

SHARKS — HAZARD MITIGATION

81. Mrs L.A. MUNDAY to the Minister for Fisheries:

I refer to the state government's commitment to helping keep people safe in the ocean and mitigating the risk of fatal shark attacks.

- (1) Can the minister please update the house on the conclusion of the nonlethal shark drum line trial?
- (2) Can the minister also outline to the house what measures the McGowan government is taking to ensure the continued safety and confidence of those using WA's beaches?

Mr D.T. PUNCH replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for Dawesville for the question. I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate her on her emphatic win and note the excitement coming out of the electorate of Dawesville since she has been elected.

The McGowan Labor government is committed to keeping people in Western Australia as safe as possible. That includes our ocean users and coastal communities. The SMART drum line trial commenced in 2019 and has now come to a close, having provided valuable findings to the government that allow us to base our decisions on strong scientific evidence and expert advice. An independent review by the Chief Scientist, Professor Peter Klinken, has concluded that the trial was extremely well designed and implemented in a highly skilful manner. I want to extend my thanks to the contractors who have been out there over the past two years conducting the trial. Professor Klinken has also concluded that the science does not support a continuation of this technology for our unique coast. On the recommendation of the Chief Scientist the trial will conclude on its scheduled end date of 20 May 2021, and additional investment will be made to the highly effective approach of tagging white sharks.

We are going to increase our support for shark hazard mitigation measures that we know are helping to keep our ocean users and communities as safe as possible. The McGowan government will spend an additional \$5 million over the next four years to deliver our highly successful shark mitigation program, including increasing white shark tagging operations, upgrades to the shark monitoring network, support for beach enclosures of our popular beaches and continuing the personal shark deterrent devices rebate scheme for surface and divers, which we know has been very popular. The success of our targeted shark tagging program has been remarkable, with 22 white sharks tagged last year off the WA coast and another nine this year, which is a total of 31 since 2020. Fifty-one white sharks have been captured throughout the program since 2019, compared with just two through the SMART drum line trial for the same period.

We are providing additional funding of \$2.8 million to increase the valuable tagging work and upgrade the state's shark monitoring network receivers. It will enable our highly experienced shark tagging team to spend more time on the water with the best chance of tagging white sharks. The McGowan government will upgrade the shark monitoring network by increasing the range of our 34 receivers to provide near-real time alerts of the presence of target sharks. This valuable data and monitoring will contribute to our capacity, importantly, to predict shark behaviour and respond accordingly using our suite of shark mitigation measures. The upgrades to next-generation digital live VR4 receivers over the next four years will mean that detection of target sharks will have a longer range of up to 800 metres, a wider detection zone than the 500 metres currently in use. There are already two new-generation receivers in place at Bunker Bay, and we will upgrade the remaining 32 receivers along the coast from Perth south to Geographe Bay, Yallingup, Gracetown, Albany and Esperance.

The McGowan government is investing in shark hazard mitigation measures backed by strong scientific evidence and expert advice to help keep WA ocean users and our communities as safe as possible.