




Speech By
Kim Richards

MEMBER FOR REDLANDS

Record of Proceedings, 14 November 2018

MOTION

Shark Control Program, Inquiry

 **Ms RICHARDS** (Redlands—ALP) (5.34 pm): I rise to speak against the motion. This motion will do nothing to improve swimmer safety, nothing to support our tourism industry and nothing to advance our knowledge of relevant issues. I want to highlight the large amount of information that is publicly available and is being relied on by the government and the opposition. When we look at this, we can see who is being reasonable. I suspect the members opposite have not done their homework, have not done their research into the issue and are just being plain lazy. We have not heard a peep from the opposition spokesperson, so let us look at the facts.

The tourism industry is critical to the Whitsundays and to the Queensland government. What do the LNP want to talk about? They want to talk about one of the longest running successful programs in Queensland, which until now has operated on a bipartisan basis. I want to talk a little bit about this program because I have had the opportunity to meet with the team at shark headquarters and to see the fantastic work of the team and the Shark Control Program. The Queensland government has established a program scientific working group comprised of expert members—scientists from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, independent scientists, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Surf Life Saving Queensland, James Cook University, the Alliance for Sustainable Tourism and reef logic. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, with the leadership of this expert group, continues to monitor the progress of alternative shark deterrent technology trials being conducted in New South Wales. The department is also in regular contact with the Natal Sharks Board in South Africa, which also has active shark control measures in place.

The Queensland government's Shark Control Program operates across 86 locations, as we have heard. The Palaszczuk government is providing an extra \$2.1 million over four years and an additional \$731,000 per annum ongoing to help meet the growing cost of the Shark Control Program. This will take total funding for the program to \$16.1 million over four years and \$4.2 million per annum ongoing.

If new technologies are shown to be effective in preventing marine life fatalities and are practical for use, they will be considered as part of the program. The department is committed to collaborative research programs with academic institutions and to date has undertaken investigations into bull whaler movements in canals and feeding strategies of bull whalers. Other programs have included the Queensland Large Shark Tagging Program by Dr Jonathan Werry and the tiger shark program by fisheries patrol officers in Queensland. Fisheries Queensland conducts ongoing assessments of the program's performance to ensure it is meeting its aims. Based on the evidence to date, traditional capture methods remain the most effective measures to reduce the risk of shark attack. Since establishing the program back in 1962, research on sharks and shark attacks has continued to evolve.

The LNP's latest thought bubble in the wake of these tragic events has been to call for a public inquiry. It is startling to see that, after a week of attempting to capitalise on tragedy and claiming to have all the answers, they now want an inquiry. In light of the free-range commentary provided by members opposite, it is important to put the facts on the record. We know that Cid Harbour is not a patrolled beach. We know it is not somewhere you should be swimming.

What we know is that there have been at least five inquiries into the Shark Control Program since 1992—four by the Queensland parliament and one by the Australian Senate. What we know is that the Shark Control Program has operated since 1962, with only one fatality at a controlled beach. What we know is that the Shark Control Program has operated under successive administrations, including the Labor Party, the Country Party, the Liberal and National parties and the LNP. We know that our government has provided an additional \$2.1 million to maintain the sustainability funding in the last budget—the first increase in the budget since 2009. There was no new money under the LNP, and that is without talking about the LNP's cuts.

What we know is that this information is publicly available from a wide variety of sources and will continue to be made available. We know that the program is reported on publicly each year in the annual report, and that includes catch numbers and bycatch numbers. We know that the opposition is one of the best resourced in the country, and we heard that. We know that the LNP member for the Whitsunday knew about the tragic event and chose to stay on in Melbourne, frolicking at Flemington, rather than fly home. We know he was interviewing people track side rather than coming home to talk to the affected people. I table his Facebook post from the day.

Tabled paper. Extract, dated 6 November 2018, from the Facebook page of the member for Whitsunday, Mr Jason Costigan MP, in relation to Melbourne Cup meeting [1898](#).

Knowing the facts, what can we say about the LNP, this motion and their conduct over the last week? We can draw three conclusions: the LNP do not want to look at the facts, they do not want to do the work and they do not care about our tourism industry, our swimmers and the truth.