

## **Question on Notice**

**No. 521**

**Asked on 9 May 2023**

**MR M BERKMAN** ASKED THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES AND MINISTER FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES (HON M FURNER)—

### **QUESTION:**

With reference to the Shark Control Program (SCP)—

Will the Minister advise (a) according to department records, how many in-utero shark pups have been found dead in catches since the implementation of the SCP, (b) does the department currently collect data on numbers and species of in-utero shark pups discovered in catches made as part of the SCP, (c) if yes to (b), where is this information available and (d) if not, (i) when and why was the decision made to stop collecting and/or recording this information, including in 'supplementary comments' to catch data from subcontractors and (ii) how is the government assessing the impact of the SCP on shark populations, including endangered species such as hammerhead sharks?

### **ANSWER:**

The Queensland Shark Control Program (the Program) plays a vital role in protecting human life at popular beaches, which attract tourists from all over the world. The Palaszczuk Government puts the safety of people first and will not make changes to the Program until effective alternatives, suitable for Queensland conditions, are identified and proven.

The Program collects a range of information for various reasons. The collection of information about pups found in sharks caught in the Program has been collected since 1962 and continues to be collected today. This information is primarily used for scientific purposes and is stored in departmental databases. As this information is not used for management purposes, it is not published online.

Since the Program began, over 60 years ago, there has been a total of 21 545 pups reported across all species.

The department undertook a stock assessment of whaler and hammerhead shark species in 2015 and this report is available on the department's website at <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/our-organisation/research/eresearch-archive>. Stock assessments use the latest biological information in modelling that takes into consideration recruitment loss from harvest through fishing and natural mortality. Based on the outputs from this 2015 stock assessment, and the fact that the Program catches on average less than 1000 sharks per year across all species, it is unlikely the Program is having a significant impact on these shark populations. The department is committed to improving information about harvest and discard of shark species composition to improve future stock assessments.

The Palaszczuk Government is committed to reviewing and adapting the Program in line with emerging science, technology and community expectations. The Palaszczuk Government will continue to do everything it can to ensure the safety of water users at beaches with Program equipment while minimising impacts on other marine life.