




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 14 November 2018

MOTION

Shark Control Program, Inquiry

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (5.54 pm): I rise to join my colleagues in opposing this motion. I do so in terms of the great privileges—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Members to my left, I have been clear about my expectations during this debate. I ask that you give the member with the call the courtesy of being heard before interjecting.

Mr FURNER: One of the great privileges of being the Minister for Fisheries is working with the men and women of Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol. They do a great job out on the waters of Queensland. I also commend the hardworking contractors in the Shark Control Program, our program volunteers and our staff in Fisheries Queensland and the department. These staff and contractors work long hours to support our fisheries sector and promote and preserve swimmer safety.

I had hoped that this debate would provide an opportunity for a respectful discussion of the government's ongoing response to the Cid Harbour attack. I do join with the member for Whitsunday in offering my condolences to the family of Daniel Christidis regarding this tragedy. During the debate over the past week we have seen the LNP try to politicise a tragedy. Our government's approach to this tragedy and this event was straightforward. We wanted to listen. We wanted to get the facts. We wanted to take action that reflected the needs of local people—local operators—that would benefit all Queenslanders, and that is what we have done. We travelled to the Whitsundays with some of Queensland's leading scientists and operational experts, local leaders and tourism operators to have a real discussion about what we could do next. Our five-point plan promotes swimmer education, science and research and represents an ongoing commitment to local people.

The tender documents for the research will be issued today. The research will aim to answer a number of questions relating to: the behaviour and prevalence of sharks in Cid Harbour; whether sharks are resident in the area or transit through; whether they have become habituated to boats; and to better understand what species was likely responsible for the attacks. Our five-point plan has been worked through and endorsed locally as a result of the government working side by side with the community. I commend every person in that room for attending last Friday, having their say and being willing to work through the options at such an emotional time. I especially want to thank Mayor Andrew Wilcox and his staff for their assistance in bringing the community together.

With any tragedy there is always a chance that the facts of the matter can be lost. As minister, I want to speak to the myths that have been disseminated in the past week. The most concerning commentary came from LNP members on the Gold Coast, who suggested that Shark Control Program equipment has been removed or is about to be removed. We just heard the contribution from the

member for Broadwater. The facts are simple: there are 86 beaches protected by the Shark Control Program and not 85, as the member for Gympie indicated. It is simply a case of going onto the internet and seeing what applies in the area.

The beaches that are patrolled cover 0.1 per cent of our wonderful Queensland coastline. There has been no deal done with respect to this outcome. In fact, as I just indicated, the number of beaches protected has increased from 85 to 86, and we promoted the program by putting in \$2.1 million at the last estimates. If there was a deal done I ask why the Palaszczuk government would wind down this program and spend that sort of money on it. These beaches are largely patrolled and accessible by contractors. There have been at least five reviews into the program. It is regularly reported upon proactively through the DAF website, monitored by a scientific group and covered in the budget.

There is no secret plan, except perhaps the one cooked up between the members for Broadwater and Whitsunday last week. I am not sure of the position of the member for Surfers Paradise, because his only response was that he was going to holiday in Fiji or Bali instead of the Whitsundays. Perhaps he got the idea from the member for Broadwater, the crisis fuelled opposition leader in waiting, who circumnavigated the good people of Thuringowa for the canals of Hope Island. My advice to him would be the same as to anyone: do not swim in the canals, do not swim at dusk, do not swim at Cid Harbour and do not swim in the murky waters of the LNP's politics. Unlike the member for Burleigh, our shark nets and drum lines do not take unscheduled leave. There has been an unfortunate attempt by the LNP to conflate the tragic events at Cid Harbour with Queensland's Shark Control Program. Let us put the facts on the record. Let us make sure the facts are heard loud and clear, once and for all.

(Time expired)