

SHARK HAZARD MITIGATION STRATEGIES

286. Mr A. KRSTICEVIC to the Minister for Fisheries:

I read with interest the opposition spokesman for fisheries' comments regarding the announcement of the government's ongoing commitment to shark hazard mitigation strategies. Can the minister please provide the house with an update on what this government is doing to mitigate the hazard posed by sharks in our waters?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

I thank the member for the question. This is an important issue for a number of different reasons. But, firstly, as everyone here knows, we value the use of our wonderful beaches and resources by everyone, from swimmers to divers to surfers to all those people who use our water, and it is important that they can feel as safe as possible when they do so. It is also very important because this wonderful coastline along the length of Western Australia is very important for attracting tourists, and one of the reasons tourists come to Western Australia is to see our wonderful beaches and swim. It is important that we get correct our shark risk reduction strategy and it is important that as part of that we look at all the different options that we can do as a government to help reduce the risk of shark attacks. Obviously, no-one wants to lose a loved one in that way, but from time to time it happens.

On different parts of the coastline we can do different things. I note the presence of the surf lifesaving club from Quinns Rocks in the gallery today. We were up there last week announcing another shark barrier, which will go out from that beach. It will be the fifth one up and down the coast. Shark barriers are great for people who want to swim along the coast, but of course it is no good at helping people who want to surf or dive. Therefore, we have to look at different technologies.

As part of our ongoing commitment to try to reduce the risk of shark attacks, we are also investing in the development of new technologies. I know the member for Bassendean said we were not doing that. I want to put on the record some of the things that we have been investing taxpayers' money in on behalf of the people of Western Australia —

Several members interjected.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: This is an important issue and the best that members opposite can do is talk about the colour of my tie—seriously!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: It is worth noting some of these things. An amount of \$300 000 is going to the development of Shark Shield; \$220 000 —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Midland, member for Cannington and member for Kwinana!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: We have invested \$300 000 to develop Shark Shield. There is \$220 000 to the University of Western Australia for testing and improving existing shark deterrents, including Shark Shield. That is over \$500 000 for Shark Shield. An amount of \$222 000 will also go to UWA to develop and test —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, I call you to order for the second time.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: An amount of \$222 000 will also go to UWA for the development and testing of innovative deterrence and underwater sound curtains; \$273 000 will go to Curtin University for sonar imaging and detection research —

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Midland, I think you have gone down that path now; just leave it alone. I call you to order for the first time.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: An amount of \$203 000 will also go to UWA to develop computer algorithms for real-time automatic shark detection; \$130 000 to Curtin for research into masking noises made by swimmers that might attract sharks; \$252 000 to the University of Western Australia to develop acoustic systems to detect sharks along the coast separate from the tagging program; and \$284 000 to Associate Professor Hart to examine the actual visual, electronic and other sensory cues that sharks look at before they attack someone so that we can understand and get a better comprehension of the risk and what sharks look for. We are investing in alternative technologies. We are getting on with the job. We are looking at all the options as should any good government. It

is just not right for the member for Bassendean not to be honest with the people of Western Australia about these strategies.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm