

SHARKS — HAZARD MITIGATION

199. Mr S.N. AUBREY to the Minister for Fisheries:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's unprecedented investment in shark hazard mitigation measures that help keep Western Australians safe at the beach. Can the minister update the house on this government's world-first personal shark deterrent rebate scheme, including how many Western Australians have taken up the rebate since the program was introduced?

Mr D.T. PUNCH replied:

I thank the member for the question, and I am very pleased to inform the house of yet another enhancement to the McGowan government's comprehensive shark hazard mitigation program—the approval and addition of a third device to the world-first personal shark deterrent rebate scheme. This \$200 shark deterrent rebate will be extended to eligible purchases of the Rpela v2 surf device, which is manufactured here in Western Australia. The inclusion of the device in the rebate scheme is testament to not only Rpela but also the manufacturing capability of some of our local Western Australian businesses.

The McGowan government aims to keep our state as safe as possible, but I was particularly pleased that this new device was developed, designed and manufactured in Osborne Park, supporting local jobs. It is a shining example of the kind of advanced manufacturing that represents the future of quality manufacturing in our great state. I had the opportunity to visit with a local surfing celebrity in the form of the member for Scarborough! The member for Scarborough inspected in detail the fitting of this device to a surfboard. It is very much an integral part of the device, so it is almost ubiquitous in terms of the surfing experience for surfers. It works by generating an electromagnetic field around the surfboard to deter sharks. I am informed that it is a little like a punch on the nose; it is something that sharks do not like. It was independently tested by Cardno Australia at Salisbury Island in Western Australia, and when active, it significantly reduces the probability of a shark bite from approximately 75 per cent down to 25 per cent.

The shark deterrent rebate is a world first and it is available to Western Australian residents; proof of WA residence must be sighted when it is purchased. It joins the Ocean Guardian Freedom and the Ocean Guardian Freedom Surf Device for a total of three shark deterrent devices. It has been taken up incredibly well by surfers and divers alike, with over 7 000 rebates claimed since its introduction. People living in Mandurah—member for Mandurah—Bunbury, Bibra Lake, Busselton and Esperance make up the top five purchases by postcode. No product offers a 100 per cent guarantee of protection, but this is part of risk mitigation and we always encourage people to check out Sea Sense.

As part of our shark mitigation program, in the last budget \$12 million was allocated for Surf Life Saving WA to deliver beach and aerial patrols until 2025, securing that valuable service into the future. We also provided a \$5 million funding boost to shark hazard mitigation, including grant funding for local governments to install and replace beach enclosures, and \$2.8 million for opportunistic shark tagging.

We base our decisions on evidence and science, unlike members opposite who seem to draw their policy advice from the newspaper of the day. This is a great addition to the shark deterrence strategy, and I thank the member for Scarborough for joining me.