

## **SHARK DRUM LINE PROGRAM**

### *Statement*

**HON RICK MAZZA (Agricultural)** [9:45 pm]: I was fortunate enough after a committee meeting this morning to have 15 minutes for a quick coffee in Hay Street. I happened to pick up a newspaper, the *Western Suburbs Weekly*, dated yesterday. Looking through the headlines, of course the first thing I came across was an article about sharks and drum lines. I thought it appropriate as the Shooters and Fishers Party representative that I put on record tonight my feelings on drum lines and sharks.

A couple of interesting comments were made by Dr Peter Sprivulis, who works for the University of WA in emergency medicine. The article states in part —

The specialist in snake and other dangerous species' bites found great whites were responsible for 10 of the 12 fatal attacks in the four decades ...

The 11th fatal attack's species was unknown and the 12th's was a tiger shark.

Hon Lynn McLaren indicated in her comments yesterday that there had not been any tiger shark attacks. According to this expert, there have been tiger shark attacks. It is also interesting to note that the article states that two of the key points made by Peter Sprivulis are that shark attack increase is linked to humpback whale population rising by 10 per cent annually; and winter divers in the south west are three to 11 times more likely to be attacked by a shark than be involved in a fatal cycling crash.

Like everybody here, I would not like to see sharks endangered or any marine life endangered for that matter. I think it is very difficult to deny that whale populations have increased fourfold in the past 15 years. Seal populations have also exploded, particularly New Zealand fur seals, and our shark fisheries have been limited to a couple of gillnet licences in the south west. Putting all those things in place, of course shark populations will exponentially grow. Like any other animal species, when the numbers get too high they need to be sensibly managed. Of course drum lining has been controversial, but unfortunately until a better method of dealing with sharks is found it seems to be consistent with what other jurisdictions in Australia are using. I personally feel that the potential benefit to public safety by using drum lines in reducing shark numbers at this point in time significantly outweighs the environmental impact.

A lot of parallels have been drawn with cycling; that a person is more likely to be killed on a pushbike than swimming in the ocean, but we have to understand that there are a lot more pushbikes on the road and a lot more people riding bicycles on the road than there are people in the water at any one time. We have had seven attacks in three years; 20 attacks in 100 years. Something is terribly out of balance with our marine environment. Some people may believe that sharks are more important than human life. Personally, I do not find that.

Several members interjected.

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** It has been said to me. I find it abhorrent. To me, human life is paramount.

**Hon Ken Travers:** What kind of people do you hang out with?

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** If Hon Ken Travers likes, he can have his say on this later. At this point in time I am putting forward how I feel about this matter. I truly believe that human life is paramount. People should be able to go to the beach and they should be able to recreate in the ocean in relative safety. Sure, there is a small risk but at the moment we are finding there is a huge amount of risk.

Some members may have watched the program *60 Minutes* on Sunday night. People have different opinions on *60 Minutes*, but we cannot get away from the fact that people have been harassing the girlfriend or widow, if you like, of Christopher Boyd, who was the last person taken by a shark. Krystle Westwood has been told to get over it, amongst other things that she has been told to do, which she did not want to disclose on that program. I find that absolutely despicable. Sure, people can campaign if they feel that something goes against what they believe in, but to then attack someone who is grieving over the loss of someone is absolutely despicable. It is disgraceful. Further in that program a member of the anti-shark culling campaign, whose name I cannot remember at this point of time, openly said that he would even consider, for want of a better word, stalking the Premier in trying to get his point across. Then people were shown on surfboards wearing black bandannas on their faces like some sort of terrorist. If people believe the shark mitigation program is wrong, they can protest, but they should not go to these levels. It is something that really concerns me greatly.

One criticism I make of this program, though, is the waste we are finding at this point in time with the sharks that are caught. Those sharks are dragged out to sea and discarded and I cannot understand why, if we want to find out more about these sharks, we cannot use the larger sharks for scientific research. I do not know what the

reason is for being unable to do that. It has been suggested to me that there is a federal issue as to why that cannot be done, but I think we could better use those carcasses rather than waste them. The other issue, as part of the food chain, is that we are now limited to some gillnet fisheries in the south west. I personally believe those licences should be bought out because those gillnets take a lot of bycatch and can be quite detrimental to the environment. However, there is nothing wrong with longlining and a good professional shark fisherman can longline; they can specifically target species like bronze whalers and other sharks that can be quite readily used as a food source and sold to fish and chip shops and fish shops. That would maybe cut down on the number of sharks out there without wasting them.

There has been a lot of concern expressed to me by recreational fisherman, and it is an indication of how many sharks are out there these days, that for the first time in the 20 to 30 years that they have been fishing in the south west they are having sharks take their fish before they get them in the boat. That suggests to me that we have large numbers of sharks out there. I have fished in the south west for a long time and it has never happened to me, but many others are suggesting that it is happening to them quite regularly.