

SHARKS — MITIGATION POLICY

**52. Mr M.J. FOLKARD to the Minister for Fisheries:**

I refer to the government's shark mitigation strategy. How will these measures provide greater protection to beach users and particularly those at Burns Beach this summer?

**Mr D.J. KELLY replied:**

I would like to thank the member for his question and congratulate him on his election to the seat. His contribution in his inaugural speech was tremendous and I congratulate him on it.

On Saturday the government announced a comprehensive response to shark mitigation. It is the sad fact that 13 of the last 15 victims of fatal shark attacks here in Western Australia since the year 2000 have been either surfers or divers, so clearly they are the people who are most at risk. One of the new initiatives we announced on Saturday was —

**Mr A. Krsticevic:** It is, "Look after yourself."

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** This is a very serious issue. It is about life and death, so I encourage members opposite —

**Mr A. Krsticevic** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Carine, I call you to order for the first time.

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** I encourage members opposite to show some respect for the families of the victims by treating this debate with respect. On Saturday, in order to protect the people most at risk—that is, surfers and divers—we announced that we would implement an election commitment to introduce a subsidy scheme for individual shark deterrents. These deterrents have come a long way since they first came onto the market. In fact, the previous government invested in some research done by the University of Western Australia to see which of those deterrents on the market worked. The University of Western Australia research was released halfway through last year and it identified that at least one of those individual shark deterrents protected the user from interaction with great white sharks on nine out of 10 occasions—not on every occasion, but on nine out of 10 occasions.

**Mrs L.M. Harvey:** You would not want to be in the 10 per cent, member.

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** As a member of a victim's family said to me the other day, being protected nine out of 10 times is better than being protected zero out of 10 times. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition should just show some respect and not try to make this a debate to score cheap political points.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** The previous government's research identified that some of these shark deterrents for surfers and divers worked. On Saturday, we fulfilled an election commitment that we would offer a trial subsidy to get more of those individual shark deterrents in the marketplace and to send a message to people that the deterrents that are approved actually do what they are supposed to do. That is the first component. Of course, we are not ignoring everything that has been done in this space. We continue to support some of the initiatives that had previously been implemented in Western Australia. For example, we announced that we would fund an additional beach enclosure at Falcon Beach near Mandurah, near where Ben Gerring was tragically taken. In an effort to give some comfort to the community down there, the government announced that it would fund an additional beach enclosure there. We also announced that we would extend the shark monitoring network to Esperance and that we would put two satellite receivers in Esperance. That is something that the community in Esperance is most interested in. We also fulfilled a second election commitment to fund beach emergency numbers for local governments that want to follow the lead of the City of Mandurah and number their beaches so that in an emergency, whether it be a shark attack or a heart attack, emergency services would be able to quickly locate the site of the emergency. Something else that we announced on Saturday—members opposite will be interested in this—is \$6 million worth of funding to Surf Life Saving WA so it can continue the beach and aerial patrols that the community expects. I discovered something when I became minister. Surf Life Saving came to see me and said it was told by the previous government that it would get its funding. I looked in the budget and post-30 June this year that \$6 million is not there. It was interesting. The government had to find \$6 million to plug the hole. When the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was asked about that \$6 million on Sunday morning, the day after, she said —

"You wouldn't put funding past 30th of June knowing there's an election in March.

She also said —

"That's just sensible management of government finances," ...

The fact that there is another black hole for something as fundamental as funding for Surf Life Saving—another \$6 million that the government needed to find—just shows that members opposite have not done even the basics on this issue.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Warren–Blackwood?