

Question on Notice

No. 1143

Asked on 26 October 2022

MS S BOLTON ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES AND MINISTER FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise (a) when we expect the next reports on the current trials of non-lethal shark control equipment, (b) what factors will be considered in evaluating them and (c) what form will recommendations' take?

ANSWER:

The *Queensland shark management plan 2021-2025* sets out how the Palaszczuk Government will continue work to reduce the risk of shark bites through the traditional program, while researching and trialling new shark mitigation technologies and boosting community education on SharkSmart behaviours.

There are currently two key trials underway in Queensland, the SharkSmart drone trial and the catch alert drumline trial.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries partnered with Surf Life Saving Queensland to deliver a trial of shark-spotting drones. The SharkSmart drone trial was launched in September 2020 with the evaluation report of the first phase of the trial now available on the department's website found here: www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/fisheries/shark-control-program/shark-control-equipment/drone-trial.

The Palaszczuk Government recently announced an investment of \$2 million per year to expand and continue the SharkSmart drone trial until 2025. New beaches will be online in time for the Queensland summer school holidays with drones operating at ten beaches from the Gold Coast to Townsville. Drones will operate every weekend and public holiday, and every day during school holidays, subject to weather conditions.

The catch alert drumline trial began in September 2021 and will continue until January 2023. The trial is being conducted at four beaches in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park along the Capricorn Coast. The catch alert drumline trial is delivered by the department and co-funded by the Federal Government as part of the joint commitment to trial alternatives in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. A scientific evaluation of this trial will commence in early 2023, with these results informing any future expansion or extension of this trial.

Due to the very different nature of these trials, evaluation criteria have been developed specific to each trial in consultation with the Shark Control Program Scientific Working Group and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. The final evaluation of all trials will include an assessment of cost-effectiveness and suitability to local Queensland conditions.

The department has also commissioned research to assess the efficacy of personal electronic deterrent devices on tiger sharks, a species of concern for Queensland. Personal electronic deterrent devices emit an electrical field that deters sharks. Previous testing has been limited to white and bull sharks. The new research led by Flinders University aims to help inform the suitability of the use of this technology in Queensland.

The Palaszczuk Government always puts the safety of people first and will not make any significant changes to the program until effective alternatives, suitable for Queensland conditions are identified and proven.