

SHARKS — HAZARD MITIGATION INITIATIVES

166. Mrs L.M. O'MALLEY to the Minister for Fisheries:

What is this government doing to protect surfers, swimmers and divers in Esperance by reducing the risk of shark attacks?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

Thank you very much, member for Bicton, for the question. In May this year we announced a range of initiatives around shark mitigation. One of those initiatives was our commitment to extend the shark monitoring network to Esperance, something I would have thought members opposite would be interested in hearing about. Today we announced the location of those two additional satellite receivers. The Department of Fisheries engaged in quite extensive community consultation with the people of Esperance, and that was well received. We met with Surf Life Saving Western Australia in Esperance and Fisheries met with the Esperance shire. We also engaged with the community directly through an online survey. More than 130 members of the community responded to that survey on where they thought those satellite receivers should best be located. As a result of that survey, we announced today that Kelp Beds beach and West Beach would be the two locations for the new receivers. Eighty-four per cent of persons who responded nominated Kelp Beds as either their first or second location choice, and more than 50 per cent of people nominated West Beach. Weather permitting, Fisheries will install those satellite receivers by the end of the month.

We think the extension of the shark monitoring network to the Esperance area is a sensible additional layer of protection to give the people in Esperance. For some reason, the previous government did not see fit to extend the shark monitoring network to the people of Esperance. The nearest satellite receivers installed under the previous government were located in Albany. I am not sure why the previous government did not see fit to extend the benefits of this new technology to the people of Esperance, but in light of the incidents that have occurred in recent years in Esperance, we have seen fit to do that and it has been well received. We made that announcement today, and that announcement comes off the back of what we have previously put in place—namely, the shark subsidies. I can now inform the house that over 400 Western Australians have taken up the option of purchasing a subsidised, individual shark deterrent.

I say to members opposite that in opposition we gave them plenty of latitude to take a number of measures and we did not take issue with them. We ask them to show some bipartisanship on the subsidy and the extension of the shark monitoring network. It is a serious issue. Since we have made these announcements, members opposite have done nothing but snipe. I invite them to get behind the extension of the shark monitoring network and the shark subsidy and show some bipartisanship on it. I know that we have a difference of policy on whether we should have a shark cull or introduce nets. I know now that members opposite have taken the lead from the federal Minister for the Environment and Energy, and it is now Liberal Party policy to pursue a cull and installation of nets. Members opposite are perfectly entitled to take that point of view. There is no doubt Western Australians see the extension of the shark monitoring network as a good thing. From the take-up of the shark subsidies, there is no doubt that there is substantial support within the community for subsidising individual shark deterrents, which were shown by their own research to be effective in over 90 per cent of cases. To give certainty to the community, I ask members opposite to show some bipartisanship on that issue and get behind those initiatives so that we can be seen to be doing together what is good for the community by adding additional layers of protection for people in a difficult area of public policy.