DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES — SHARK HAZARD MITIGATION STRATEGY

998.   Hon LYNN MacLAREN to the minister representing the Minister for Fisheries:

I refer to the report titled "**Likely effectiveness of netting or other capture programs as a shark hazard mitigation strategy in Western Australia"** prepared for the Department of Fisheries in 2012.

(1)   Is the minister aware of the report's findings that shark nets and drum-lines have resulted in high bycatch rates of species, including dolphins, marine turtles, sharks and rays, that are not implicated in attacks on humans, and that shark control programs would pose a risk to dolphins, which are an important tourist drawcard in Western Australia?

(2)   As the report recommends that the government should consider shark-proof enclosures that protect swimmers while not harming marine life, when will these enclosures be trialled?

(3)   Does the minister agree with the report's recommendation that neither shark nets nor drum-lines should be introduced in Western Australia as a shark hazard mitigation measure because of the environmental impacts of these activities?

(4)   In light of the report's findings, how does the minister respond to the assertion that the best way to provide protection for surfers and divers at locations further out to sea than swimmers is to increase understanding about shark behaviour and repellents through research and education?

Hon KEN BASTON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

(1)   Yes.

(2)   By the end of 2014.

(3)   No.

(4)   The Liberal–National government has employed a range of shark mitigation measures, including additional aerial patrols, tagging, real-time sighting reports and research projects, including understanding shark behaviour and potential repellents. In spite of these measures there continues to be an unprecedented number of shark attacks in our waters. The measures announced today will provide some additional reassurance to those members of our community who enjoy the aquatic environment.