

FISHERIES — SHARK SIGHTINGS

8. Hon JAMES HAYWARD to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Fisheries:

I refer to Western Australia's shark population.

- (1) Has there been an increase in the number of shark sightings in the past five years?
- (2) How does the Department of Fisheries monitor shark numbers in WA's waters?
- (3) Has the minister heard anecdotal evidence from fishers and boaties that they have noticed larger numbers of sharks in recent years?
- (4) What impact could an increase in shark numbers have on other fish species such as demersal fish?

Hon KYLE MCGINN replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question. The following answer has been provided by the Minister for Fisheries.

- (1) The number of reported shark sightings has increased over the past five years. This is primarily due to increased surveillance through the McGowan government's shark hazard mitigation program, Surf Life Saving Western Australia's helicopter patrols, shark tagging, reports of sightings from the public to SLSWA, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, together with an increased public awareness of sharks.
- (2) DPIRD conducts periodic stock assessments using catch, abundance surveys and other data types to determine the population size and trend of a range of different shark species.
- (3) Yes.
- (4) A wide range of shark species exist in WA that form part of the natural ecosystem. Predation by sharks on fish is one source of natural mortality for these species, which is a normal by-product of a healthy functioning ecosystem.