

**Submission
No 38**

MANAGEMENT OF SHARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES WATERS

Name: Name Suppressed
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Partially Confidential

Management of Sharks in New South Wales Waters:

Submission:

Balance in the Marine food chain:

It is vital that we consider the balance of the entire marine food chain in this debate.

We continue to commercially fish **wildlife** from the lower end of the marine food chain for our wide-spread consumption and reduce the available food supply for predator sharks.

The laws enforced since the late 1990's act to protect predator White Sharks and aim to increase their population.

These 2 practices are in conflict and have the potential to create a man-made imbalance in Australian waters where the ratio of large sharks to fish will become dangerously disproportionate.

It is a clear continuation of logic that with an imbalance, predators will become increasingly desperate as we outcompete them for their food supply and it is possible that the increase in shark attack incidents over recent years is a result of sharks being forced to target a human even though it is not their normal behaviour.

The protected status of White Sharks is a dangerous double standard that deems a single shark species to be a more valuable marine organism than other fish species and is out of place with how balanced food chains function.

I believe this leaves us with 2 options,

1. Protect the entire food chain and cease commercial fishing of marine wildlife for human consumption throughout Australia, so as to ensure an adequate natural food supply for an increasing White Shark population.

Note: In addition, it is important to consider that the creation of small scale, isolated protected marine parks may not be sufficient to correct large scale overfishing and has the added risk of attracting more sharks to a single area. This is particularly dangerous when the protected marine park is coastal and located along popular surfing, swimming and tourist beaches.

2. The Government manages the population of White Sharks in NSW waters via a carefully regulated capture and removal program that acts to maintain a safe balance of White Sharks to prey fish species.

A current precedent for the culling of an Australian native animal can be observed in the culling of Kangaroos in the ACT. Another relevant comparison may be the policies controlling the hunting of bears in the USA and Canada.

Responsibility:

If a dangerous animal is protected by government policy with the goal being to increase its numbers then there is a responsibility placed upon government to act to prevent serious injuries and fatalities within the community from being caused by that animal.

Responsible policy would have recognised this and introduced widespread shark attack mitigation strategies across Australian & NSW beaches. Since laws protecting White Shark populations began to be enforced over 15 years ago, the only measures that have been used by the NSW government to protect the public has been the continued use of shark nets exclusively on metropolitan beaches between Wollongong and Newcastle. I believe that this is an irresponsible lack of action for the residents of regional NSW and a failure of 'duty of care' on the behalf of the NSW government to protect the victims of shark attack incidents in NSW waters.

I believe that the Australian and NSW governments are liable on this matter. Ocean users in regional NSW at least deserve the same shark mitigation strategies offered to metropolitan NSW in the form of Shark nets and furthermore they deserve the same as nearby Queensland residents in the form of Shark nets and drum lines.

The recent announcements made by the Minister for the Department of Primary Industries – Niall Blair that Shark nets will **not** be implemented in Far North NSW waters because a) the coastline does not suit netting and that b) in 2015 policies are designed to be more conservationist minded; are disappointing for two reasons

1. There is no justification provided for why shark nets do not suit the Far North Coast beaches, especially when this area receives similar amounts of swell and ocean currents to locations being protected in metropolitan NSW.
2. Shark nets are continuing to be used and have funds invested into them in metropolitan NSW and there are no publicised plans to remove them in these areas. This is an example of a hypocritical double standard that is a callous disregard for ocean users & unfortunate shark attack victims in regional NSW.

Shark Attack Mitigation:

Unfortunately, non-lethal shark mitigation strategies are at this stage still largely unproven and in research and development stages. This conclusion is supported by the fact that the Sydney Shark Summit & a NSW government funded review of emerging technologies have been unable to identify and endorse a suitable shark mitigation strategy to be implemented on the NSW north coast.

Until non-lethal shark mitigation strategies are proven effective and implemented across NSW beaches throughout the entire state.

I believe White Shark protection laws should be modified to allow the population of large dangerous sized animals that are big enough to pose a threat to humans and are found to be frequently visiting our beaches to be both monitored and managed by government in a carefully regulated and controlled - targeted capture and removal program. I believe these measures are necessary to protect human life.

I feel that change is also required to the immediate response to a shark attack incident. I believe it is appropriate to lobby for a policy that allows for the destruction of a large shark that is found to be in close proximity to and likely responsible for a recent attack. This is a responsible alternative to merely herding away the animal from the scene of a recent attack using jet skis or tracking its departure from the area using aircraft as has happened in recent fatal and serious attacks in the Byron / Ballina area. There is little argument to support that an entire species will be endangered by eradicating a single large dangerous animal. However, the removal of what could be a rogue animal could prevent the risk of further unnecessary fatalities.

If quickly locating the animal responsible proves difficult perhaps the use of DNA samples could be investigated. By matching the DNA information of a shark, found upon a shark attack victim following an attack, and samples taken during a non-lethal capture of an animal, the responsible animal could be correctly identified and removed.

Human's safe recreation in the ocean:

The activities of surfing, diving and swimming in the ocean are important draw cards to the tourism industry and therefore local economies throughout coastal regional NSW and Australia and humans have the right to enjoy them without the increased risk of shark attack due to a dangerous man-made imbalance in marine food chains.

In addition, activities such as nippers, iron man life-saving events, as well as the large number of Australian surfing world champions and the 'Bronzed Aussie' tradition has enormous cultural significance and we all have the right to participate without an increased risk of shark attack.

I understand that the views I have shared in this submission are my opinion and that those of us that choose to surf, swim and dive in the oceans do so with the accepted risk of shark attack. However, the recent increased incidence of attacks is perhaps no longer a random event that is to be accepted along with our own mortality but a symptom of a larger man made imbalance in our oceans that is putting lives at risk.

Regards,