




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Shark Control Program, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferry Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (10.10 am): I rise to update the House on the status of the shark control program in the Great Barrier Reef marine park. As it stands right now, 27 beaches that used to be protected by shark control measures in the Great Barrier Reef marine park are no longer protected. This situation is not acceptable to the Queensland government. If it was possible under the new federal permit conditions then we would have the drum lines back in today. The reality is this is not possible.

The conditions of the federal permit, including releasing large dangerous sharks close to some of our famous swimming beaches, cannot be carried out without putting our staff and contractors at serious risk of injury or worse. A few members from the federal government and those opposite have called for us to just meet the federal permit conditions, but this ignores our responsibility to keep our staff and contractors safe. Currently, contractors do not have the equipment or vessels to do this safely. Furthermore, there is a requirement that sharks be tagged. I am advised that would require a vet to be on the vessel to undertake tagging.

Let me be absolutely clear: we do not support a catch-and-release program for dangerous sharks near our most popular swimming beaches. I am also disappointed that the New South Wales Environmental Defenders Office, which received New South Wales government funding, led the action against Queensland. The Queensland government has always put the safety of human life first, and for 57 years there was bipartisan support for that position. It is disappointing that the Leader of the Opposition, who has previously backed the Palaszczuk government's position that people's lives are more important than sharks, now supports the federal government's requirement to ensure man-eating sharks are released live. Only the Palaszczuk government remains resolute in support of the shark control program to protect our reputation as a safe tourist destination.

The solution to this is very clear. The shark control program operates under a permit from a federal authority issued under federal legislation. The federal government can fix this today by introducing legislation to allow our existing program back into the Great Barrier Reef marine park. I call on those opposite to get behind our shark control program and strongly urge their federal colleagues to do so as well.