

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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SA Oyster Farmers are Looking to Revolt!!!!

Adelaide, South Australia, December 19, 2008:

New annual fees for licences and leases in the oyster industry for 2008/09 announced by The Minister of Agriculture – Rory McEwen on November 20, 2008 have seen fees increase by an average of 450 % over 2007/08 fees.

Increasing costs within Government are nothing new, but (by way of illustration), these new fees and a new charging regime, will see :

5 Coffin Bay Oyster Farmers pay as much as the entire Tuna Sector for the regulation of their leases and licenses.

“Industry has had enough”, President of SAOGA Bruce Zippel said. “The Government claims that it costs the same to regulate a tiny oyster farm as compared to a large tuna farm, but won’t let us see the figures to prove it”.

“Some smaller oyster growers who have no choice but to operate a number smaller oyster sites to be viable will see their fees increase from less than a thousand dollars to twenty five to thirty thousand dollars”, he said. “What a Christmas Present!”

“Oyster Growers are just starting to get the bills and are very angry at the Govt’s denial of natural justice and riding roughshod over them. SAOGA Executive have been working through the process put in place by Government since March 2008 but are constantly being denied access to the actual costs of regulation and licensing,” he added.

“We are committed to working with Government on cost recovery for licensing and regulation of our sector – but no one is listening. No one can prove to us that it costs

\$750,000 to effectively shuffle paper for 90 growers and 316 leases covering a total of 1,064 hectares (most of which you can walk too at low tide)” he said.

How can this happen? – if this is a genuine process of negotiation, how can the rates be set without agreement with a major player in the aquaculture sector. Govt has a policy if no agreement can be reached – but it would appear they have changed the rules.

As a monopoly supplier – industry cannot go elsewhere for regulation and licensing. Government has an obligation to deal with these situations openly and transparently, rather than force things through – to “balance the books”

They have gone ahead and regulated new fees without agreement from the oyster industry and these fees if allowed to stand, will de-stabilise the industry and cause job losses in rural and regional areas.

A Supreme court injunction is being considered to declare these fees as invalid and bring the Government back to the negotiating table.

“Farmers are angry” Mr. Zippel said. “SAOGA does not sanction or condone acts of civil-disobedience and cannot be held responsible for the actions of individual farmers who are trying to save their livelihoods for themselves and their families,” he said.

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SAOGA is the industry association for oyster farming in South Australia and represents the interests of 90 growers in South Australia, representing 85% of the growers in SA.

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