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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **MINISTER OF PLENTY SCREWS THE LOWER LAKES AND COORONG YET AGAIN**

Fisheries Minister Rory McEwen is jeopardising the livelihoods of dozens of Lower Lakes and Coorong families with the unjust allocation of cockles under his proposed quota management scheme, Independent MLC Ann Bressington said today.

“We all recognise the need to ensure the sustainability of the resource by implementing a quota system,” Ms Bressington said.

“Indeed, the industry workshop on the 20-21 December 2006 agreed that the industry was at risk of overfishing and needed a management scheme, but the quota allocation had to be fair and equitable.

“However, under the scheme, the Minister has created yet another situation of immense personal wealth of the few while the battlers of the industry go to the wall. Under the scheme proposed by the Minister, the big guys stand to make millions of dollars while 70% of the industry is hung out to dry. That is not fair and equitable for a whole of industry decision.”

“In order to streamline the administration of the fishery and make the job easier for the Department of Fishery, the Minister is prepared to cripple an industry by forcing the battlers out.

Ms Bressington said delaying the season opening from 1 November to 1 December was a calculated and heartless move by the Minister to further squeeze the battlers who are already on the verge of bankruptcy.

“Coorong and Lower Lakes families are already struggling due to the drought and now the Minister wants to kick them when they are down.”

Gary Hera Singh, spokesperson of the Southern Fishermen’s Association, said that the Minister has ignored that many harvesters face hitting the wall.

“The foundation of democracy is all people are equal, but obviously some fishers are more equal than others. Money talks,” said Mr Hera Singh.

“Does the Minister intend to open the recreational fishing season while the restrictions are in place on the industry fishers? There is a very real possibility that a black-market for bait cockles will be created by the Minister’s inaction and lack of foresight.

**For further information please contact Ann Bressington on 0448 887 277 or 8237 9596 or Gary Hera Singh on 0428 596 460.**