

**Submission
No 66**

MANAGEMENT OF SHARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES WATERS

Organisation: Port Macquarie-Hastings Council
Name: Mr Liam Bulley
Date Received: 23/10/2015

Thank you for the opportunity to make submission in regard to the Inquiry into management of sharks in NSW waters being undertaken by the Legislative Assembly.

I acknowledge the terms of reference and advise that council staff are able to provide some comment on:

- a) The impact of shark attacks on tourism and related industries;
- b) Changes in shark numbers, behaviour or habitat;
- d) Measures to prevent attacks by sharks, including strategies adopted in other jurisdictions.

a) The impact of shark attacks on tourism and related industries

The Greater Port Macquarie Tourism Association assesses that at a strategic level there has been no or very little impact locally as a result of the one local attack, or attacks more broadly on the north coast of NSW. In particular, they noted that accommodation operators have not seen any change in visitor bookings or any trend towards visitors looking for other destinations or activities away from the beach. Whilst it has been acknowledged that there has been some localised impact (surf school bookings), on the whole, there is a feeling that potential adverse impacts have been exaggerated by/in media commentary.

b) Changes in shark numbers, behaviour or habitat

Council staff are unable to comment as to whether there has been an increase in shark numbers locally. This issue is best left for industry experts to provide comment on. What staff can contribute to this matter is that:

- Dale Carr was attacked by a shark at Lighthouse Beach, Port Macquarie on the evening of 22 August 2015. Mr Carr sustained severe lacerations as a result of the attack.
- The local lifeguard/lifesaving season commenced on 19 September 2015. Since that time local beaches have been closed on two occasions as a result of confirmed shark sightings.
- Surfers reported seeing a shark at Lighthouse Beach on the morning of 1 October 2015. The sighting was reported to local media who subsequently advised council staff. Council lifeguards closed Lighthouse Beach, Port Macquarie in accordance with adopted shark sighting practice. The beach was reopened several hours later with lifeguards commencing patrols several hundred metres along the beach from the area where the shark was sighted.
- Beachgoers at Town Beach, Port Macquarie reported sighting a shark to Council lifeguards on 6 October 2015. Lifeguards subsequently sighted the shark and immediately implemented councils Emergency Beach Closure procedure. The sighting occurred during the afternoon and the beach remained closed until the next morning of 7 October 2015. Lifeguards reopened Town Beach on 7 October.
- There have been no subsequent beach closures within the Port Macquarie Hastings area as a result of shark sightings.

d) Measures to prevent attacks by sharks, including strategies adopted in other jurisdictions

Council lifeguards have adopted procedures that relate directly to sharks:

- Shark Safety Guidelines
- Emergency Beach Closure Procedure.

These procedures were reviewed by council lifeguards prior to the commencement of the 2015/16 surf swimming season. They have been modified to reflect best practice processes established by other council lifeguard services which were circulated by the Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association in late August 2015.

These procedures have been effective in regard to dealing with the events of 1 & 6 October as outlined above.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to make submission in regard to the Inquiry into management of sharks in NSW waters.