

ROCK LOBSTER INDUSTRY - WHALE ENTANGLEMENTS

280. Mrs D.J. GUISE to the Minister for the Environment:

Can the minister please advise the house on whether the recently released training DVD on whale entanglements for the rock lobster industry has had any impact yet?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

I thank the member for the question and for her ongoing interest in our marine environment, particularly as it affects her electorate of Wanneroo. I am very pleased to advise the house that during the recent parliamentary recess I released a DVD produced by the Department of Environment and Conservation in collaboration with the Western Rock Lobster Council and the west coast rock lobster managed fishery. The DVD is aimed at reducing the number of whale entanglements along the coast of Western Australia, particularly during the whale migration period. The DVD explains what commercial fishers should do if they come across an entangled whale and promotes the very important west coast rock lobster managed fishery's code of practice that aims to prevent whale entanglements. The rock lobster industry has a high staff turnover, so keeping skippers and crews aware of what they need to be doing and be aware of in regard to entanglements is very important.

Yesterday there was a response to a whale entanglement off Two Rocks. The DVD had been viewed only a few days earlier by the crew of the vessel known as *Sex Sea*, and they did everything according to the protocols and the recommendations contained in the DVD. They came across a humpback whale nine or 10 metres in length and weighing around 15 tonnes.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: This is a very important matter. The crew found that the young humpback whale had craypot lines entangled around its pectoral fin and tail. The Department of Environment and Conservation's disentanglement team, which has attracted nationwide attention for its work, responded immediately and, with the assistance of the Department of Fisheries and the crew of the vessel, was able to disentangle the whale. It is very important that we acknowledge the cooperation and collaboration of the rock lobster industry, the Department of Environment and Conservation and the Department of Fisheries in ensuring that we protect our marine animals and do everything we can to prevent such entanglements from occurring. This is a very good example of where that collaboration continues to result in positive outcomes for the magnificent animals that migrate up and down the Western Australian coast. We must convey congratulations particularly to Mr Doug Coughran, who is now recognised nationally and internationally as an expert on whale disentanglement. He is an employee of some 20-plus years of the Department of Environment and Conservation. It is great to know that we have experienced staff like these who are now leading the world in responding to those sorts of occurrences along our coast. I congratulate all of those who were involved in this rescue. However, I highlight the importance of industry working with the Department of Environment and Conservation and also with the Department of Fisheries so that they are able to respond positively to incidents and reduce the number of whales and other mammals that become entangled along the coast. This is a very positive story and a very good example of strong cooperation among all of the sectors. I table a copy of the said DVD titled "Code of Practice For Reducing Whale Entanglements".

[See paper 2784.]