

**Submission
No 36**

MANAGEMENT OF SHARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES WATERS

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Inquiry into the Management of Sharks

a) The impact of Shark Attacks on Tourism and Related industries

Visiting tourists are allowed to camp at Coffs Harbour beaches and there is between 5 to 10 cars/campers per night that stop in the area. After discussions with these tourists 100% know of the shark problem. Most (70-90%) are worried about entering the water however still do it. It is worth noting that nearly all of these people are young & single therefore do not have children to think about. Whenever the surf has no-one out there is tension in the atmosphere and people will not go out until someone else does. This often takes some time. It has changed the care-free atmosphere of the North Coast which is why many people visit. I, as an Engineer, can personally say I have turned down a job in the Ballina area because I could not live there as a surfer.

b) Changes in shark numbers, behaviour or habitat

Obviously this year there has been a sharp spike in the number of sightings and attacks on the North Coast of New South Wales. Around Coffs Harbour there were sharks being spotted by local surfers very often and these were just the ones you heard of a lot went unreported. Getting people to record sightings and close encounters would definitely help with future management of the animals by identifying patterns, regular areas of shark activity, types of sharks, size of sharks etc. There have been around 10 times more sightings than usual in the Coffs area.

There have definitely been more sharks now than in any time in the last two decades. It is also worth noting that the West Australian attacks preceded the East Coast attacks and they occurred at different times. So what were the conditions on the West Coast when attacks were occurring and what were the conditions on the East Coast? Maybe other countries (South Africa and North America) have been noticing similar conditions. It appears all the attacks around the world this year have been on East Coasts. After EVERY shark attack data should be recorded. Water temp, ocean currents, time, size, type of shark etc. This is something the government could do as it takes little effort, knowledge and resources.

Sharks have been more inquisitive this year with sharks getting closer than usual. This could be due to the need for food. Definitely more sharks near shore coming in closer than other years. An alarming spike in the number of Great Whites sighted as compared to other species. Most years the predominate species along the North Coast are tiger sharks however this year there have been a greater percentage of Great Whites being spotted. The size of the sharks has changed too with much larger sharks being seen or involved in attacks.

c) Adequacy of Management Strategies

The current management strategies are inadequate and very expensive. Aerial patrols may make some of the visiting tourist feel at ease but locals realise a plane or chopper can not stop a shark from attacking someone. Aerial patrols may be able to tell you that sharks are in the area on that day but we all realise sharks come and go and do not attack all the time. Putting up shark warning signs is also flawed. If a shark is spotted on the day a sign goes up for the day. The shark may have just been passing through while

a whole day of beach activities has been ruined. Also once a visiting tourist sees a shark sign at a beach they remember and don't go back to that one. These signs create a sense of panic and danger where there may be none. Water patrols are also expensive and incorrect water craft are used. Boats should not be used. They use more fuel than a jet ski and can not travel into shallow water where attacks occur. Shark nets seem to have some effect and make people feel safer however they can't target just sharks. Drum lines once again have the problem that they can not just target large sharks. All of these options are labour intensive and costly.

An option that has not been investigated is the use of personal jet ski's. If the government used some of the funding from the above options it could register local jet ski owners and use them to patrol local surf spots. Grants could be given to locals that want to earn an extra \$50-100/day. In this way you could have many more "spotters" out in the water and they would be confined to one surf location so you know that beach is going to be protected for that day/half-day. Using Lennox as an example, instead of one boat travelling up and down the coast between Ballina and Byron (missing everything) a jet ski could be sitting on the point at Lennox all day and catch everything while another is over at Boulders Beach to do the same. In this way there can be more patrols done by locals who know the area and they can protect a single beach for an entire day. Spotters could talk between each other and also gather data. If every spot is not patrolled at least one spot is patrolled for the entire day and this is a safe area.

The other management strategy that needs investigation is the use of Orca audio to deter the sharks from an area. The Orca is the only predator that feeds on Great White Sharks therefore sharks will be deterred from the noise that Orcas make. Whether it is forming a line west to east off the coast at some location and creating a wall to stop the Great Whites coming up the coast or just playing the audio at a single beach this is an option worth investigating.

As much as we do not want to admit it shark attacks (especially fatal attacks) involve large sharks not the little ones. Also it is most probably the same sharks that are responsible for more than one attack. The beach community knows this and sees the government to be doing nothing other than wasting money. There are not that many 4.5m and up Great Whites that are sighted or are around. By eliminating the large sharks of the Ballina area (possibly 5 sharks) there would be a drop in attacks to normal levels. Often scientists will say a shark is as smart as a dog. Well we all know some dogs like to lick your feet and other dogs want to bite your head off. It is about controlling the sharks that are going to cause a problem.

The other concern of the local beach communities is the Council policy of burying whale carcasses that are washed up on a beach. As I understand a whale has been buried on the beach between Evans Head and Ballina. This is where the sharks are attacking. A whale has now been buried on Sapphire Beach at Coffs Harbour. Let's see what happens. It does appear however that these whale carcasses could have been dragged out to sea and sunk or blown up. This provides food for other species and does not burley sharks close to shore. This is that basic that it seems silly to mention it. But it is also appalling to see Councils create this problem.

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

Many of the strategies used in other areas have also been used here along the North Coast. That is what we should now be determining, what is the best strategy.

e) Any other related matters

People are dying. People are going bankrupt. The government are looking at options to investigate. As an Australian and an educated person I know there are people that have thought about this issue and are much more advanced than the government's attempt. Get the right people together, not politicians we all know there useless until it comes time to finance it, and sort it out. If you can't employ a consultant they will figure it out.