

Anglers fuming over new boat fishing licence 9/7/09

By BEN JONES

FROM October this year, recreational fishermen will be slugged another \$30 in licence fees with a new licence being introduced for recreational boat fishing.

Each person fishing from a boat will have to pay for the additional licence, announced by Fisheries Minister Norman Moore last week.

Nathan Harrison, principal management officer at the Department of Fisheries, said the new licence would be used by the Department to create a database of recreational fishers in the State.

"The problem we face is that we don't know enough about our fisheries but this licence will help us find out who is fishing, where they're fishing and what they're catching," he said.

The new licences, in conjunction with increases in the cost of existing licences, are expected to raise about \$4 million a year.

No one who fishes from boats will be exempt from the licences, which will also apply to interstate and overseas visitors who intend to fish.

Mr Moore maintains the funds raised will go towards additional policing by fisheries officers and fisheries research projects.

Local fisherman Joel Boxall was not impressed by the new



A sign of things to come? Broome Fishing Club President Steve McLaughlin with a nearly empty car park at the Broome boat ramp.

measure and doubtful the extra revenue would do much to help WA's fisheries or fishermen.

"I just want to go out and have some fun with some mates and fish from a tinny with a few beers and now we're being slugged with this new fee?

"It's bloody ridiculous," he said.

Broome Fishing Club president

Steve McLaughlin estimated there were 1200-1500 recreational boats in the Broome area, with three or four people fishing from each boat.

Even the most conservative approximation of the revenue raised equated to well over \$100,000 from local anglers, Mr McLaughlin said.

He said the new licences could

lead to a dramatic drop in the number of people fishing from boats.

"I'm not anti-licences - I think it's a good idea if the money goes back into the fishery," he said.

However, given the lack of funding for appropriate boating facilities in Broome despite licence fee increases in that area, he was not optimistic that the

new revenue would be spent on fisheries in Broome.

"All of our boat registrations went up and now these new recreational licences are coming," he said.

"They've been studying for 18 years - I'm wondering when they're going to get out of school and get to work on it."

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