

GREAT WHITE SHARKS — CSIRO ANALYSIS

**33. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Fisheries:**

I refer to the front page of today's *The West Australian* and the front page —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members! Start again.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to the front page of today's *The West Australian* and the front page on 9 February titled "Great White Dope" —

**Mrs M.H. Roberts** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Minister for Police, I call you to order for the first time.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Paul Murray's article today states that CSIRO analysis indicates that up to 10 000 great white sharks are off the south west coast —

*Point of Order*

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** We have had a very long preamble. I question whether that is in order and whether the member actually has a question.

**The SPEAKER:** That is not a point of order. Member, can you get to the question.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

**Ms L. METTAM:** I ask —

- (1) Does the minister know more than our nation's premier scientific organisation?
- (2) If not —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members, this is question time. It is the last question. Let the member have her say. Any more interjections and you will be called to order.

**Ms A. Sanderson:** She does not know what she is saying.

**Ms L. METTAM:** The member does not know much.

I continue my question —

- (2) If not, why is the minister not doing more to protect Western Australians?

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

- (1)–(2) I am glad the member for Vasse has finally asked me a question on this issue. She has been very vocal, but the shadow spokesperson for fisheries has said nothing on this issue since he gave an interview on the ABC in which he said that he did not support a shark cull and he did not have a problem with our individual shark deterrent subsidy scheme. Ever since he gave that interview, he has said nothing. The member for Vasse has been out on this issue. I put it on the record that I have great respect for the CSIRO and the work it does.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** I do not dispute any of the material in that report. What I do find curious is the rather bizarre interpretation that has been put on that report by members opposite. Remember, in the lead-up to that report coming out the federal Liberal environment minister, Josh Frydenberg, used that terrible quote for those of us who are disability-access conscious. He said blind Freddy could see that there are more sharks off the coast of Western Australia than there used to be. That CSIRO report says that in fact there has been no noticeable increase in the number of great white sharks off the Western Australian coast or off the east coast. That is the first thing that that report says—no noticeable increase. The second thing it said is, yes, it attempted to give an estimate of how many great white sharks are off the coast of Western Australia and the east coast. I do not dispute the numbers that the CSIRO said. What I do dispute is extrapolation that some people in the media have tried to make. The front page of *The West Australian* today said further analysis indicated blah, blah, blah, without actually citing who had done that further analysis. I suspect it was the journalist who wrote the article on the back of an envelope. The most interesting part of Paul Murray's piece today is that he said words to the effect of—I will not quote him exactly—"I am taking the numbers a bit further than the researchers would probably want me to", which is exactly right.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** He took the research from the CSIRO and extrapolated those figures to get the biggest number he possibly could.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** The question that the member for Vasse asked is, “What are we doing?” We respect the work of the CSIRO. We have put in place a world-first subsidy scheme for individual shark deterrents. Almost 1 500 Western Australians have taken up that offer since we announced it mid last year. Initially we thought about 1 000 would be the number. Those 1 000 were quickly snapped up, so we have extended the offer to 2 000. Western Australians are embracing that program. The shadow Minister for Fisheries does not have a problem, yet the member for Vasse continues to bag it out there. We are doing things that the science tells us will make a difference. The CSIRO report that the member for Vasse clutched today makes no recommendations about shark mitigation measures; it simply gives an estimate of what the numbers are.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** I have no problems with the work of the CSIRO report and we will continue to follow the science. I will give the member for Vasse one last bit of advice. The member for Vasse tweeted something the other day that I found really offensive. She tweeted, “How many fatalities are you willing to wear?”

**Ms L. Mettam** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members, it is not a chat session. Minister, can you finish up.

**Ms L. Mettam** interjected.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members! I call the member for Vasse to order for the first time.

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** The member for Vasse tweeted, “How many fatalities are you willing to wear?”

**Ms L. Mettam** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Vasse!

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** This is a very difficult area of public policy. During the eight years of Liberal government when there were more than 10 fatal shark attacks, we never asked the government to wear those fatalities. We do not hold the Liberal government responsible. There has now been a change of government and the member for Vasse is trying to hang the shark fatalities on us. I find that particularly distasteful not only to people on this side, but also to the families of those people involved. I suggest to the member for Vasse and members opposite that we are happy to have a sensible debate about this issue, but do not try to sensationalise it to try to win a few cheap votes.