

Question on Notice

No. 1167

Asked on 10 October 2023

MS S BOLTON asked the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

With reference to whales and calves being caught in shark nets during migration season this year, and every year—

Will the Minister advise of any capacity the government has to replace these nets with alternative shark control measures during these migrations when requested by communities?

ANSWER:

Successive governments have recognised the vital role the Shark Control Program plays in protecting human life at popular beaches, which attract tourists from all over the world.

The Queensland Shark Management Plan 2021-2025 sets out how the Palaszczuk Government will continue work to reduce the risk of shark bites through this long-standing program, while researching and trialling new shark mitigation technologies and boosting community education on SharkSmart behaviours. An end of management plan review will commence in late 2024 and will provide advice to government on future options for the program from July 2025 onwards. Extensive community engagement and consultation will be required before any changes are made.

Up to 45 000 whales migrate along the east coast of Australia each year. The percentage of interactions is very low and releasing entangled whales continues to be a Program priority. Fully trained marine animal release teams located at Mackay, Sunshine Coast, and the Gold Coast use best-practice techniques to quickly and safely release marine animals from Program equipment.

So far for the 2023 migration season there has been nine entanglements involving eleven whales. However, and most importantly, all eleven whales were released safely and alive by our highly trained and experienced team.

The Palaszczuk Government is committed to the continual improvement of the Shark Control Program. However, no major changes will be made to the program, including the removal of nets, until the trials currently underway have been completed, analysed, and determined whether they are effective for Queensland conditions.

If a member of the public sees an entangled whale, it is important not to approach or try and release it. Report whale entanglements with program equipment via the shark control program hotline on 1800 806 891 and let trained and properly equipped experts do their job.