



Speech by

Hon. HENRY PALASZCZUK

MEMBER FOR INALA

Hansard 14 October 2003

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Grey Nurse Sharks

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (10.02 a.m.): Grey nurse sharks have long had an image problem; now they have a fight for survival. Their fierce appearance, and their exposed sharp teeth meant they had an unwarranted reputation as people eaters and they were hunted almost to extinction in the 1960s. Unfortunately, the species has failed to recover since then. For grey nurse sharks, it is still not safe to go back into the water and the future of the species is now in the balance.

Already there are a number of protective measures in place, but as the Premier said more needs to be done. The Minister for the Environment and I are proposing greater protection in the six aggregation areas for grey nurse sharks in south-east Queensland. The proposals involve total annual closure to fishing around Wolf Rock near Double Island Point and annual closure to all forms of fishing around the Moreton Bay Marine Park aggregation sites except for restricted spanner crabbing and aquarium fish collection.

Fishing hooks are one of the biggest problems. They become embedded in the sharks and can cause serious infection and can also disrupt their feeding and digestion, causing the animal to starve. One only has to be reminded of the movie *Finding Nemo* where one of the stars, a grey nurse shark, has a hook embedded in its side.

Fishers are already very conscious of the threats to grey nurse sharks. When I opened the Straddie Fishing Classic in August, I congratulated organisers for their decision to limit fishing within 1.5 kilometres of the Flat Rock, Gotham City, China Wall, Cherubs Cave and Henderson Rock aggregation sites in the competition area. We are also proposing to restrict diving at these sites. It is proposed that divers must not:

- dive between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m.;
- touch or feed grey nurse sharks;
- chase or harass or interrupt the swimming patterns of grey nurse sharks;
- block cave entrances or gutters or to entrap grey nurse sharks;
- dive in groups of more than 10 divers; or
- use mechanical or electro-acoustic apparatus including, but not limited to, scooters, horns and shark repelling devices.

It is also proposed to list the grey nurse shark as a protected animal under provisions of the Nature Conservation Act, which would mean the maximum penalty for taking, using or keeping it would be up to \$225,000.

These are proposed changes and we are seeking community input. However, we do need to act now to protect grey nurse sharks. They are already regarded to be extinct in Victoria. The fact is that the survival of this species in our waters will continue to be under threat if we do not change our behaviour in each of these aggregation sites.