



Speech By  
**Patrick Weir**


**MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE**

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**MOTION**

**Shark Control Program, Inquiry**

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (5.18 pm): I rise to speak on the Queensland Shark Control Program motion moved in the House by the shadow minister for agricultural industry development, fisheries and forestry, the member for Gympie, Tony Perrett. Last week at Cid Harbour in the Whitsundays, a popular tourist destination, a young Victorian tourist, a doctor with a promising career, was fatally attacked by a shark while enjoying the delights of this North Queensland haven. This was the third shark attack in the past two months at Cid Harbour.

You would have thought that the Palaszczuk Labor government would have been concerned about this recent spate of attacks. However, their answer has been succinct and clear—nobody could miss it: stay out of the water. The LNP also has a succinct and clear message: people before sharks. Telling local families and tourists to not swim in what is arguably one of the most beautiful places on earth is just another example of how lazy this government is. It is a momentous policy failure and does not address the real issue.

In 1962 the Queensland Shark Control Program was introduced—a long time before many in this chamber were born. One would think that during the last 56 years changes would have occurred to both the ecology of the oceans and to the habits of humans. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries has stated that since the inception of the Shark Control Program only one fatality has been recorded at a controlled beach. Whilst official statistics are not recorded, there have been approximately 20 shark fatalities since 1962 on Queensland beaches.

The Labor government would have us believe we can advertise for tourists to come and visit North Queensland with the slogan ‘Come and visit North Queensland: a great place to stay out of the water’. This government is putting the welfare of sharks before our tourist industry and the safety of Queenslanders. They are spending \$250,000 of taxpayer dollars to discover there is a shark program in Cid Harbour. The tourism industry contributes \$12.8 billion directly to the economy of Queensland and indirectly \$12.5 billion and employs 217,000 Queenslanders, or 9.1 per cent of the people employed in Queensland. A vast majority of the millions of tourists who come to Queensland come to experience our pristine beaches. These shark attacks are jeopardising our tourism industry. The Labor government wants tourists to come to our beaches. However, the message is ‘look but don’t touch’. The time to act is now before tourists start choosing a destination they know will be safe for their families.

There is another argument that has been overlooked in this debate, and that is the issue of fishing. Commercial and recreational fishermen and charter boat operators have seen an increase in the number of fish being taken by sharks over the past decade. John Reid, who is 81 and is the state’s most experienced fishermen, wrote to Minister Furner in January warning him of the exponential rise in shark numbers with no reply. In his letter Mr Reid wrote, ‘As a matter of urgency something should be done to address this problem.’ Groups of eight or nine sharks frequently circle under his fishing boat just four nautical miles off the coast. The entries in his logbook detail the experiences he has

encountered and the loss of catch due to sharks. Mr Reid's letter states, 'In the last five years the number of sharks has doubled in each of those years. It has been extraordinary. They are so prolific.' He blames a succession of Labor governments. This could open up the argument for having a take of sharks for the survival of not only the tourism industry but also the fishing industry. There was an article in the *Courier-Mail* recently which interviewed Mr Reid, and I am happy to table that. It is quite an interesting read.

*Tabled paper.* Article from the *Courier-Mail*, dated 10 November 2018, titled 'Shark warnings ignored' [1897](#).

I myself go fishing once a year on a charter boat, and all the charter operators talk about the increasing numbers of sharks. In the coral trout fishery they are losing half the catch to sharks. There is no doubt that there has been a rise in sharks. I support the member for Gympie's motion to have an inquiry into the number of sharks and a control program for the control of sharks. This is asking for an inquiry—not a wholesale cull but an inquiry. If the members opposite want science and a scientific basis, this would deliver it. I support the motion.