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REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

**COMMITTEE ON INVESTMENT, INDUSTRY AND
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**INQUIRY INTO MANAGEMENT OF SHARKS IN NEW
SOUTH WALES WATERS**

At Ballina on 26 November 2015

The Committee met at 2.05 p.m.

PRESENT

Mr K. J. Anderson (Chair)

Mr G. J. Aplin (Deputy Chair)

Ms N. Hay

Mr A. A. Henskens

Ms T. F. Smith

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GREGORY JOHN HACKFATH, National Field Officer, Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association, and

KENNETH JOHN HOLLOWAY, National Special Projects Officer, Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association, affirmed and examined:

CRAIG JOSEPH NOWLAN, President, Ballina Lighthouse and Lismore Surf Life Saving Club, and

ALEXANDER NEIL CAMERON, President, Byron Bay Surf Club, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: We will now resume the hearing. The first group of witnesses to give evidence this afternoon are representatives of the Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association, Ballina Lighthouse and Lismore Surf Life Saving Club and Byron Bay Surf Club. Thank you for attending to give evidence before the Committee. Mr Holloway, I am informed that you would like to declare a conflict of interest?

Mr HOLLOWAY: I believe I may have a perceived or do have a conflict of interest because I am the importer of a beach patrolling tower called Surveyor Lifeguard Towers from the United States and part of the Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association's [APOLA] submission talks about lifeguard towers. I wanted to make the Committee aware that lifeguard towers form a number of designs and I have an interest in one of those designs.

CHAIR: I appreciate you placing that on the record. What water evacuation procedures are in place for lifeguards and surf rescuers to follow when a shark sighting is confirmed?

Mr HACKFATH: From APOLA's point of view, and specifically I can reflect on what Coffs Harbour City Council does as I am also the team leader for Coffs Harbour City Council lifeguard service, our procedures are that if we have a confirmed shark sighting we will clear the water for a minimum of two hours. If we continue to see more sightings of sharks within that two-hour period then it extends for a further two hours after the last sighting. Basically if there are no further sightings within that two-hour time frame then we will reopen the beach. There are other ways in which we can also open a beach—for instance, if we see evidence that a shark may have moved on; and if we see a shark on a school of bait fish we will put a PWC, a jetski, into the water and if we observe the shark leave the area, so we know it is gone, then we will reopen the beach in that circumstance as well.

CHAIR: How do you confirm a shark sighting?

Mr HACKFATH: Confirmed shark sightings are either we have a source that we know can identify sharks—one of the lifeguards themselves sees a shark—or there are enough people on the beach who can say, "Yes, there is definitely a shark." As you can imagine, we get a lot of sightings of a shark out there and it turns out to be dolphins. So we do not willy-nilly close the beach on any sort of big, dark shape in the water; we want a confirmed sighting.

Mr GREG APLIN: What work are your organisations undertaking with local councils and any other organisations to mitigate the effects of shark presence and attacks?

Mr HOLLOWAY: Can you repeat the question?

Mr GREG APLIN: Can you tell the Committee what work you are undertaking with local councils and any other organisations to mitigate the effects of shark sightings and attacks and the results on your community?

Mr NOWLAN: From Ballina's perspective, since the first incident with Tadashi we have been involved in the development of a protocol with the Richmond Local Area Command. With police, surf life saving, the local volunteer surf club, the ambulance service and Ballina council representatives we have developed a four-stage protocol if there is a shark sighting—namely, ring 000 and from there it is escalated to the police. The police will determine if it is 5 o'clock in the afternoon and it is a very ordinary day then we will probably just let it go. If it is a day like today and there are people in the water at North Wall then we will probably escalate it to getting assets into the water to get those people out or request that they leave the water. So that process has been

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in place for probably a good six months now. Last year we probably had four call-outs for our jet rescue boats; we are now up to 61 for this six months.

Mr GREG APLIN: That answers the question more in relation to emergency response. I am looking more at the long-term effects of what you have just been through. How are you working with other organisations to mitigate the effects of that on your community and resources?

Mr NOWLAN: Obviously we are reliant upon the Government with the procedures in shark-deterrent measures that are being trialled. It is early days for us. We are trying to come to terms with the level of incidents and level of activity that we are seeing. Obviously we welcome any deterrent measures to be trialled. It is work in progress.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: I begin by thanking all of you for the great work you do in keeping our beaches safe, particularly the surf life savers who are obviously volunteers. I was concerned to read in the Ballina Lighthouse and Lismore Surf Life Saving Club submission that this has had an effect on your volunteer numbers. Can you tell the Committee what sort of effect these shark attacks have had on the community and on your clubs?

Mr NOWLAN: It has had a range of impacts. Basically our numbers—in 2013, we had 572 members; in 2014, we had 578 members; this year we are at 449 members. We are currently down 23 per cent. That is reflected in both our junior numbers and our senior patrolling members. We are down considerably on what we normally have. We have worked hard over the past few years to try to build our numbers up. We have been successful in that but obviously now we are back—this places a greater responsibility on those members who do show up. We have gone from when I first started as being a member here of having five to six members on patrol, we are up around nine on average patrolling members per shift. Obviously with the reduction in numbers we will be going back.

We have increased our risk assessment to get back into the water. We are placing patrolling members on the headland here; that takes members off the beach if there is a rescue that we need to attend. So that is an issue we have to deal with. In terms of the local community, and I can only speak in terms of anecdotal evidence with the number of tourists and things like that, but certainly we have heard of people choosing not to come to this area because of the shark activity. Ballina has certainly hit the map for all the wrong reasons. I have been to Sydney and when people in taxis ask where you come from and you say Ballina they go, "Shark city". It is certainly having an impact on our tourist numbers and that is something we also need to deal with.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Are there any specific measures you could recommend that would assist you in building up your volunteer numbers?

Mr NOWLAN: I think time. We were hoping to get some clear air after the second attack, the Matt Lee attack, which occurred in the centre of the beach here. We were starting to get back into the water and people were starting to get back into the surf but, obviously, that again has knocked those numbers back again. I think any support from the Government in terms of shark deterrent measures would be helpful. The Prime Minister is encouraging us to be an innovative society and obviously there are beaches all around the world.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Agile and innovative. It is almost akin to stopping the boats.

Mr NOWLAN: We hope that the development of technologies will give us an early warning or deter the shark from getting within proximity to the beach. That is what we would be looking for. That is probably the end game from our point of view. We expect and we are aware that we are not going to be able to have our numbers back to where they were in the short term, but that is something we will have to continually build upon. A number of nipper parents joined us early in the season but after the last attack with Sam Morgan they have withdrawn their membership from the club. It is having a direct impact. We would obviously welcome the trialling of measures. Obviously those measures need to be ecologically friendly. I suspect we are never going to get support from 100 per cent of the community but that is just the way it is. We need to do as much as we can to protect the public that want to go into the water.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: I wish to follow up on that. Mr Hackfath, you said that you are from down Coffs Harbour way. Could each of you describe firsthand the areas you have observed and the effect on the numbers of people that are using the beach you have observed since the shark attacks started?

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Mr CAMERON: Byron Bay is relatively shallow so sharks are easily spotted in the water. Most of the bay is anything from five to 10 metres deep and the bottom is visible from the surface, so there are no hidden features there. We do have a couple of reefs out in the middle of the bay that attract wildlife. Associate members of the Byron Bay Surf Club swim daily from The Pass to the main beach. They used to swim directly across, which was approximately 1.5 kilometres across, and near a couple of these reefs where a couple of them have spotted sharks. They now swim closer to shore, shorter distances and after the shark attack we had last year it cleared the water for a month or two months and people gradually came back. At the moment there is still the fear of sharks but it does not seem to affect the numbers attending the beach.

Mr NOWLAN: Similar to what Mr Cameron just said, I live not too far away and I travel around this way to go to work just to look at the beach.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: For the transcript, because it will not pick up your hand gestures and so on, could you identify the beaches you are observing and then give us the effect that you have observed on the number of people using the beach?

Mr NOWLAN: Sure. I have lived in close proximity to here. I travel past Shelly Beach and Lighthouse Beach on the way to work. There are three main breaks, north Shelly, Speeds, which is out here off the end of Lighthouse Beach, and North Wall. On a good day it would be nothing for probably 80 to 100 surfers to be in the water at 7.30 a.m.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Is that a decline?

Mr NOWLAN: That was 100 before the incidents occurred. I can drive past here now and you would be lucky to see five or so.

Ms TAMARA SMITH: It depends on the surf.

Mr HOLLOWAY: I have good knowledge of and I know the beaches from Garie Beach in the Royal National Park down to City Beach at Port Kembla.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Great place.

Mr HOLLOWAY: Great place Port Kembla; one of the most beautiful beaches in the world.

Ms TAMARA SMITH: I might contest that.

Mr HOLLOWAY: I can say that there is no decline in the usage of the beaches and in the water. Because of the growing region behind us—south-west Sydney, the largest urban growth area—on a good day we are seeing more and more people using our beaches.

Mr HACKFATH: Coffs Harbour City Council manages about 65 kilometres of coastline. There are roughly 34 beaches on that coast and we patrol seven beaches.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Can you give us the northern extremity?

Mr HACKFATH: Yes, from a beach called Bongil Bongil Beach or Bonville Beach in the south right through to Station Creek in the north. It is a fairly large area. A lot of surfers use the beaches right along the coastline. There are some very good breaks, even better than those at Kiama. I do not think I have seen a decline in surfer numbers in the area. We had a lot of people come up to us on the beaches as lifeguards and quiz us regarding sharks and we did think our numbers had declined. But prior to this I went into our system and tallied up our statistics and they have not; the numbers have increased since last year. Maybe people are not going in the water as much but there are certainly still a lot of people going down to the beach.

CHAIR: That is at Coffs Harbour?

Mr HACKFATH: That is at Coffs Harbour.

Ms NOREEN HAY: I would like to know what your view is on the effectiveness of nets in mitigating shark attacks.

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Mr CAMERON: As far as Byron Bay is concerned it has a very outspoken community that is 100 per cent against netting on the beaches for appearance and wildlife and as whales and dolphins regularly come close to the shore. I do not think it would be a viable thing for Byron Bay.

Mr NOWLAN: I have only had experience in Sydney as a visitor; I really have no personal experience. There does not seem to be the level of support for nets around here, as Mr Cameron said.

Mr HOLLOWAY: I started working as a beach inspector at Maroubra in 1971 and Maroubra was netted before that. I hardly ever saw a shark at Maroubra in 10 years when I worked there in those days. My understanding of the nets is that they are designed to kill sharks but there is quite a bycatch with them. As far as being effective, I think that the shark has to be unlucky in some circumstances to be caught in the net because the nets are only 150 to 200 metres long. For example, in Wollongong we have 42 kilometres of coastline and I stand to be corrected but there are only five mesh beaches with nets of 150 to 200 metres long. There is plenty of room to swim over, under and around those nets. I think that it is a psychological confidence thing for beach users to say there is a net there because in my opinion there is no real evidence that they are stopping all the sharks coming to netted beaches. We had a case at Bondi a couple of years ago where a guy lost his hand and, of course, Bondi is meshed.

Mr HACKFATH: Same as Coffs Harbour. The general community does not support nets. We have a very active grey nurse shark population around Coffs Harbour. We have islands that have the grey nurse shark population in close around the Jetty Beach. We have grey nurse shark populations and I think it would be an environmental nightmare to put nets in at Coffs Harbour. To be perfectly honest there is not a lot of support for them at all.

Ms TAMARA SMITH: Thanks so much for coming in. I want to take the time to congratulate you on the work that you do to keep ocean users safe. As the local member I say hello to Mr Cameron and Mr Nowlan. I am an associate member of the Byron Bay Surf Club. I know that you guys are the ones who are dealing with what has been happening in our area as front-line rescue volunteers. I know that the Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association Inc. [APOLA] does great work as well. From the submissions I wanted to ask a question of APOLA. You support the increased funding for observation towers and ongoing investment in the Shark Smart education program but you talk also about supporting a financial and performance audit of funding going to water safety programs. Clearly you have some questions or concerns about the allocation of resources. I wondered whether you could expand on that.

Mr HOLLOWAY: Yes. I will answer that if you like. Basically there are two safety providers on beaches along our coastline. There is only one safety provider here and that is local councils. They can choose to have their own in-house lifeguard service such as those at Bondi and Coffs Harbour. Many of those services operate seven days a week, such as the ones in Wollongong, Sutherland, Waverley, Randwick and Manly. They have seven days a week, 560 days a year lifeguard services. Then we have the volunteers, who basically are subcontractors to council, and we have contractors. We have a variance of contractors. You talked earlier about agility, which is the evidence we have in our folder. All of us here, we define it as the three "As". The first is accountability; we are all accountable. The president of the surf club is accountable, as is Mr Hackfath from Coffs Harbour. We are all accountable when it comes to this problem with the sharks. Council contractors, volunteers, associations and professional lifeguards are accountable, and collectively we are all accountable.

When we enter into a situation like we have—which is a bit unprecedented—and we have this spate of shark attacks, the question has to be asked whether we have the agility to be able to move and try to correct things, the ability to move quickly and easily to look at legislation, strategy, policy, operational procedures, introduction of new professional lifeguard technologies and equipment, innovative patrolling strategies, statements, government decision-making and so forth. Are we agile enough? Do we have the strength to sit down in the one room—and this is a good start—with the service providers, professional volunteers and contractors to have a look at it and say, "In 2015, are we really doing our job to the best of our ability?" APOLA thinks there is a lot of room to move on that. We think the whole thing can be better. A lot of money is being put into beach safety by the Federal Government, the State Government and local councils. I do not know who built this building but I can see about \$6 million sitting right here.

Ms TAMARA SMITH: Council built it.

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Mr HOLLOWAY: Somebody had to come up with \$6 million. I do not want to be disrespectful but Mr Nowlan mentioned that out on the patrols, stick a patrol person on the cliff to look at the sharks. We would have thought that if you are going to spend \$6 million on a building—it has a beautiful view from the restaurant and while I was sitting out there I could see all the people on the beach and I could see a pod of dolphins and birds working—surely the observation point, the key area, for the lifesaver or lifeguard to be in to be able to control the beach, similar to the coach's box at the football from where he looks down and says, "You go here and you go there," should have panoramic views. But in many cases in surf clubs and lifeguard facilities, those simple, fundamental patrolling strategies are not taken into consideration. We believe APOLA needs to come up with alignment to everybody, to be on the same page, on how we patrol our beaches because we think what we have to look at is that there are guarded times and unguarded times. We have patrolled beaches and unpatrolled beaches.

We think there is not much council can do if a person wants to swim or surf down here at 8 o'clock tonight. What is the level of responsibility that council should take? Obviously, we cannot put a lifeguard on every beach, every 100 metres along the beach. But how in guarded times, while lifeguards are on duty, are we doing it the best in 2015? We say no, we would like to see an independent audit of where the money goes and whether in 2015 that manpower, equipment and money can be used more efficiently for the patrolling of beaches.

Ms TAMARA SMITH: In regard to surf life saving volunteers and clubs, what would you like to see? There was an announcement yesterday about some of the technologies that will be trialled. Mr Cameron rightly pointed out that I am a resident of Byron Bay and on that side of town there is a very different feeling. What do you think would be the best way to support what you do to keep people safe on the beach, from shark encounters in particular?

Mr CAMERON: Obviously aerial surveillance is good because they are easily spotted from the air. Standing at water level, they are nearly impossible to see, but it is very clear to see a shark in the water from the air. Secondly, some sort of sonar-type of thing. I am only speaking from my own experience—I have no scientific facts on this, but something like that to deter the creature from coming close to a point. We patrol between the red and yellow flags; we assist outside that area to a limited degree according to our numbers. Our main goal is between the red and yellow flags.

CHAIR: Mr Cameron, should we have more patrols on beaches, more patrolled areas?

Mr CAMERON: Byron Bay is a bit special. Council got on board as from last year and there is a patrol on the Main Beach and Belongil Beach every day of the week. The Australian lifeguard service does patrols of Tallow Beach, which is one of the most dangerous beaches in Australia, Broken Head, Suffolk Park and a number of other beaches which are frequently supported by the community. Manpower is the biggest thing and manpower costs a lot of money. You cannot get the volunteers to spread that wide.

Ms TAMARA SMITH: Mr Nowlan, do you want to add anything?

Mr NOWLAN: I tend to agree. I think aerial patrols in the short term are the answer. Obviously, we do not have the technologies available to implement straightaway but we do have local helicopter firms that are able to do that. They are limited when conditions are not all that great. We had a craft carnival here a fortnight ago when there was quite a strong southerly. He was able to have a look closer to the wall, where it was protected, but further along the beach it got choppy and so he lost his ability. We need a range of different measures to be implemented, but I think the first one, in order to give the public a level of confidence, would be to see more aerial surveillance. But then we need to roll out other technologies and get them to see what else we can use and, I think, sonar as something to deter sharks from coming into these places. The reality is that we all deal with the red and yellow flags, but there are surfers 200 metres that way and surfers for kilometres the other way. We cannot protect them. What is of concern to the local community is that while we are able to protect a certain area we cannot protect everywhere at present.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Obviously, the rule on the beach is that the patrolled area is between the flags and you usually have other flags outside those to say no surfboarders can come within that area. Can you explain to the Committee to what extent you actively patrol and observe the area outside the flagged area?

Mr HACKFATH: Council lifeguard services patrol the whole beach. Basically council takes responsibility for everybody on the beach, regardless of red and yellow flags. We take active observation of the

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entire beach and not just between the red and yellow flags. The red and yellow flags are probably our priority area where surveillance is highest, but we continually watch the entire beach. That is why elevation is so vital—the elevation to be able to patrol. I give the example of Park Beach, which is 2.4 kilometres long. Our tower is about one-third from the southern end. That means we have about 800 metres one end and 1,600 metres the other end. With an elevated platform, such as our tower, we can effectively see the entire 2.4 kilometres of beach. It is not ideal—another portable tower somewhere up the beach would be great, but it comes back to resources obviously. Again, we patrol the entire beach and at the seven beaches we actively patrol that is the philosophy we have on them all.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: What about the voluntary surf life savers? Are they different? Are you more focused on the area between the flags?

Mr CAMERON: Yes, as president of the Byron Bay Surf Club, and as with every other surf club in New South Wales, we sign a patrol agreement. For the past three years our area has run from Belongil Beach in the north through to Broken Head in the south. We supply a service to those areas upon phone calls or distress, police or ambulance. We have an emergency callout system throughout the far North Coast branch and I think every other branch in the State has the same thing. We have the availability of an Australian Lifeguard Service's jetski, which is manned straight away. We have a callout system that notifies people who can help out by text. They assist us as quickly as they can.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: I know that if there is an emergency you will assist anyone, anywhere. My question is directed more to your main focus in regard to observation. We have heard evidence about towers and we have heard that observation is critical. At the moment, do you watch the whole beach regardless of where the flags are or do you focus mainly on the flagged area?

Mr CAMERON: Our patrols are informed prior to commencement. They employ an inshore rescue boat [IRB] or a jetski to do surveillance from Main Beach through the pass and further down towards Belongil Beach. They do a careful scan of the water and that goes on through the day on a regular basis.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Is that the same for you, Mr Nowlan?

Mr NOWLAN: Yes, that is correct. As Mr Cameron said, we have an agreement to go about three beaches north, to Sharpes Beach. We send out roving patrols on a regular basis not only to keep an eye on other people on the beach but also to observe any potential shark activity. We cover a fair area on land but also will put a craft on the water and do a patrol from North Wall to the end of Shelly Beach probably two or three times per patrol.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Since the recent shark attacks, have you started to do things differently in regard to the frequency of surveillance or other procedures?

Mr NOWLAN: We have implemented risk management and risk assessment, a written document that takes into account whether there is bird activity or bait balls, the clarity of the water, et cetera. We have a matrix to apply to that so that we can determine whether or not to open the beach in the first place. As I said, we have seven or eight people on patrol and legally we are required to have at least three. There might be three observing the water and others might be doing something else. We have said to everybody, "All eyes on the beach," so nobody wanders off to do anything else. We have put a couple of people on the headland and sent more people on roving patrols. We have changed the way we operate at present so there is no non-essential water activity. We have taken our nippers off the beach here in regard to water-based activity and taken them to Shaws Bay, which is about 300 metres to the west of here. We have changed the way we operate. Up until the attack a couple of weeks ago, people were starting to get more confident and were going back into the water. But the recent attack stopped that so everybody is at a heightened level of vigilance in regard to what is going on in the water.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Mr Holloway, did you have something to add?

Mr HOLLOWAY: Yes, philosophically that is where APOLA and the volunteer Surf Life Saving association are a bit different. You have in your kit a picture of Bondi. Right now at Bondi there would be 20,000 people on the beach.

Ms TAMARA SMITH: My daughter is there.

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Mr HOLLOWAY: What we have developed over the years is what we call a patrolling strategy, and a copy is in your kit. Bondi is one example. There we have a permanent tower. People are confused when you say "towers"—call it a shark tower, call it an elevated observation, call it a beach patrolling tower, or whatever you like, it is where lifeguards or lifesavers are in an elevated position. If you turn around now you have a pretty good view of the beach. A permanent tower like that would be, for example, your surf club or independently—Waverley Council has its own tower with despatch, communications and storage for equipment—and they are usually at the back of the beach and fixed. Then we have smaller towers, like ones up and down the Gold Coast, developed because of the rapid development of high rise along the coast.

There people do not walk to the flagged area but simply get out of their holiday apartments and walk straight down to the beach and drown. Warren Young, who has worked for 42 years on the Gold Coast City Council as chief lifeguard, has developed the same basic system as is used in southern California where you place manpower according to activity. There might be a hotel or increased shark activity and you would put a tower and a lifeguard at that end of the beach. The reason for the tower is that in 2015 we cannot expose the elements kids, volunteers, adults or especially professionals whose normal shift hours would mean seven hours in the sun. We know 2,000 people a year die of melanoma and six people worldwide die in shark attacks. The emphasis should be on the rescuer.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: I will stop you there. Do the mid North Coast and the North Coast have towers on the beaches?

Mr HACKFATH: We have three towers that are permanent or semipermanent structures. As Mr Holloway said, they all comply with workplace health and safety requirements and they are engineering compliant. They have to be because they belong to the council. We need to develop—we are in the process of developing—a truly portable tower. We need something that can be pulled around the beach by a quad bike or an all-terrain vehicle.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: You need them to move around in order to go where you have your flagged areas?

Mr HACKFATH: Pretty much.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Do Ballina and Byron Bay have towers?

Mr CAMERON: We do not have a tower. Fortunately, the sand dune behind the beach is quite high. If you stand there at the handrail you can see the surf in a similar manner to the way you can see it here. I would speak against towers, especially for some of the smaller clubs. We are blessed—we have a large membership and strong patrols—but some of the smaller clubs up and down the North Coast and far North Coast have limited numbers. If you put a shark tower in, it would take away at least one or two of those members, so the numbers of people you have on the beach for emergency action would be reduced. The towers are visible—you can see them—and they are identifiable for people in need but it takes away manpower from the smaller clubs.

Mr GREG APLIN: My question follows on from what you said about the practical activity that you are undertaking. That has been well documented and thank you for describing it. What interaction is there between your organisations and the local community, councils and media, in making people aware of activities that they can undertake to become more educated in their use of the beach and the surf? Secondly, how do you address the visitor—the tourist—who comes here? How do you increase awareness in that sector?

Mr CAMERON: We have a sandwich board which goes on patrol. That has written information—tides, wind conditions, surf conditions, whether there are stingers and what people should do if they see something.

Mr GREG APLIN: Do they know to go to the board? That is the point.

Mr CAMERON: We have a pamphlet which is handed out. I think Surf Life Saving NSW has put in a submission—No. 55—which lists a SharkSmart application. People are handed that. Whether or not they read it is another thing.

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Mr GREG APLIN: I am just trying to explore whether there is sufficient awareness. You are undertaking actions; are people sufficiently aware of the opportunities to access those apps and that information?

Mr NOWLAN: No.

Mr GREG APLIN: Can more be done? How would you suggest it is done?

Mr CAMERON: I do not know how you force it down their throats—I will put it that way.

Mr GREG APLIN: We just need to explore that; it is an important element.

Mr HACKFATH: Coffs Harbour City Council, similarly, puts out signs and pamphlets. We have pamphlets in various languages, which go into all the accommodation. That is local plus Statewide. It was developed through the New South Wales Water Safety Black Spots Fund. We have also developed five language videos about surf safety. That, again, was done through the Water Safety Black Spots Fund. That has been distributed to all the accommodation houses throughout the State. That is on YouTube through a link so that anybody can access it. Coffs Harbour City Council Lifeguard Services provides education programs. We have a refugee program through one of the local church groups. I cannot think what it is called now. That program comes out usually two or three times a year. We also have a program that works with migrants who have lobbed into the area. We will probably have one for the Syrian refugees who will come into the area very shortly.

We have an extensive school program that hits all the schools at years 3 and 4, and years 7, 8, 9 and 10. There are three different courses that students can do. One is an awareness course in the school, which is given face to face. In the second course we get them down to the beach and do more education with them on the beach. The third course is a fully qualified education program that allows students to go surfing as a school sport. On pretty much all of these things, we cover the issues of patrolled areas, what you should be doing, where not to swim and, if you are learning how to surf, how to identify where to surf. We cover dangers in the ocean, including rips, sharks, rocks, boating and even sun safety. We have a pretty extensive program in Coffs Harbour. We would love to expand it more but everything comes back to resourcing.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Mr Hackfath, we have heard a bit about the business impact. We are trying to ascertain the impact on businesses of these shark attacks. We have heard a bit from the North Coast area. You are from the mid North Coast. I appreciate that you are not a businessman, but what is the anecdotal evidence in your area about the impact of the recent shark attacks?

Mr HACKFATH: I would say there is very little anecdotal evidence. In the latest lot of holidays—in September and October—we had reports of record amounts of accommodation being full. There were plenty of people at restaurants and getting around the place. We thought the beaches were a little quieter but our statistics do not show that. The thought that the beaches are quieter might just be in our heads, so I do not think there has been too much of an impact. We have had a lot of shark sightings but, to tell you the truth, I put that down to the hype from the media. So many people are so much more aware of it now. Social media has gone crazy. As I mentioned, we have had reports of grey nurse sharks. There have been so many sightings of sharks at Jetty Beach but most of those sharks have been grey nurse sharks. We all refer to grey nurse sharks as labradors. We are not getting sightings of big, dangerous sharks.

CHAIR: Mr Nowlan, from what we are hearing up and down the coast, we appear to be in the hot spot. What needs to happen, as soon as possible, to get confidence back and to get people back onto the beaches and into the water, and to get your nippers back into the water, performing and doing what you would normally be doing? You said earlier that you are doing things differently. That may be the way it will be forever more—who knows? What do we need to do to get some confidence and to restore faith in what you are doing on a day-to-day basis?

Mr NOWLAN: We do not know whether this will be the new norm. We do not know whether this level of activity will be ongoing. We need some additional funding because the demands on our services have increased. We are using increased fuel and increased manpower. People—the teams—are taking time off work to go out and investigate these things. Initially, in the short term, the solution would be increased aerial patrols on a regular basis throughout summer up and down the coastline. That is the first thing. The second thing would

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be to look at these other technologies that are available, to trial them and to try to implement them. We understand that there are technologies available but they have not been trialled independently.

We urge the Government to fund that or to give them incentives in order to get the trials happening. There are some smart people out there. We need to utilise their abilities to come up with some technologies that will give us an early warning. If we get an early warning we can get people out of the water—clear it—and when we know that it is safe they can go back in. It would give the public a level of confidence to know that we have the technologies in hand to enable them to swim safely. If there is something out there we can make people aware of it and get them out of the water.

CHAIR: I am hearing three things which, if we could change the world today, would help you. You need aerial surveillance; you need more funding to get more lifeguards on the beach—Mr Holloway made a good point earlier about having manpower according to activity—and you need early warning. Do you think that would assist in getting your guys back?

Mr NOWLAN: I believe so, yes.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Mr Nowlan, part of the issue now seems to be a lack of confidence in safety. It seems to me that the evidence suggests that patrolled beaches are less likely to have shark attacks than a non-patrolled beach. Would having the physical presence of towers on a patrolled beach not give a level of confidence back to the community?

Mr NOWLAN: Any of the technologies out there will assist in giving people that level of confidence but it is just one thing in a suite of things.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: It seems to me that you are not really conscious of things that are happening in the air or the technologies used in the water, but a physical presence—someone who is looking over the beach—would be quite a reassuring measure in addition to the other things that you have spoken of.

Mr NOWLAN: We have certainly received some positive feedback from people who have seen our members on the headland. People have responded well to that and thanked us for doing that.

Ms NOREEN HAY: You would know from the Wollongong experience that the aerial patrols—not helicopters but fixed-wing aerial patrols—have a very conscious effect on the people around the beaches. They are low flying and the surf lifesaving clubs work in tandem with them. Correct me if you think I am wrong, but I think that has a very positive impact on the community.

Mr HOLLOWAY: The Australian Professional Lifeguard Association [APOLA] position on aerial patrol is that if we are going to have aerial patrol it should be by fixed-wing aircraft. The information which I have is from Department of Primary Industries [DPI] statistics. They did scientific research by putting plastic sharks under the water. I am not sure, but there might have been 50 between Wollongong and Batemans Bay. The helicopters found 17.5 per cent of the sharks—obviously, one got attacked—and the aerial patrol got 9.5 per cent. I might be a bit out in my percentages but that is an indication of the effectiveness of aerial patrols.

Aerial patrol can only work when the water is clear—when it is not dirty and not really choppy and so forth. If we are going to have aerial patrol we would support the fixed-wing patrols because they are 10 times cheaper and they can stay up longer; and also because they do a range of other things. We are not at all critical of the helicopters. They are fantastic pieces of rescue equipment, but the use of helicopters is a very extravagant way to look for sharks.

Having said that, Wollongong beaches work with a tower plan. There is a lifeguard in a tower on just about every beach. All the towers are different; they are not coordinated as they are on the Gold Coast or in southern California. When people walk along the beach there, they can say, "There's the lifeguard." If someone has an asthma attack there, and they are looking for a lifeguard, they can say, "There's a lifeguard in the tower." We have not reached that stage yet but we have a system of council lifeguards working on the beaches from Mondays to Saturdays—they have been doing that for 100 years—and volunteers working on Sundays and public holidays. We also have the aerial patrols. I am not sure what more you can do.

Ms NOREEN HAY: The point I was making was that aerial patrol is seen as a positive. It is seen as a shark patrol by the community around the beach.

Mr HOLLOWAY: Absolutely. It gives confidence.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: I do not wish to disclose my age but I grew up in Newcastle in the 1970s and 1980s, and my recollection is that they were all fixed-wing shark patrol planes going overhead at the beach. Has that changed? Has there never been that level of shark patrols up here in the north?

Mr NOWLAN: I think we are the same age. In the 1970s and 1980s we had a fixed-wing aircraft doing the patrol from Byron to Ballina, commenting on what the conditions were like. It was a tourist attraction as well. We have had the availability of the helicopter service here to do some patrols. As they do normal training runs or sightseeing they look out for us. Only about three weeks ago there was a shark off Flat Rock, which is about two kilometres north of here. That helicopter was able to circle above it, and circle down lower and indicate to the people in the water that a shark was present. Do not get me wrong: If we can get a combination of both that would be an advantage, but fixed-wing aircraft are obviously restricted in how tightly they can turn.

CHAIR: We sincerely thank you, gentlemen, for your time today. It is greatly appreciated. The Committee may wish to send you some additional questions in writing. The replies will form part of the evidence to be made public. Would you be happy to provide a written reply to any further questions that we may have for you?

Mr HACKFATH: Yes.

Mr HOLLOWAY: Yes.

Mr NOWLAN: Yes.

Mr CAMERON: Yes.

CHAIR: Mr Hackfath, Mr Holloway, Mr Nowlan and Mr Cameron, thank you again for your time. We appreciate the feedback and the honesty of your answers.

(The witnesses withdrew)

(Short adjournment)

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NATALIE BANKS, National Shark Campaign Coordinator, Sea Shepherd Australia Limited, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: Welcome. Thank you for appearing before the Committee today. Do you have any questions about the procedural information on witnesses and the hearing process that was sent to you?

Ms BANKS: I do not.

CHAIR: Thank you. Before we commence with questions, would you like to make a brief opening statement?

Ms BANKS: I would.

CHAIR: Please go ahead.

Ms BANKS: I thank the members of Parliament who are here today for undertaking this parliamentary inquiry into the management of sharks in New South Wales and for the invitation to provide further information to Sea Shepherd's submission. It is disappointing that the Baird Government felt so pressured to make two big announcements recently on this topic without taking into account the findings of this inquiry, the input of the members of Parliament here today and the constituents they represent. However, Sea Shepherd Australia and I acknowledge and appreciate the efforts that the New South Wales Government has gone to in seeking a scientific review, holding a shark summit—which our New South Wales shark coordinator Allyson Jennings was invited to—and committing to a trial of nonlethal alternatives, to the value of \$16 million.

I cannot let it go unsaid that the smart drum line trial announced yesterday is not a nonlethal trial. Smart drum lines have been used in the French territory of Reunion with recorded mortalities. Sea Shepherd put out a statement on the announcement yesterday. I reiterate that the recent scientific review of nonlethal techniques undertaken by Cardno highlighted some issues with the use of smart drum lines—mainly that they have not been independently assessed for their effectiveness in catching white, tiger and bull sharks and/or their impacts on marine life.

With regard to the management of sharks in New South Wales waters, I have difficulty comprehending why a program called Shark Spotters that has been used in Cape Town, South Africa, for more than a decade, which was the only initiative that Cardno recommended be put in place immediately, has seemingly been ignored. Sea Shepherd has been in contact with the scientists and program manager involved in Shark Spotters for the past two years and cannot think of a better government funded solution to service Ballina, Byron Bay, Lennox Head, Evans Head and surrounds. The program was started by surfers for surfers. It has spotted more than 1,700 white sharks at eight beaches in 11 years. The one fatality recorded in that time occurred on a low-visibility day. I am hopeful that this inquiry will look closely into that program while also considering the current shark meshing program in New South Wales and its management by the Department of Primary Industries.

Sea Shepherd's submission goes into great detail about the history of the shark meshing program, its major downfalls, the lack of justification for nets, the State's duty to conserve biodiversity and habitat, the lack of underlying evidence to prove that unwanted shark encounters have an impact on tourism six to 12 months on, the impact that the shark meshing program has had on more than 16,000 precious marine animals and the vitally important ecological role sharks play in our oceans. It also highlights the major concerns raised by two scientific committees about the management of the program by the Department of Primary Industries. Given that there is scientific data illustrating the importance of sharks in keeping our oceans healthy, and given the frightening figure of a 90 per cent decline in some shark species, I look forward to hearing the results of this inquiry. I again thank the Committee for inviting me to be here today.

CHAIR: Thanks very much, Ms Banks. In your submission you state that research indicates that there is no long-term impact on tourism and business where shark attacks occur. What research do you base that on?

Ms BANKS: I did quite a bit of research on that. A lot of the facts and figures in the submission are footnoted to show where I got the information from. Off the top of my head, Destination NSW was one resource that we used a lot. We also used the figures for beach attendance listed in the Surf Life Saving NSW annual reports to come to that conclusion. We used a Chamber of Commerce survey that showed there had been no

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impact on 80 per cent of businesses in the local area. I think we also used the Australian professional lifesaver statistics. I can reference the submission again and provide more sources, if required, but they were the main sources we used to obtain that data.

CHAIR: Did any part of your research focus on Ballina and this region specifically?

Ms BANKS: Part of the Surf Life Saving NSW and Destination NSW information focused on this particular region.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms TAMARA SMITH: Thank you so much for coming, Natalie. Congratulations on the 88-page submission.

Ms BANKS: Thank you.

Ms TAMARA SMITH: An 88-page submission is incredibly welcome. Thank you so much for that detail. You have provided a detailed history of and statistics on the New South Wales shark meshing program. Do you think it is effective in reducing the number or impact of shark encounters? That is what we have heard, but there are a many different views on that. I am interested to hear what you think. Would you step away for a moment from the environmental perspective and address the premise that the meshing program keeps people safe?

Ms BANKS: In 1946 the then Premier said that the meshing program provided nothing but a false sense of security. I support that view. We have done a lot of research on the shark meshing program and the encounters that have taken place at meshed beaches. There have been 40 unwanted shark encounters at meshed beaches in New South Wales. There was a fatality in 1951 in Newcastle. There have been two very serious encounters with white sharks in the past 10 years at meshed beaches. One of those has been talked about. One was at Bondi, where a gentleman lost his hand. In the second, a gentleman who was surfing lost approximately two kilos from his body. They were very serious white shark encounters at meshed beaches.

Mr GREG APLIN: In your submission and again today you referred to the Shark Spotters program in South Africa. Would you provide detail on how that works?

Ms BANKS: In Cape Town they have towers. The cliffs there are similar to those in the Ballina region and they have built towers on the cliffs. The program started with volunteers; there are now paid staff. The towers have viewing platforms and the staff member wears polarised sunglasses and uses binoculars. There is one person in the tower who has a communications system to contact the person on the beach. They have two people at each beach. Eight beaches are covered by the program. It runs between 6.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m.

Mr GREG APLIN: So it is covering not only surfers but also beachgoers, body boarders and swimmers.

Ms BANKS: That is correct. The focus is on sharks, but it assists every beach user, not just the surfers or swimmers. It is one of the programs that covers all beach users—surfers and swimmers.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: The Shark Spotters website says:

... Shark Spotters is not 100% effective due to human error, weather and sea conditions.

Why do you say it is the perfect solution?

Ms BANKS: I am not saying it is perfect. I do not think any program can provide 100 per cent coverage. Shark encounters are a random event. As I said, there was one shark fatality on a low-visibility day. The program provides much better coverage for surfers and bathers than the current system, which is a 150-metre shark net and/or the potential smart drum lines. The program provides coverage from 6.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m., unlike an aerial patrol, which provides coverage only in one particular area for a few minutes at a time.

CHAIR: What does Sea Shepherd see as a viable option to protect beaches and beachgoers?

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Ms BANKS: Sea Shepherd is very much behind Shark Spotters. It is not the be-all and end-all; however, it can be put in place immediately. It is not an expensive solution. It provides a lot of ticking of the boxes for anybody whether it be from an economical point of view, a political point of view or the point of view of beach users themselves. I am a scuba diver, so I hear from people who go over to Cape Town regularly and talk about how safe they feel because they have got somebody there consistently between 6.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. providing that coverage. Shark Spotters is definitely an option. We also are behind the eco shark barrier or those eco-nets as some people will sometimes call them. I have heard they are looking at potentially bringing them in here at Lighthouse Beach from point to point, which I am a little bit concerned about. But I do think that the actual barrier itself and the way it is currently constructed at Coogee Beach in Western Australia is fantastic and it has provided a lot more confidence to beachgoers. We even are seeing school swimming classes taking place within the barrier.

Ms TAMARA SMITH: Could you outline Sea Shepherd's concerns around the smart drum lines?

Ms BANKS: The smart drum lines will use bait. If anybody talks about tagging a shark they tag them by berley or baiting the water, so we are attracting sharks to an area. That is one concern. A smart drum line on a buoy out in the area of a beach which is kilometres long will not provide the protection that I think our beachgoers are looking for.

CHAIR: You said to berley or bait the water to attract sharks. Is that not what we are seeing off our bars now with bait balls and lots of activity? Is the food source attracting them?

Ms BANKS: Correct. It all is a food source but that is a natural food source that is off our coast. We are doing this deliberately, putting bait artificially onto a hook to attract a shark to the area. We are saying that is going to provide safety for our beachgoers and it will not.

CHAIR: Do you think the sharks are following the food source?

Ms BANKS: Absolutely.

CHAIR: Do you think whales are following the food source?

Ms BANKS: Absolutely.

CHAIR: So it is the food chain that is coming up the coast?

Ms BANKS: I absolutely do believe that. We have to look at the reasons behind it. I do not know 110 per cent but I do know that bait fish attract predators. I do know that whales attract predators. But there also could be other reasons for why we are seeing an increase. I cover a lot of that in my submission as well, including the nutrients coming from Richmond River and higher temperatures at the moment.

Ms TAMARA SMITH: The Committee and the Ballina Shark Mitigation Advisory Group have heard from CSIRO scientists. I have seen a lot of the migration patterns of tagged great whites; they go to New Zealand and they come back. What we heard this morning from a professor and doctor from Southern Cross University supported what you are saying, which is that it is opportunistic. There is a bait ball so chomp, chomp, chomp.

CHAIR: Can I just correct you there? They clearly said it was not the food chain. They said it was opportunistic. It was not the food chain that was bringing whales and sharks in.

Ms TAMARA SMITH: I am saying exactly that. I am saying that we heard this morning that they are opportunistic. Barry Bruce from the CSIRO showed us long-established migratory patterns of the great white sharks up here over the past 20 years. We also heard this morning that the humpback whales are almost back to pre-whaling numbers. In your submission you looked at beach attendance and tourism expenditure statistics during and after shark encounters across the State. What do you conclude about the impact of shark activities on beach attendance and tourism?

Ms BANKS: There is not anything to specifically clarify with 100 per cent certainty that shark encounters affect tourism. I hear this regularly reported in media particularly. There is nothing that I have been

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able to see that has provided with 100 per cent clarity that that is the case. As a matter of fact, I was really surprised when I was researching the fatalities because I thought that fatalities may have more of an impact on tourism numbers and tourism dollars being spent in an area than an encounter may have. Actually, it is the other way. There were more people in attendance six to 12 months later at beaches and international and domestic travellers coming to an area that had had a fatality within the past six to 12 months. It increased, which was quite surprising. When I hear that statement it frustrates me because there is no evidence to back a lot of that statement up.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: But we heard from people over lunch that have been in business for 30 years in this area and who have said that there has been a dramatic drop off in their trade since the fatalities and the attacks in this area. Frankly, that just makes common sense, does it not?

Ms BANKS: I believe that there may have been a short-term decrease. I do not think we can say that in six to 12 months time you will see that decrease because the numbers from the statistics that we have seen do not support that.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Has there ever been a spate of attacks on the North Coast of New South Wales similar to the ones we have had recently?

Ms BANKS: No, there has not been.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: So there is no statistical information that can be contrary to that evidence, is there?

Ms BANKS: But there is also nothing to say we have statistics to show that there is a—

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Except we have business owners who have been operating businesses for 30 years who are saying it has had a dramatic effect.

Ms BANKS: Sure. Anecdotally we have got evidence. Anecdotal evidence is an opinion and opinion can change.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: No, it is a statement of fact as to observation. It is not an opinion.

Ms BANKS: Unless I see their business reports that showed me that, which I have not seen. I am happy to take that on board if they can show me their business reports. I also am aware of some of the surf businesses that are being affected but we also have an increase in surf sculptors in their area currently too, so there is massive competition also. There could be a range of factors that have an input into why they may be seeing a downturn. We cannot just blame it on shark activity.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Are you saying surfboard sculptors and manufacturers have the same economic effect as cafes and restaurants?

Ms TAMARA SMITH: We also heard from the Local Tourism Network that in its survey there was no palpable decline in tourism. I think there is a tension between anecdotal evidence and statistics. Statistics can mask the lived experience, so I think both things can be accurate.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: The business owners were saying they were not part of that survey.

Ms TAMARA SMITH: Yes, I know.

CHAIR: We have heard a fair bit of information today from various people and various sources putting their own views, which has been fantastic. It is why we are here.

Mr GREG APLIN: We have heard and read some submissions regarding the comparatively small number of shark attacks in Australia over the past 20 years compared with the number of drownings and fishermen who are washed off the rocks and subsequently drown. That would tend to suggest that perhaps one solution is to pour more resources into surf lifesaving clubs and extend their capabilities. Would you be in favour of that? What would be your comments?

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Ms BANKS: I am not against it. My concern, however, is when we raised this in Western Australia, and I heard it again today from Surf Life Saving, they are concerned about taking resources away from the drownings and having eyes on the water in terms of rips and those things. That is why I am so supportive of the Shark Spotters program. I think we need people whose sole purpose is to spot sharks and that is all they are looking for. They are not worried about rips and they are not worried about drownings; they are leaving that to Surf Life Saving to focus on. Their whole purpose is to spot sharks and get people out of the water if there is a shark.

Mr GREG APLIN: Are you aware of any other technologies that would work in tandem with Shark Spotters?

Ms BANKS: Absolutely. I think sonar technology such as Clever Buoys would work very well with that. I think definitely aerial patrols play a purpose but I do not think they play as high a purpose as sonar technologies purely because, as I have said, helicopter patrols and fixed-wing aerial patrols are only covering an area for a certain amount of time and not for the whole time that surfers are in the water.

Ms NOREEN HAY: We have heard varied opinions about nets, although no-one has touched on the word "cull" I have noticed since I have been here today. The people who are opposed to netting seem to be very pro the idea of an increase in resources to Surf Life Saving and aerial patrols and the ones who are not opposed to netting are quite happy to have everything. Where would you see Shark Spotters lining up? Would you not see them being an enhanced surf lifesaving group, because there might be times when no-one is drowning and they could be watching for sharks?

Ms BANKS: I see that there is a correlation between our surf life savers and shark spotters. As a matter of fact, when I also pitched this to Surf Life Saving Western Australia they were saying they could share emergency facilities and that sort of thing. So I cannot see a reason why the two would not go hand in hand, and I think it would be massively beneficial to everybody if they did.

Ms TAMARA SMITH: I just wanted to add that I have met several times with Sharnie Cornell from No Shark Cull and looked at the shark spotting program in South Africa. One of the things that was raised was that most of the South African beaches are high up. I have seen pictures of the towers and there is a lot of height; they are on elevated sites and then they have the tower. So I think that one thing that is unique to us here is that it is fairly flat.

Ms BANKS: Yes.

Ms TAMARA SMITH: The height that they are using is about 40 metres?

Ms BANKS: Yes.

Ms TAMARA SMITH: Once again, I think we were hearing from APOLA that those towers can go up to that height and the heights required to spot those sharks.

Mr GREG APLIN: Any questions that relate to your area?

Ms NOREEN HAY: Not in relation to my area, no. I think I have covered it in general, and I did have off-the-record discussions with Ms Banks.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Who owns the shares in Sea Shepherd Australia Ltd? Can you tell us a bit about the organisation?

Ms BANKS: The organisation started in Australia in 2007. Its main purpose was basically—and still is—the conservation of marine animals, and we are mainly known for whale conservation in the Southern Ocean. In 2004 we became very much involved in shark conservation with the implementation of drum lines in Western Australia. Our whole purpose is providing transparency in the programs that are currently running and also to get nonlethal methods and techniques implemented and lethal techniques currently, such as shark nets and drum lines, removed.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: On page 9 of your submission you seem to suggest that the State is not responsible for surfers and swimmers.

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Ms BANKS: Correct.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: But on page 11 you say it is under a legal duty to conserve nature and marine life.

Ms BANKS: Correct.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Do I take it that if the Government had a choice between saving surfers and swimmers on the one hand and saving sharks on the other hand you would suggest that they should be saving the sharks over the people? Is that right?

Ms BANKS: No, that is wrong.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Is that not what your submission says?

Ms BANKS: My submission is basically saying that the State is not responsible any more than for beekeepers being stung by a bee, but there is a legal duty under all of those Acts that are footnoted to protect biodiversity, and a lot of the times the shark nets are actually ignoring those Acts. So it is not so much that we are saying that people are not important and that sharks have more importance; we want to see proven, scientifically backed solutions to the problems that we currently have with sharks. That is not happening, and right now you have got a problem. We have scientists here saying use shark spotters, and nobody is taking it seriously.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: I do not know whether that is the case. I think they are imputing—

Ms TAMARA SMITH: I think you will find my colleagues are, that shark spotting is definitely something to explore.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Especially the marrying of it together with the other issues as I have indicated.

Ms BANKS: Yes. I should say that up to this point—

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: I do not think it is really for you to be saying what we are taking seriously and what we are not, with respect.

Mr GREG APLIN: I would like to explore the difference between shark spotters, which, as you described it, bears a very similar relationship to some of the towers that already exist. What is the essential difference from the ones we have in Australia to those you have described in South Africa, apart from the time that they are operating?

Ms BANKS: The height is probably a difference as well and the polarised windows or the polarised sunglasses that are used. I have spoken very briefly to Surf Life Saving and I do not believe that they are in place at all of the beaches at which they currently have towers. They also use a system of flags and alarms. Flags are not something that are used in terms of sharks being sighted or notifying our current beach users of sharks being sighted. They will use a white flag to advise people a shark has been spotted and a red flag if a shark has been spotted in the last two hours, so it gives beach users a chance to make an informed decision whether or not they want to take that risk and go for a surf. They put a black flag up if it is a low-visibility day—again, providing that communication without having to be at the beach regularly to alert the beach users to what is happening in the water.

Mr GREG APLIN: Just to follow that through, you mentioned communication. How effective is that program in communicating to the general public at a local level and also at a tourist level—those people not familiar with the locality—and how do they achieve that end?

Ms BANKS: It appears to be very effective because, again, we are seeing very low unwanted shark encounters at the eight beaches at which the sharks supposedly are. They have also got boards next to where the flags are that they write on. In terms of anything to do with sharks, whether it be even that salmon are swimming around the area or have been spotted, or there are bait fish that have been in the area, those particular things are all written on a board. It is a great way or a very simple way to communicate that to beach users.

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Mr GREG APLIN: What role could your organisation or other organisations play in enhancing the awareness of the general public?

Ms BANKS: We have 700 volunteers who would be willing to play a role in that program should it be implemented.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: How high then do you say the towers need to be, in metres?

Ms BANKS: The towers in Cape Town, South Africa, are 30 to 40 metres.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: High—from the beach?

Ms BANKS: Some of them at the beaches themselves, if they are flat like this beach they are 30 to 40 metres. If they are on cliffs they do not go that high; they make it as though they have 30 to 40 metres.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: That is a massive height.

Ms BANKS: Correct.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Sorry, did you answer my earlier question? Who owns the shares in Sea Shepherd Australia?

Ms BANKS: I do not know. I do not believe we have anybody who owns shares. We are a company limited by guarantee.

Mr GREG APLIN: Thank you very much for attending today. If there are further questions, additional questions in writing may be supplied to you. Would you be prepared to reply to them as they will form part of your evidence and be made public?

Ms BANKS: Absolutely.

(The witness withdrew)

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JOHN DOUGLAS TRUMAN, Group Manager, Civil Services Group, Ballina Shire Council, sworn and examined:

DAVID ERIC WRIGHT, Mayor, Ballina Shire Council, affirmed and examined:

ACTING-CHAIR: Before we proceed, do you have any questions concerning the procedural information that was sent to you in relation to witnesses and the hearing process?

Mr TRUMAN: No.

Mr WRIGHT: No.

ACTING-CHAIR: Before we commence with questions, I invite you to make a brief opening statement, if you desire.

Mr TRUMAN: First, we would like to say thank you for the opportunity to speak and congratulate you on holding the inquiry. As you would appreciate, we think this is a very important issue for our community and to see the Government response both in terms of programs and initiatives such as the inquiry we think it is very, very important. So thank you, and in saying that we should also welcome you to Ballina—I am sure Tamara has done that already, but we will add our welcome to that. I guess you can call this inquiry a site meeting now that you are here at Lighthouse Beach.

We would like to make a couple of comments in respect of our submission. We have made half a dozen or so recommendations there. I guess some of them now are a little bit dated, given some of the responses by Government to date. A couple of key points that we would like to emphasise are, first, that we commend the Government for the shark summit process managed by the Minister and the department. We think that that investigation and research was certainly very important to this issue. It is also our view that the key findings out of that shark summit were that an integrated response is required and that different solutions will be required in different parts of the coast which, on the one hand, adds to the complexity of the matter but it also, we think, is a key point.

We have made some comments about emergency management. We have what we call a temporary measure in place. The reason we say that it is temporary is it is existing systems without adding further resources. To that end, it is not a perfect situation, and also, because it is not embedded into the wider emergency management arrangements for the State, there are some problems. As we have touched on in our submission, a key point to that emergency response is the use of aerial surveillance, and we have no control when that will be available to us.

So in terms of emergency management, whilst we have a system that is working locally—and I emphasise it works only locally because of the cooperation of one particular private operator—if that was to change, that system would essentially fall over. So again, one of our key recommendations is asking the Government to look at a response in terms of an emergency management framework. We have also touched on economic impacts and, again, at this stage from a council's point of view that is very difficult for us to quantify. We have had feedback from different business operators on all sorts of issues that come before a community like drought or flood; in those sorts of times some people prosper and some businesses hurt. I guess trying to understand that has been difficult for us. We have recommended that, given the scale of this issue, particularly with the media attention that has focused on Ballina, we suspect there might be local impacts. We think this needs to be studied by someone with resources other than the council.

Likewise with the social impacts, it is difficult for us to ascertain—certainly the mayor and Tamara as elected representatives will understand more—the extent of the impact on surfers and those who are used to a certain lifestyle. It is not beyond the point to say that it has changed, given the frequency of attacks, particularly since February, and has made people's use of the ocean very different—the Committee probably will have heard some of those sorts of comments today—and likewise with the function of the surf clubs in managing nippers and so forth on the beach. It is fair to say that a lot of this has changed, mainly because the extended response after an incident is quite devastating to the community. So trying to understand that in a more comprehensive way for government we think is important.

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ACTING-CHAIR: That is very much to the core of this inquiry. In your submission and in your opening statement you referred to economic, social and psychological impacts. You indicated that you are in the process of trying to gather information—this is something the Committee has asked other witnesses—but will you be in a position to quantify some of those aspects in the near future? If so, can we ask you to respond to that in writing? Of course that would depend on when you might have some data.

Mr TRUMAN: With respect, that is our point: We are not in a position to quantify it. That is the sort of study we think is better served by government agencies that have a bit more of the sort of background and resources than we have. We can advocate and facilitate and so forth but as a council we do not think we are in a position to provide that type of data.

ACTING-CHAIR: At this stage do you have anecdotal information that you would like to put forward?

Mr WRIGHT: I have been in close contact—some people say too close—since February; it has changed my life. I have lived on the beach all my life and I have used it. I am busy being mayor so I do not get much time but since February I, like a lot of other people, for example, our chief lifeguard who works for the council has been out more than 50 times in the jet boat and has been to every attack and a drowning—he had to give mouth-to-mouth—and he surfed for the first time the weekend before last. That is because people were angry at the start—some people have been surfing for 50 years and they said, "I need to be able to surf; you have to do something about it." We are lucky we had the helicopters and we could do something. It all kicked off again when we had the Oz Grom surf festival in July, the day before it was about to start Matthew Lee was taken on the wall down there.

If you took a Lotto chance and there were six numbers he would have had the six balls. He only survived because of the Westpac helicopter, which has been flying for 30-odd years and never carried blood until the Monday before and he got taken on the Thursday—the protocol now is that they are always carrying it. He was lucky because of a whole heap of other things, which I will not go into—Gary was on the beach with his four-wheel drive and things like that. The other impact is that we know that people understand that the helicopter service—both Air T&G and Westpac—are integral to our society. They have not seen them coming here so much. I have to commend the trauma team at the Gold Coast Hospital. They have had so many people up there—for example, Sam was taken two weeks ago and they had him on the operating table getting everything done within two hours. It is bad that they have had to be like that but at least we have a good service.

We have had lots of visitors this year as the highway has been upgraded—in fact, tomorrow I was supposed to have a meeting with Bob Higgins, who is in charge of the highway upgrade, but it is now going to be Monday. People have been bypassing Byron because they cannot get in there—they get two million visitors a year—and we are getting a lot of influx. Some of the negativity from not going in the water, a lot of those people have been in restaurants and having a look at all other aspects but certainly after Matthew was taken this beach did not have a surfer on it for about 1½ months—not one.

ACTING-CHAIR: Can you outline for the record the importance of tourism through the North Coast area as a whole and the impact that you might foresee from these attacks?

Mr WRIGHT: This place would not exist—as Tamara has already said—without tourism. Our cafes out the front and all the food-related businesses desperately need tourists. We also have some very good accommodation areas. The other thing is that council owns the Ballina Byron Gateway Airport and on the figures for October we are the fastest growing airport in the country. While those visitors are going to Byron Bay, a lot of them are coming here. We should have upwards of half a million passengers per year from next year. As part of our economic development we are looking at developing the aviation industry out there—the grants and the poles and wires thing would be brilliant out there. The surf shops—I got an email that came the other day unsolicited from Richard Beckers, who owns one of the surf shops, and he said in his 17 years in that business it has dropped down 90 per cent. I know from Webster surfboards at Lennox Head, he was making 20 boards roughly a month and going right around the country selling them—a lot of the boards went to Western Australia—and the two areas he was selling boards to, locally and in Western Australia, has gone down to about two boards per month.

ACTING-CHAIR: Would you be prepared to table that document?

Mr WRIGHT: Yes. I have just written something on the bottom.

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ACTING-CHAIR: Those two gentlemen joined us at the community lunch but that was not effectively on the record.

Mr WRIGHT: He said he has been in business long enough that he is now going to work on—he says here that he has cancelled over \$100,000 worth of surf accessories for Christmas but he wanted to know what we are doing. They are certainly all interested if this eco barrier will work. He believes that his business will be okay because he will now be going into the clothing side and other things.

ACTING-CHAIR: My question was a leading one and I hope that others might take it up. Would you like to ask a question at this point?

Ms TAMARA SMITH: I do not have any questions because I am fortunate enough to work very closely with both the mayor and Mr Truman—we are members of the Ballina Shark Mitigation Advisory Group. I commend them for tirelessly keeping this in the public arena and for their ongoing work.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Would you agree with me that the shark attacks have had an economic impact in this area?

Mr WRIGHT: Dramatically. It has really had an impact on certain businesses but the biggest impact has been socially. I have been very close to some of the victims and the rescuers, especially the man who jumped in over the shark, swam out and helped to rescue Tadashi Nakahara in February and then gave mouth-to-mouth. I will not say because this is being recorded but he has had a very difficult time since. So much so that every couple of weeks I take him and Gary Meredith to lunch. We sit in the corner over there so we can see the ocean. Every morning he goes down to where Tadashi was killed—no matter what the weather is like he is there.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: I am not saying that is not important but the remit of this Committee is to look at the economic consequences. On page 3 of your submission you identify some long-term bookings that have been cancelled since this happened. Some have suggested to the Committee that it is only a question of opinion that this has had an economic impact, but these are tangible, real examples of the economic impact this has had.

Mr WRIGHT: From talking to the managers at the Lennox caravan park, which is owned by the State, a number of people—people who have been coming for 20 or 30 years and would normally book for Christmas—have cancelled.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: So when people like Sea Shepherd say there is no demonstrated impact economically and it is all a matter of opinion that ignores what is happening, does it not?

Mr WRIGHT: The council owns the Flat Rock Tent Park and quite often, because it is a tent park, we have people that come and take cheaper holidays and surf and we lost quite a lot of those bookings.

Mr TRUMAN: Yes, they are recorded in the submission.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: They are matters of fact. There is no opinion about it, is there?

Mr TRUMAN: No, they are matters of fact from our own operation. The other point I would add is when you are talking about economic resourcing there have been costs to the community in preventative services. The beach closures alone have had an impact on the council because you are just managing the responses when they are required. Our volunteer emergency services, as we touched on in the submission also, again those resources are normally fund raised and they are affected. It is not a broader economic impact but it does take resources away from their other normal activities.

Mr WRIGHT: Part of our protocol we developed locally, we have a fantastic shark advisory committee that formed—we had some preliminary meetings after the two attacks in February but after Matthew's attack in July we formed the committee. Ms Smith is on it, Kevin Hogan, Mr Gulaptis, we have all the senior police, council officers, Mr Truman and me, surf life savers, lifeguards, Department of Primary Industries and the University of Southern Cross professors. We put a protocol in place which works using 000 and that means the police automatically, even though they only have one car, come straight to it. Gary or

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someone, the chief lifeguard, will respond, and the jet boat will come out if there is a likelihood. Over 40 times the Air T&G helicopter has had to come down and tell people that there is a shark or sharks in the vicinity and get them out.

The two detective inspectors that keep coming and being part of it, they have been absolutely fabulous, Cameron Lindsay and Bill McKenna. They said definitely there would have been much more impact on people, much more tragedy if that helicopter was not there. Having that protocol going has meant that last year from July to September our jet boat went out four times to shark-related incidents and this year, July to the end of September, it was 54 times. They just spent \$28,000 on upgrading the boat and in three months they used it as many times going out as they did normally in 1½ years. It is impacting on all these facilities. We have had extra lifeguards. It does impact business and employees and things like that dramatically.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Just in regard to the economic impact, is it too early for your council to have devised some sort of plan to try to counter that economic impact? Have you got a plan? Have you worked on that or is it just too early for you to have done that?

Mr TRUMAN: No, we have not, outside of our normal tourism operations. Again, we think it is broader than that. We have to be careful how we do that by promoting the area without drawing attention to one issue.

ACTING-CHAIR: I would like to explore that a bit further.

Ms NOREEN HAY: No, I am happy with the information I have received.

ACTING-CHAIR: Could we explore that further as that is one of the reasons why we are here in our capacity as the Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development. Clearly this is of great concern to us. Assessment of data is vital. You will be working with tourism agencies to gather that data but clearly, as you indicated, we are in the early stages. That needs to be done at some point to quantify the comparison between a normal year to this year and to look at the reasons. What initiatives are you instituting and how are you going about it?

Mr TRUMAN: I think the best thing is to say we at this stage are using our existing internal resources to assess the data that we would normally collect. We are not in a position—and that is why we put in our submission that we need assistance—to try to quantify this question. It is not one we have had the ability to answer before and we are saying it is difficult for us, partly because we have not had a summer season yet and to properly research we need resources.

ACTING-CHAIR: Pre-empting that, are you getting inquiries from visitors outside this region in your economic capacity—in your tourism capacity?

Mr WRIGHT: I have attended virtually all the Lennox and Ballina chamber of commerce meetings. For some reason instead of getting 20 and 30, the one from Ballina we have had 70 or 80 the last few times. I give a statement about what we are doing, what is the latest thing and then they respond back. Most of the businesses, it is a combination of all of a sudden we have all these extra people from Queensland coming down, particularly over weekends and there is a lot of negativity. If we did not have those meetings I think a lot of businesses would have just about folded. It impacts on everyone and all the accommodation. We are lucky that despite the negativity there is the positive aspect of people coming down. I am not sure why.

We had a prawn festival the week before last and council sponsors that with other people. It costs about \$300,000 worth of money and in-kind support and they had upwards of 25,000 people for one day. People know about Ballina. That has been a good thing in a way but it is also a bad thing. We have been known for the wrong thing. Because I have done so many interviews, the producers of the 4BC program rang me up last week. Three of the producers on the show know me. Because they have seen so much footage they are not going to Noosa anymore; they are coming to Lennox Head. That is three families to stay over Christmas which is a positive thing. All the tourist shops seem to be doing okay. Those who rely on anything to do with surf clothing or stuff like that, I am certain their business is down. Real estate is booming though.

ACTING-CHAIR: You referred to media inquiries. I would be keen to explore where they are coming from. Are they national or international enquiries? How are you responding to them? As Mr Truman mentioned,

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you have to be careful how you do so. How are you promoting this region and more generally the North Coast region?

Mr WRIGHT: Our council is one of roads, rates and rubbish really. We have an asset that we have not had to do much for. Council has put in facilities. This building is only two years old and it cost \$7.5 million. This is the community part upstairs; we lease the cafe and the building is paid for by council and a Federal Government grant. The Ballina Lighthouse and Lismore Surf Life Saving Club won the club of the year three years ago and was runner up last year. They operated out of two containers then but now they have this building. We are building infrastructure and we are trying to make it accessible and to keep it clean. We finally have the money, thanks to Ms Smith and the State Government. We are going to build a new marine rescue tower. I think people think that Ballina is on the cusp of going somewhere. This has been a big hiccup and I do not know what another attack between now and Christmas might do. It might all change.

Mr TRUMAN: I know the question is in relation to tourism, but our focus has been getting into the mitigation program. We think if people feel safe they will swim and they will visit. That is why we have been particularly concerned about the aerial surveillance. We said from the get-go that it should have been maintained the whole time. We are pleased with the Minister's announcement this week that it will be extended. Again, we would prefer further extension. I think that is the best message we can give. The mayor is responding to media and other inquiries and at least we can say that there is an integrated strategy to protect people while they are swimming. That would be the best promotion of tourism for us.

ACTING-CHAIR: Are you being kept in the loop sufficiently in that regard as to the new measures and what is your view of them?

Mr WRIGHT: I have given—not an exact count—but over 700 interviews since February. Most of those, virtually the whole time I have never criticised anybody and we have never been gung-ho or said, "Let's go kill the sharks!" We waited until September and I have been saying, "We have to wait until the shark summit and get some answers." We do not have any control out there. It is not us. When the summit happened the Minister got it replicated at Lennox Head and he answered a lot of questions and he said he would make an announcement in two weeks—\$16 million—and I do not think they knew where they were going to spend it. We had all the promises. Sam got taken two weeks ago and the Premier and the Minister notified Ms Smith and me so we could have a positive say. The guy from Western Australia came two weeks ago tomorrow and we are going to net. The Minister said we could. It will be a lot dearer, but from the end of the North Wall right to this point. Two of the attacks have taken place right in that gutter next to the wall and if this eco-shark barrier holds up at least until Christmas—it will not be before Christmas—we will have the beach as safe as you can get here on the North Coast.

Mr TRUMAN: The access to departmental officers and the access to the Minister's office has been excellent.

Mr WRIGHT: Yes, it has been absolutely brilliant.

ACTING-CHAIR: That is good. It is important when we are talking about communication.

Mr WRIGHT: I did an interview on Tuesday and the Minister texted me about five minutes later. That is the sort of feedback we are getting. I cannot believe, Ms Smith too, that they are politicians because they are really sincere people. They understand that we are hurting. I know it is not tourism but it is the aftermath of anyone closely affected by it, which has had a big impact. Hopefully we can prevent another attack.

Ms NOREEN HAY: From what we have seen today it does have a serious impact on tourism. Earlier we had groups advising us on the impact of negative media that they believe is a direct result of the shark attacks. They have been asking how to counteract that negative media by putting out something more positive, but really those sorts of stories sell papers.

Mr WRIGHT: Yes.

Ms NOREEN HAY: After the recent experience and until the announcement by the Government have you developed a media strategy? From what you said a moment ago, have you learnt from recent experiences about media strategy?

Mr WRIGHT: No matter what anyone thinks, right from the start—I am not a Green but I believe we should not hurt the sharks as we are in their territory—I have never said anything that is not positive about Ballina. In every interview I have done I thank Air T&G, for their coverage around the country and overseas. I have thanked the lifesavers, the lifeguards, the police and council and I have promoted our protocol. I know I am driving you guys mad and I am driving a lot of our commentators mad because I am pushing a positive message. So much so that the Gold Coast *ABC* rang me up and said, "Could we do a promo on the prawn festival?", because I had done their show. For 10 minutes I was talking about that. We had a lot of Queensland visitors down. I have always been trying to promote it. Because of that the Premier and the Minister are in contact quite a bit. I have them both in my phone. I do not think too many people have the mobile phone numbers of the Premier and the Minister.

I have always tried to say that we are in an unfortunate position. It is beyond our help, we are doing all this, we have a shark advisory group and everyone is working really hard but we need extra. When I asked for aerial surveillance after Matthew was taken the answer was, "No, it was nothing." Now, it is, "What can we do to help?" That is because we have always been telling the truth and we have been sincere to Government Ministers and the Premier. This has not been done before. People do not understand that our shark advisory group is the first time it has been done. The protocol we have working pretty well for everyone except Sam. That has not been done before. We are hoping that whatever happens here can be replicated on other beaches on the North Coast.

Ms NOREEN HAY: I hope I have not given you the wrong impression. Nobody suggested that you said anything negative. What I am referring to is developing a media strategy to counteract negative media.

Mr TRUMAN: I think it is about continuing our normal Destination Ballina marketing, which we do on a regional basis. That just focuses on the hinterland options and generally why you might come to the region. There is more than one reason to come to the region than surfing, so it is about continuing those. The media attention comes from events like today, announcements and incidents and, like all those things, they come and go. We just have to respond as best we can. At the moment it is being helped by the fact that there has been a good story to talk about in terms of what the region has to offer and the response of the Government, and the councils collaboratively trying to address the issue.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Do you have a Destination Ballina like we have a Destination Wollongong?

Mr TRUMAN: Yes, there is a North Coast regional basis and a Ballina one.

Mr WRIGHT: We can do a lot of marketing through the airport. Not too many places are serviced by four airlines and it looks like we will have a fifth one next year. What I was trying to get at was to say that when there is an attack there are extreme views. No matter what you say, you are going to get horrible headlines but that is usually only when somebody wants to get the news. Some of the news outlets have been fantastic—2SM just wanted hourly updates and 2GB's Steve Price has been brilliant. We spent a quarter of an hour one night just talking about the great things he has done on holidays here. The local media has been absolutely brilliant. They do not glorify or anything; they just want to know if we have a drone or a net or something like that. Those are all positive stories because people see something is being done.

We had a big meeting about culling at Lennox at the end of July and a lot of people attended because they were so frustrated. I have been saying for months we have to wait until the summit—what is this summit thing? Now all of that has changed; I would not say everyone has changed but a lot of that has changed. Certainly having the acoustic buoys out there and the smart drum lines that are going to be there next week all helps. Some environmentalists do not want smart drum lines but they have to realise that is exactly the same thing as tagging. The only difference is the tagging is not done with the boat out there; the boat comes out a little later. The media and those sorts of things can be positive and we have been working on that. The thing that drops us back is if there is another attack.

ACTING-CHAIR: We have heard anecdotal evidence today about declining memberships of surf clubs and you are going to table the impact on local businesses from the declining economy. Has there been any financial impact on council as a result of these attacks? If so, in what regard would that be?

Mr WRIGHT: We pay for the Sunday helicopter because it does not normally run on Sundays. The first couple of times it was paid for by private people. After July, they realised the helicopter was not flying on

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Sundays so they had to do something about it. Since then council has picked up that tab. If we have a shark attack and we close all the beaches—how many do we have?

Mr TRUMAN: We mentioned in our submission—this is now a couple of months old—that we spend in excess of \$30,000 both in managing beach closures, particularly—

Mr WRIGHT: We have had 50 beach closure signs to go out.

Mr TRUMAN: Yes, as I said, because with surfers you are not dealing with patrolled sections of the beach there are many access points across the coastline. Operationally it is quite difficult to close beaches with the amount of resources required to do that. We have also invested in the production of a website for beach closures.

Mr WRIGHT: And a new app has come out today.

Mr TRUMAN: Yes, that has just been announced and is now operating so there are investment costs in that as well.

Mr WRIGHT: What that does is someone puts the app on their phone—I have not put the app on my phone as I use the website—and you put in the beaches you are interested in and for any closure you get a message to say, for example, "Lighthouse Beach closed due to shark".

ACTING-CHAIR: How are you communicating that to locals and to visitors?

Mr WRIGHT: The media announcement was yesterday. That is brand new; it has taken a little while. One thing we have is that anyone who has ever owned anything to do with sharks or has any ideas is asked to contact us. We have passed all that on to the Department of Primary Industries. We have been inundated and it is hard to be polite and get back to everyone. There are a lot of good ideas. The impact on council is more than that: It is Mr Truman's time and I must have sent him hundreds of emails so we can make a concentrated effort. He puts together much wordier answers than mine—I just say sorry. There is also our open parks guy and virtually everybody else. One of our staff was involved in the attack—he had the day off and had gone surfing—and he has only got better now. Council also gave the use of their doctor and that for debriefing. The rescuers were horrified and they were free to use our services.

ACTING-CHAIR: Thank you for appearing before the Committee today. We may wish to send you some additional questions in writing, and the answers to those would form part of your evidence and be made public. Would you be happy to provide written replies?

Mr TRUMAN: Yes.

ACTING-CHAIR: I thank everybody who participated in the hearing today. Proceedings are now concluded.

(The witnesses withdrew)

(The Committee adjourned at 4.21 p.m.)