The Chief Minister must explain how he intends to indemnify anglers caught fishing without a permit on the Tiwi Islands.

Shadow Fisheries Minister, Willem Westra van Holthe, said Paul Henderson should outline exactly how his Government will protect the interests of anglers fishing the waters off the Tiwi Islands following his Government’s broken election promise to secure a deal that would mean permits aren’t required to fish in inter-tidal waters.

“Since the High Court’s 2008 support of the Blue Mud Bay decision, the Henderson Government has been promising anglers they will not require permits,” Mr Westra van Holthe said.

“But after 18 months of fruitless and frustrating negotiations with the land Councils, the Tiwi Land Council has decided anglers are required to obtain permits when fishing inter-tidal waters.

“Currently, the Land Council requires anglers to obtain a $55 camping permit from AFANT before they fish in Tiwi waters.

“But I understand this doesn’t cover anglers looking to fish the inter-tidal zone. If caught, they face a $1000 fine under the Aboriginal Land Act.

“In a radio interview with ABC’s Julia Christensen this morning, the Chief Minister blamed the Tiwi Land Council for the lack of certainty that has resulted from his failure to negotiate an agreement with land councils.

“He also indicated it could be the end of the year before a settlement is reached.

“While he says, repeatedly, that his door is open to the Tiwi Land Council, maybe he should do as I have already urged him to do and jump on a plane and negotiate directly with Traditional Owners.

“In the meantime, the Chief Minister should take action to indemnify anglers if they are caught fishing without a permit. As it stands, the situation is intolerable.

“Otherwise he could support the Amendment I introduced that is currently before Parliament that would allow land councils to issue exemptions from the need for a permit.

Further comment: Willem Westra van Holthe 0414 778 430