hardly say—

Mr Pisoni interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. R.J. McEWEN: The member for Unley, whose own business record is not a proud one—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. R.J. McEWEN: —has the audacity to lecture me on credits and debits. Obviously, if the new invoice is less than they have paid, they will get themselves a credit. I think the member for Unley should go to the same class that the Deputy Premier is setting up called Finances 101, because he will understand that, if you make a mistake, you say sorry and you address the issue, and that is the way I do business.