

PEARLING LEASE FEES

230. Hon KEN BASTON to the minister representing the Minister for Fisheries:

I refer to the large increases in annual fees for pearl farm leases announced by the Labor government in December 2018.

- (1) Will the minister outline the reason for the increase in fees together with the method used to determine the new fees?
- (2) Does the minister concede that under the new fees, the government is recovering more revenue than costs; and, if so, what is the government using the new revenue for?
- (3) Is the minister intending to reconsider the large fee increases that he plans to impose on one of WA's oldest and most iconic industries?
- (4) Did the minister consult with the industry prior to increasing the fees; and, if so, with whom did he consult, on what dates and how did the consultation take place?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

I thank the member for the question. The following information has been provided by the Minister for Fisheries.

- (1) Prior to 2019, the fees paid by the pearling industry did not cover the government's cost of managing the fishery, effectively delivering a taxpayer subsidy. A review undertaken by the previous government recommended a significant increase in pearling lease fees. The 2019 lease is less than the figure recommended by this review.
- (2) No. The expected revenue that will be raised from pearling access and lease fees in 2019 is in line with the government's expected cost for managing the fishery. It is longstanding government policy, including during the period of the Barnett government, that fisheries should return a dividend to the community for accessing a community resource.
- (3) No.
- (4) Pearl farm lease fees have been the subject of significant previous review. The Pearl Producers Association was also consulted on the 2019 fee in November and December 2018.