

SHARKS — HAZARD MITIGATION — DRUM LINE TRIAL — GRACETOWN

93. Mr M.J. FOLKARD to the Minister for Fisheries:

Being a keen surf lifesaver and an absolute champion of aquatic safety, can the minister update the house on how the scientific, non-lethal Shark-Management-Alert-in-Real-Time drum line trial, which began today off the Gracetown coast, will provide answers to the effectiveness of the technology, and can the minister outline to the house how this compares with the way in which the previous Liberal–National government conducted a chaotic lethal drum line program off the coast?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

I thank the member for Burns Beach for the question and for his commitment to safety along our coastline. I can inform the house that the SMART drum line trial commenced today in Gracetown. All 10 SMART drum lines were deployed this morning by the contractor. It was a very smooth rollout this morning, which I think is indicative of the planning this government has put into this trial.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Vasse!

Mr D.J. KELLY: Members will remember that we initially were hopeful that the New South Wales government would provide the data from its trial, but when that data was not forthcoming, we committed to running our own trial. That trial began today. I will talk about the way in which we are conducting the trial in the Gracetown area. There will be 10 drum lines north and south of Gracetown. We also installed three VR4 satellite receivers in the Gracetown area. Members would be aware that these VR4 receivers are the satellite receivers that pick up tagged sharks. Under the previous government, that area of the coast—the Gracetown–Margaret River area—had no presence of VR4 receivers.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Vasse, I am sure you want to hear the answer.

Mr D.J. KELLY: Despite the activity along that coast in recent years, in the eight and a half years of the previous government it never extended the shark monitoring network to that area. We have done that. Those VR4 receivers will work in conjunction with the SMART drum line trial. We have also, as part of the trial, installed nine Spectur beach alarms. Those alarms will alert beachgoers who are already in the water when a tagged shark has been detected. There are nine of them to work in conjunction with the SMART drum line trial. If a surfer is in the water and a tagged shark is identified in the area, there will be flashing lights and an alarm to let people know to leave the water and that the beach is then closed. That is local technology, built here in Western Australia. It is also being trialled by the shire, but with these nine units, we have really enhanced the SMART drum line trial.

In planning the trial, we put together a ministerial reference group, which included the shire, Surf Life Saving WA, Surfing WA, Sea Shepherd and the Conservation Council of Western Australia. All those people, for the first time in Western Australia, have sat around the table and talked about what we need to do to deal with this problem. It is because we have all those people with disparate views around the table that the rollout this morning was so smooth. But do we get applause from members on the other side? The member for Vasse is out there criticising us for allowing groups that are sceptical of this technology to be involved in the planning.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Vasse!

Mr D.J. KELLY: That is indicative of the confrontational way in which members opposite deal with this issue.

Several members interjected.

Mr D.J. KELLY: It is an absolutely confrontational way.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr D.J. KELLY: Member for Cottesloe, another job has just become vacant for you today. Just keep that in mind.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr D.J. KELLY: We are conducting this trial based on science. We will have the Chief Scientist evaluate the trial at the end of the 15-month period, to tell us whether this technology actually reduces the chances of a shark attack. That is what this is all about. We know we can catch sharks, we know we can tag them, we know we can relocate them and we know we can release them, but what we do not know is whether this technology will actually reduce the chances of future shark attacks.

I will finish by saying that I really wish the opposition would come on board with this. I now know that the member for Geraldton has had the shark mitigation portfolio wrested from him by the member for Vasse. I congratulate her on her new title as opposition spokesperson for sharks, but I would just say to her: do a bit of research.

Several members interjected.

Mr D.J. KELLY: When we announced this trial —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: The minister has the call.

Mr D.J. KELLY: When we announced this trial and when we announced that we had purchased the drum lines, clearly the member for Vasse did not know —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members! Do you want question time to finish early today?

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup interjected.

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

Mr D.J. KELLY: Despite wanting this technology used in WA, the member for Vasse did not realise that they were manufactured in Europe. Then, when we announced the parameters of this trial—that the drum lines would be set only when the weather permitted—the member for Vasse complained about that! She did not know that this technology could be deployed only —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Vasse!

Mr D.J. KELLY: She did not understand that this technology could only be deployed weather permitting. She was out there saying that they should be deployed in all weather conditions.

Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Darling Range, I call you to order for the third time.

Mr D.J. KELLY: Given the tragedy that occurred to a drum line operator in Queensland, member for Vasse, I thought that was in very bad taste.

Finally, and this is the one I like best: the member for Vasse does not know the difference between a shark and a dolphin. Early December last year, there was a photo in the paper. Someone produced a photo of something jumping out of the water in the member for Dawesville's electorate. The member for Vasse said it was proof that we need drum lines in the member for Dawesville's electorate. If she had waited 24 hours, the scientists would have confirmed it was a dolphin and not a shark.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister, come on.

Mr D.J. KELLY: If I can finish: being the member for sharks is one thing; being the member for spooky dolphins is quite another thing.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members! Minister, you will get to the end of this because other ministers want questions.

Mr D.J. KELLY: If I could hear myself speak, Mr Speaker, I would get to my —

Several members interjected.

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

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: The more noise you make, the fewer questions you have.

Mr D.J. KELLY: I will finish simply by saying that we have approached this issue on the basis of science. Whether it be promoting personal shark deterrents or the installation of the beach emergency numbers signs, which have been very useful to emergency services in recent weeks, we will approach this issue on science, and I wish the opposition members would come onboard.