

MARGARET RIVER PRO — SHARKS — HAZARD MITIGATION

272. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Tourism:

I have a supplementary question. In light of the cancellation of another major international tourism event due to sharks, does the minister stand by his comment that this issue in WA is not impacting tourism and will he encourage his government to do more to mitigate the risk of sharks?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

Why does the Liberal Party in Western Australia hate the Margaret River Pro? That is all I can say.

Ms L. Mettam: You hate the Margaret River Pro.

Mr P. PAPALIA: There have been no statistics on tourism this year. She is talking about statistics she was responsible for in her government, which drove down and neglected tourism for eight and a half years.

Ms L. Mettam: Five dive shops shut.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes, when we came to office, tourism had been neglected for eight and half years. Yes, we responded. In September we passed a budget that enabled Tourism Western Australia, the agency responsible for tourism, to run campaigns and it resulted in more than 52 000 additional bookings, mostly in the month of December last year. The first quarter of this year has, by all accounts, as the member would know had she bothered to speak to any tourism operators, been the best quarter in years. This Chinese New Year was the best one ever experienced in WA. We brought 4 000 interstate and overseas visitors to the Ultimate Fighting Championships, an event that has never been held here. There were 3 800 competitors here for two weeks with the National Surf Life Saving Championships. More than 3 000 national rugby league fans came for the double header. There have been thousands and thousands of additional visitors from outside this state as a direct consequence of government actions. By pursuing this path, all the member for Vasse is doing is jeopardising my attempts to retain the Margaret River Pro and extend it into the future.