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Mr Graeme Williams President
Northern Territory Guided Fishing Industry Association PO Box 1313
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Dear Mr Williams

Thank you for your letter to my predecessor, the Hon Kon Vatskalis MLA, outlining the formulation of an industry representative body and your Association's advice on the introduction of fishing tour operator (FTO) licence fees.

Firstly, let me congratulate you and the Committee on the formation and incorporation of the Northern Territory Guided Fishing Industry Association (NTGFIA). It is clear that you, Mr Browne and your committee have been busy in attracting members and canvassing FTO's on ways to enhance the industry and ongoing funding for your Executive Officer.

I have considered your Association's submission proposing a low fee level to encourage FTO's to become active members and the suggestion that government could fund any shortfall so that an Executive Officer can be employed. Given the need to provide an adequate level of funding for the Association to employ an Executive Officer, I propose to shortly announce that a FTO licence fee will commence on 1 July 2007 and will be initially set at \$400. I support the Association's position that licence fees should be set a low level and gradually increased to minimise any impact on licensees. It is for this reason that I intend to seek a gradual increase in licence fees, at a rate of \$100 pa, until a FTO fee level of \$800 is achieved. Licence fees will be payable by all people, companies or partnerships who hold licences that provides the services of a person to conduct a fishing tour. I understand that this decision does not address the immediate issue of meeting your Executive Officer's wage costs. In seeking to ensure the continuation of the current arrangements for the FTO industry, I am prepared to provide another grant of \$40 000 for 2006/07. The Department of Primary Industry; Fisheries and Mines will be in contact with you shortly to make the necessary arrangements for the funds to be released to the Association. It is my intention to make a similar level of funding available in 2007/08 from FTO licence fee revenue.

I note your proposals for revision of sections of the Fisheries Act, an FTO management plan and electronic lodgement of catch returns. I support these initiatives in principle and expect that they will require some discussion and negotiation with my department's personnel, particularly in undertaking a review of the Fisheries Act. Electronic returns are eventually proposed for all fisheries and the significant cost of that transition must also be identified and considered. Another matter to consider regarding electronic returns is the number of FTOs who have the ready means of submitting them. Perhaps you could consult your members on this matter as a first step in seeking to simplify the lodgement of data.

I understand that a proposal to limit the number of FTO licences was considered in 1996 and 2003. On both occasions the Department of Justice advised against restricting the issue of FTO licences due to legal constraints. In light of this advice, I am unable at this time to commit to your proposal for FTO licence restrictions. However, I would suggest the subject can remain open to discussions in the future.

Yours sincerely



CHRIS NATT 19 SEP 2006

Northern Territory Government, O..~ Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines

MEDIA RELEASE
11 September 2006

New fee for *(fishing charters)*

fishing tour operators

A \$400 annual licence fee for fishing tour operators is to be introduced next year to assist the development and management of this important industry.

Fisheries Minister Chris Natt said the fee followed extensive consultation with fishing tour operators and would help fund the continuing appointment of an executive officer to represent and promote the industry.

"Recreational fishing is vital to the Territory - \$34.7 million in 2000 - of which a quarter was outlaid by interstate and overseas visitors, many of whom charter boats for their fishing experience," Mr Natt said.

"Our fishing tour operators are not only an important contributor to the NT economy and tourism, but they are often the eyes and ears of what's going on out there - and can play an important role in fisheries management.

"The new licence fee will go towards the continued funding of the executive officer position within the Northern Territory Guided Fishing Industry Association (NTGFIA)."

Mr Natt said the fee would be introduced on 1 July 2007, increasing by \$100 each year to a ceiling of \$800 a year. There are currently 105 individuals holding 138 fishing tour operator licences.

"The NTGFIA was incorporated as a representative body last year with NT Government assistance and funding, including the employment of an executive officer, Mr Lloyd Browne," Mr Natt said. "This fee will enable the guided fishing tourism industry to be self-reliant'.

"Consultation is essential to fisheries management and the guided fishing industry is an important part of this process. We look forward to continuing to work with them on all aspects of guided fishing tourism and welcome their input on fisheries management issues."

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For further information about this press release please contact Peter Hurt, Media Manager Marketing and Communications. Phone (08) 8999 2059 or 0401 119461