

SHARKS — HAZARD MITIGATION

672. Ms R.S. STEPHENS to the Minister for Fisheries:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's comprehensive shark hazard mitigation program. Can the minister please update the house on the automation of the shark warning system and outline how this will help support the government's commitment to keeping WA beachgoers safe?

Mr D.T. PUNCH replied:

I thank the member for the question. It is an excellent question. I am very pleased to inform the house of yet another addition to the McGowan Labor government's comprehensive shark hazard management strategy, which is the automation of parts of our shark warning system in the lead-up to summer. Eight automated towers will be installed at Twilight, West and Kelp Beds beaches along the Esperance coast, at Bunker Bay near Dunsborough and at Cowaramup Bay and Lefthanders surf break there will be two each. Another two automated towers are being installed by the Town of Cottesloe after being refurbished by the department following the SMART drum line trial, which are the first warning towers to be installed in the Perth metropolitan area. I am very pleased to install this new infrastructure for the people of Esperance, who asked for this specifically when I met with them recently.

This investment represents yet another enhancement of the government's comprehensive shark hazard mitigation strategy. I am very proud of the \$17 million world-leading strategy, which is based firmly on science and research. These new measures complement our recently allocated \$12 million for Surf Life Saving WA to deliver beach and aerial patrols to 2025, which secures the service into the future. I also remind the house of our recent \$5 million funding boost to shark hazard mitigation initiatives, including extension of the popular \$200 rebate for personal deterrent devices, grant funding for local governments to install and replace beach enclosures, and \$2.8 million for dedicated funding for opportunistic shark tagging and extending the range of the receivers to 800 metres.

Like so many areas of public debate lately, the difference between the government's and the opposition's positions could not be more stark. I noted with interest the comments of the shadow Minister for Fisheries, Hon Colin de Grussa, following the recent infamous alleged shark-riding incident off the Pilbara coast. I condemn the actions of that individual in the strongest possible terms; it was reckless and idiotic behaviour that endangered the safety of crew and passengers and needlessly engaged emergency services personnel. But I was shocked to hear that Hon Colin de Grussa's response was to call for more drum lines along the Pilbara coast. More drum lines, he said!

Ms A. Sanderson: They don't believe in science.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: He certainly does not. It is as if the actions of one idiotic individual would trigger the expenditure of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money without any reference to science or evidence. I quote Hon Colin de Grussa on ABC Pilbara radio —

... I think there is a role for government in this space that's for sure and I think earlier ... or last year and the year before the Government trialled drum lines ...

Clearly, he is well briefed on it! I am not sure that he has read the Chief Scientist's report. He continues —

I think drum lines should be trialled at as many places as possible ...

He certainly has not read the reports. The interview goes on. It makes for very interesting reading, if any members want to read it. At the bottom, he encapsulates the whole strategy of members opposite —

I guess the other thing to of course is ... whether we use the shark deterrent devices, now I'm not sure how effective they are, I would suggest though that it's not a bad idea to be using something that may help ...

Clearly, a lot of strategy and thinking has gone into that! Once again, members, as with so many public policy issues, even the ones we have heard today, we are reminded that there is one party in this place that trusts science and formulates policy in a methodical and logical way based on evidence to keep Western Australians safe and there is an alternative, which is the members opposite.

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition with the last question.