

SHARK DRUM LINE PROGRAM

10. Mr D.J. KELLY to the Premier:

I refer to the Premier's shark drum line program and the fact that 63 of the 66 sharks caught have been tiger sharks, most of which were undersized, and to his Sharksmart website, which states that tiger sharks have been responsible for only one possible attack in WA since 1980, 34 years ago. In light of this, how can he possibly claim that his policy is a success?

Mr C.J. BARNETT replied:

This program using drum lines has been in operation for three weeks. There has been a lot of commentary and a lot of debate about it, obviously. The government took a decision to use drum lines late in December, and they were in place by late January. That is quick by any standard. We have not, therefore, had a full summer of monitoring to determine the outcome. Although it might be only anecdotal, I think the prevalence of the great white shark from September to December is pretty clear. The member is quite right; 66 sharks have been caught—23 in the south west and 43 in the metropolitan area. Seventeen of those sharks were in excess of three metres, which is a large shark by any standard. Sixteen of those 17 sharks were destroyed and one had already died on the line. Forty-eight sharks were less than three metres, but these were big sharks; they were two-metre and 2.5-metre sharks.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: They were not small sharks. People need look only at the size of the hook, which was specially made to be large so that genuinely small sharks would not be caught. Many of the sharks that were released were over two metres. They were big sharks capable of causing severe injury, if not death. The criteria that were adopted were for three varieties of sharks—great white, tiger and bull—in excess of three metres because the evidence of fatal attacks has shown that they were sharks generally over three metres in size.

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

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

Mr C.J. BARNETT: People were saying that no sharks would be caught. The government intends that this program will run through next summer. I expect that when the drum lines are in place, there will be a wider distribution of sharks. Something has been learnt. As the Minister for Fisheries has said, the aerial surveys, the tagging and the apps are happening.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Can I make a comment about this?

Mr D.J. Kelly: No; just answer the question.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am answering the question. I want to make a comment about this. I respect people's views. I understand that a significant portion of the population does not support this policy, but this government was faced with the reality that in over 100 years, there have been 20 fatalities from shark attacks. There have been seven fatalities in the last three years. This government—I accept the responsibility—had a responsibility to act to protect human life and to minimise the risk to those people who use beaches for swimming, diving and surfing. One thing is absolutely certain from this debate —

Mr P.C. Tinley interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Willagee, I formally call you to order for the first time today.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: One thing is absolutely certain: the Labor Party would have been incapable of making that decision—absolutely incapable.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Labor does not have a position. The member who asked the question said that Labor could well keep the policy. The Leader of the Opposition comes out supporting a commercial product over the weekend, the Shark Shield.

Mr M. McGowan: You gave them money.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The opposition is incapable of making a decision on this and the people of Western Australia know that.

Several members interjected.

Ms S.F. McGurk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Fremantle!

[Interruption from the gallery.]

The SPEAKER: Just let me tell the people in the gallery, you are welcome to sit and listen to the debate, but please do not make any comments, clap or make any other noise; otherwise, you will be ejected from the gallery.

Member for Fremantle, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: To conclude, I want to make another observation about this topic. The Treasurer has just reminded me that a boy was killed last year in New South Wales by a tiger shark. Tiger sharks are aggressive. The other observation I want to make about this is that while I respect people's views and their right to protest, I will not accept what is happening in this debate. I will not accept people engaging in and promoting violence. As Premier, I will not accept threats on people's lives. I will not accept the intimidation of people who have expressed their view in favour of the shark cull, including people close to those who have lost their lives through shark attacks. When the Leader of the Opposition went down to Cottesloe Beach —

Several members interjected.

[Interruption from the gallery.]

The SPEAKER: Please remove whoever is shouting out in the gallery. I want to hear the rest of this answer in silence.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am talking about when the Leader of the Opposition went down and took part in the protest on Cottesloe Beach. I acknowledge the vast majority of people were there because they opposed the policy and they were making their point known, but a minority group engaged in and advocated violence and threatened and intimidated people. Someone who hopes to be the Premier of this state should not have done so.

Several members interjected.

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