

GREAT WHITE SHARKS — CSIRO ANALYSIS

50. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Fisheries:

I refer to the front page of *The West Australian* of 9 February —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Ms L. METTAM: — and the appropriate headline “Great white dope”. Does the minister stand by his comment in *The West* the following day that WA beachgoers are no more at risk of shark attack than people on the east coast?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

It is good to see that the member for Vasse is again leading the charge on sharks instead of the shadow minister, whom I note is not here today.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr D.J. KELLY: There is a bit of misinformation peddled by members opposite that on the east coast of Australia this problem has been solved, and that this problem is an issue only on the west coast, and apparently only since March 2017. Remember that they were in government for eight years and did not solve this problem. Can I say, if I am allowed to answer the question —

Several members interjected.

Mr D.J. KELLY: — that in the last five years there have been five fatal shark attacks in Western Australia. In the last five years there have been five fatal shark attacks on the east coast. In the last five years there has been the same number of fatal shark attacks on the east coast as there has been on the west coast. In 2015, there were 14 shark attacks in New South Wales alone. Do members remember that Ballina was the shark attack capital of Australia? Members opposite try to peddle this misinformation that this problem has been solved on the east coast. It has not been solved. It was because of that very significant spate of shark attacks in New South Wales that the New South Wales government committed another \$8 million to new measures over the last two years. It did not do that because it had solved the issue over the last 50 years; it did that because it was still an issue over there. There is no basis for this. The CSIRO report the member referred to was an assessment of shark numbers. It made no recommendations about particular measures that needed to be taken; it was simply a population analysis.

Mr D.C. Nalder: What are you doing about it?

Mr D.J. KELLY: The member for Applecross has just said, “What are you doing about it?” If he had been here yesterday, I went through in great detail the new measures we have taken since we took office in 2017. If the member for Applecross wants me to go through them again, I will.

Several members interjected.

Mr D.J. KELLY: Sorry, he is the member for Bateman, or is it Bicton? I get confused.

I could go through those measures again, but I simply refer the member for Bateman to yesterday’s *Hansard*. We take this issue very seriously. We want to do things that are based on science. The personal shark deterrent subsidy that we introduced was based on research done by the University of Western Australia. A couple of days ago the member for Vasse accused me of ignoring the science. The member for Vasse went on radio and said that individual shark deterrents were like waving a toothpick at a great white shark. That is completely contrary to the science that was done by the University of Western Australia and funded by the previous government. I say to the member for Vasse that we will deal with this issue on the basis of what will actually make our beaches safer and what will give an additional level of protection to people who are most at risk, which is surfers and divers. We will not be harassed by someone like her, who is really only interested in trying to deal with this issue on the basis of trying to get some political advantage.