MR J.R. QUIGLEY (Butler) [9.32 am]: I raise with the Premier of Western Australia my grievance concerning a prospective Eco Shark Barrier installation at Quinns Beach. I do this at the request of the Butler community and, specifically, at the request of the Mayor of Wanneroo, Tracey Roberts. In May 2015 the City of Wanneroo undertook a feasibility study into whether it could install an Eco Shark Barrier at Quinns Beach and embarked on community consultation. That took place last year when the city consulted with the Department of Transport, the Department of Lands and the WA Planning Commission. The City of Wanneroo conducted a thorough investigation of this and found that there was very strong community demand for such a facility up there. When the community was surveyed, 72 per cent said they would use the beach more; 73 per cent said they would use Quinns Beach over any other beach; and 82 per cent said they would be more likely to swim. I note that the government has offered to install an Eco Shark Barrier at Middleton Beach in Albany and at Sorrento Beach. I will just say something about Sorrento Beach: I do not want to advocate that that barrier be ripped away, but as the Mayor of Wanneroo, Tracey Roberts, points out to me, it is her understanding that the City of Joondalup has asked for more money. There has been toing and froing over the Eco Shark Barrier at Sorrento Beach and no financial agreement has been reached with the government; whereas the City of Wanneroo is shovel-ready—or should I say “snorkel-ready”—to proceed with this project. A lot of the attraction for it there is that it is a very long way from Sorrento Beach. As the member for Ocean Reef knows, the distance—just to give the chamber an idea—between Quinns Beach and Sorrento is 20.5 kilometres. To put that into perspective, the distance between Cottesloe and Sorrento is 21.5 kilometres. Quinns Beach is as far from Sorrento as Sorrento is from Cottesloe. This area is right up the coast. As the Minister for Environment and member for Ocean Reef knows, because he lives out that way, there has been a very large influx of migrants to the population there. A lot of English and Sudanese are moving into the area—people with somewhat limited swimming and ocean experience. Many of them are diffident about entering the water because of a fear of sharks. Also, we do not have any swimming pools on that northern coastal strip, unlike in the western suburbs where I note that most of the schools have 50-metre pools. The Claremont Aquatic Centre, in the middle of them all, has a 50-metre pool. There is also Bold Park and Challenge Stadium. There are no pools in the electorate of Butler, apart from a pool at the arena that is hopelessly overused. Some schools see it as problematic to take their classes of infants to learn to swim in the ocean. The added advantage we have learned from the Cockburn experience is that the shark barrier provides not only a shark mitigation tool, but also a fence around an area of the ocean where kiddies in inflatables cannot go out past in that area. The City of Wanneroo has costed this proposal and made a resolution. After starting its investigation in May 2015, it resolved unanimously on 2 February 2016 to proceed with installing an Eco Shark Barrier. It resolved to write to the Premier requesting a $300 000 state government contribution to this. I have gone through this in my reply to the Premier’s Statement. The state infrastructure in that north coast area is meagre. I realise this is a challenge for the state government. It is a huge challenge for the City of Wanneroo also, because it does not have a state road. All the roads are local distributor roads, and the council carries the expense of that. The City of Wanneroo did not get any contribution from the state government for the reparation of Quinns Beach when it was eroded; the council had to pay $3 million. As a result of the council’s unanimous resolution to proceed with installing an Eco Shark Barrier, having passed a motion in the council on 2 February, it then put it on its 20-year infrastructure list. Mayor Tracey Roberts, directed by the unanimous resolution of the City of Wanneroo, wrote to the Premier seeking $300 000 for the installation of the Eco Shark Barrier. It would be installed before the election. As I said, the council is snorkel-ready; the equipment is available. The council is ready to get this down as soon as the Premier can indicate that the government will contribute that money. Although the council asked for $300 000, I notice from media releases that the government said it would provide $250 000 to the City of Joondalup to do this at Sorrento Beach, and that has not yet been taken up by Joondalup—it is toing and froing. Can I just say something about Sorrento Beach? A shark enclosure was installed at Sorrento Beach for $250 000 but it is a three-minute walk on the cycleway into Hillarys Boat Harbour where there is a heavily used beach where there are no sharks because it is inside the harbour. I say on behalf of the people of Butler and the Mayor of the City of Wanneroo that the request for $300 000, even if it is rounded down to what the council has stated, is a sincere request, Premier.
government undertook a series of measures. I admit that some of those measures were very controversial. However, I felt a responsibility as Premier to respond to what was an extremely dangerous situation, and that risk remains.

One of the most expensive, but probably the most effective, measures that was undertaken by the government was the introduction of daily summer aerial beach patrols. Those patrols are now being undertaken through the use of helicopters, which are obviously a lot more flexible, but also a lot more expensive. Those patrols extend from Mandurah to Yankeep and that obviously covers the Quinns Beach area. Those patrols have been effective in spotting sharks and alerting beachgoers and the like. We have also provided equipment and support for surf clubs. That includes jetskis, observation decks, the use of apps to provide updated information, and some scientific research in tagging and monitoring sharks to try to understand more about shark behaviour. There was also, of course, the shark catching program. That program did not prove effective against great whites and tended to catch only tiger sharks. However, we still have a policy and provisions that if a shark presents an imminent danger, it can be destroyed, and that has been done on one occasion.

Out of this process has come the idea of beach enclosures. There is quite a misunderstanding around Australia about beach enclosures. People talk about the shark nets that are employed in New South Wales and Queensland. I think most people, certainly in this place, now know that shark nets are not—as most people, including myself, originally thought—barriers to prevent sharks from coming into the beach. They are a bit like a large tennis court net, and they are placed at the bottom of the ocean. They are not continuous. They are designed to catch and kill sharks. They are not a barrier. They are a net for snagging sharks. They kill literally hundreds of sharks, turtles and dolphins, and all sorts of other species, all along the New South Wales and Queensland coastline. We are not doing that in Western Australia, and we will not do that.

The nets that have been installed in Western Australia are barriers. The first shark net was put in place at Dunsborough Beach, which has very calm and protected water, and it has proved to be very effective. The net goes out to sea for about 100 metres and is about 300 metres long. So, it is not a tightly enclosed area. People can go there and have a decent swim and feel quite secure that they are not going to have a shark anywhere them. As a result of that success, another shark net was put in place recently at the Busselton foreshore. Busselton is a very popular, growing town, and that shark net has also been successful. In last year’s budget, we committed to fund a shark net at Middleton Beach in Albany. That is, again, a fairly protected beach, but one at which there has been a shark attack, and sharks are sighted reasonably frequently in that area.

As the member for Butler said, a shark net has also been installed at Sorrento Beach. We were very conscious that there were no protective nets at northern suburbs beaches. It is difficult, because one of the prime determinants is the degree of wave motion. If the conditions are fairly rough, shark nets are not suitable because they will be torn up and be displaced and the like. Therefore, we are looking always for calm locations, and they are more limited in the north of Perth than they are in the south of Perth, in which there are a number of locations at which shark nets could be used. I acknowledge that the City of Cockburn took the initiative and has put in its own shark net. Good luck to it; well done.

With respect to the shark net proposed for Sorrento Beach, the water is deeper in that area and the wave action is larger than it is for the nets employed at Dunsborough and Busselton. Therefore, probably a stronger net will be required, and it will be more expensive. It is also believed that because of the location of that beach virtually by itself on that whole northern suburbs coastline, a shark net enclosure is likely to draw a large number of people. The City of Joondalup has come back with that and we are discussing with it whether we will provide some additional funding to make it a bigger enclosure and to compensate for the deeper water and rougher conditions. Those discussions are going on and the government may well contribute more but I would expect the City of Joondalup to also contribute significantly to that.

Quinns Beach was not one of the beaches that was examined by the hydrobiology report. We will, therefore, rely on information provided by the City of Wanneroo. As the member for Butler has said, the Mayor of the City of Wanneroo, Tracey Roberts, wrote to me on 2 December requesting that the funding be transferred from Sorrento to Quinns. We will not be doing that. That will not happen. We will continue to work with the City of Joondalup on the Sorrento project, even though it is likely to be more expensive.

We have implicitly adopted a policy that in every budget, we will fund an extra one to two shark nets, depending on their cost and location, and their suitability.

Mr D.J. Kelly: Is it in the forward estimates?

Mr C.J. Barnett: No. We do not have forward estimates before we present the budget for the coming year. It is a sequence.

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

The Speaker: Member for Bassendean!
Mr C.J. Barnett: Mr Speaker, this is the sort of idiocy we get in this place—just dysfunctional members of Parliament.

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

Mr C.J. Barnett: A grievance was asked in good faith. If the member does not want me to answer it, I will sit down.

Every year, we intend to fund one to two shark nets, depending on their cost, to try to get a spread. The limitations are location and high wave action. The City of Wanneroo has now put in a proposal for Quinns. We will consider that, along with other proposed locations, at the time of the coming budget.

The member for Wanneroo, Paul Miles, also wrote to me, on 26 November, with a similar request that the funds be transferred. As I have said, we will not be doing that. We will stick in good faith with the Sorrento project. However, we will consider Quinns. From what I know of the site, the wave action is a little high, but probably manageable, and if the City of Wanneroo is willing to also contribute to that, there is probably a pretty good chance that it will happen.

I agree with the member for Butler and the member for Wanneroo that there is a lack of locations and a lack of safe swimming areas on the northern beaches. They are fairly exposed. They have reef structures that provide some protection, but there are also some rips in those areas that are quite dangerous.

I would like to see this proceed, and it will be considered as part of the next budget. The council of the City of Wanneroo has put up a good proposal. There are plenty of other locations around Perth that will come into consideration for a shark net. However, the northern suburbs do present a strong case for some enclosures.