



BIG RISE: Jimmy McGovern on a lifter unloading a 9m boat from the racks at Fremantle Boat Park. Picture: THEO FAKOS.

Boat-pen price blow-out

By **LLOYD MARSHALL**

RECREATIONAL boat owners are all at sea over a Government proposal to increase pen fees by as much as 44 per cent at a public marina.

And the explosion in boat ownership — in the wake of the state's economic boom — is resulting in unprecedented demand for spaces to berth or store craft.

Boating WA president Simon Joel said: "Officials from the Department of Planning and Infrastructure mooted the idea of increasing fees at Hillarys Boat Harbour by as much as 44 per cent this year.

"And because Hillarys is the benchmark for other marinas,

that increase seems certain to flow on. Since this Government has been in power it has done absolutely nothing to provide more pens and ramps for recreational boat owners."

Bruce Barnett, who is on the committee of the Hillarys Penholders Association, said he paid \$6000 a year for his pen and that his proposed new fee would be about \$8500.

"I have a 13m boat in an 18m pen and I am charged based on the official length of the boat, but under the new system I will be charged for the number of square metres of water under my boat," he said.

"At last week's meeting one of the DPI officials said the plan was to leave small boat owners alone

and make owners of larger boats pay a lot more, which has to be a clear case of discrimination."

Mr Barnett said it was proposed that boats up to 10m long would be charged three or four per cent more, while his increase would be about 42 per cent.

Open pens on the Swan River are rare. Boat dealers are complaining they are unable to sell large boats because prospective owners can't find berths.

Cale Parsons, who runs the Fremantle Boat Park storage operation in Mews Rd, Fremantle, plans to build a stack containing 30 cradles, which would take his total to 280.

"We have a waiting list of 50, but I don't think we'll be building more than 280 because we are out of room," he said.