




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 4 February 2020

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Shark Control Program, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (10.00 am): I am pleased to inform members that after months of painstaking negotiations—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Resume your seat, Minister. Members to my left, the minister has the call.

Mr FURNER: After months of painstaking negotiations, we have reached an agreement with the federal government that will see shark control measures returned to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The Palaszczuk government has no higher priority than ensuring the safety of human life. That is why we have always remained 100 per cent rock-solid behind the highly successful Queensland Shark Control Program in this state.

That is also why, in the face of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal decision that changed the very nature of the program in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, we removed our drum lines because it was not possible to meet the new permit conditions without the risk of serious injury or death of our staff and contractors. Since that time we have been consistent and we have been clear that we wanted shark control measures returned to our most popular beaches within the marine park as soon as possible.

In that time, we have seen ill-informed criticism from some quarters that has done nothing to keep swimmers safe, done nothing to contribute to a solution and risked damage to one of our most important industries—that being the tourism industry. Against this backdrop, we remained focused on the most important outcome—a safer environment for swimmers and visitors at our most popular beaches.

Under the agreement we have reached, we have an amended permit from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority that takes into account the health and safety of our staff and contractors. The federal government has also committed \$4 million towards transitioning our Shark Control Program within the marine park to a nonlethal program. That will include trials of SMART drumlines, rebates to councils to install swimmer safety netting, piloting drone surveillance and swimmer education. A further \$1 million in funding will assist with shark management in the Whitsundays community where recent shark incidents have caused particular concern. This will include ongoing research, technological trials and increased signage and education of water users. I welcome this funding and I am pleased to report that discussions with the federal government about contributions to the expected continuing costs of these measures are ongoing.

We expect that drum lines will be returned to their previous locations within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park in the next couple of weeks. The drum lines will be checked regularly. Non-target species will be released at the site of capture and target species will be released where it is safe to do so. We expect that relocating and releasing sharks will reduce the immediate risk to swimmers at that

location, although it will not remove the risk entirely, making the other shark control measures under this agreement all the more important. This is a responsible outcome on this issue, a grown-up outcome, which is a lot more than can be said for those who have chosen to grandstand on this matter while people's lives were potentially at stake.