

HUMPBACK WHALE - BUNBURY COAST

249. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for the Environment:

I refer to the whale caught in crayfishing ropes off the coast of Bunbury. How did the state government respond to this situation?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I thank the member for Collie-Wellington for the question. I am very pleased to inform the house that the young humpback whale that was discovered 33 kilometres off the coast of Bunbury was freed late yesterday afternoon by a Department of Conservation and Land Management disentanglement team. We have people within CALM who are trained in performing this sort of duty, and they did an excellent job. Yesterday afternoon they found a young 40-tonne humpback whale that was 12 metres long and had approximately 27 metres of rope wrapped twice around its peduncle.

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am surprised members do not know what that is. I will let them look it up in the dictionary.

The CALM disentanglement team raced out to the whale and analysed the situation. Within a short time they managed to cut the whale free. It is a very dangerous exercise and in other parts of the world people have been killed doing this work. We have excellent people trained in this sort of thing. The whale was last seen swimming strongly away into deeper ocean with no signs of distress.

I especially thank those people involved - Mr Doug Coughran, Mr John Carter and Ms Verity Steptoe from CALM; Mr Gavin O'Dea, Mr Warren Cowell and Mr Michael Cooper from the Bunbury Sea Search and Rescue; Mr Gary Carthew from the City of Bunbury Surf Lifesaving Club; Mr Phil Coulthard and Mr Ben Knapinski from the Dolphin Discovery Centre; and the skipper of the crayfishing vessel that found the whale, Mr Paul Pittorini and his crew. They did a great job.