

**Submission  
No 63**

## **MANAGEMENT OF SHARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES WATERS**

**Organisation:** Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association Inc.  
**Name:** Mr John Andrews  
**Position:** National Secretary/Treasurer  
**Date Received:** 23/10/2015

# **Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association Incorporated Submission**

## ***Inquiry into management of sharks in NSW waters***

### **23 Oct 2015**

#### **Introduction**

**Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association Incorporated (APOLA Inc.)** is a non-profit professional association that is recognised as the peak professional association for Australian professional beach inspector ocean lifeguards.

APOLA promotes best practice in ocean water safety and beach management and coordinates professional ocean lifeguard activity in lifeguard training, community education, tourism support, public relations, regulation and risk management in consultation with Councils and their professional lifeguards.

Typically Council professional ocean lifeguards wear the nationally endorsed workplace uniform for Council Professional Ocean Lifeguards comprising either an aqua blue long sleeve workshirt as seen on the popular long-running award winning television series ***Bondi Rescue***, or a long sleeve white workshirt with blue collar and cuffs with the word LIFEGUARD in block red on the front and back together with blue shorts or blue long pant as worn by Gold Coast City Council Lifeguards.

#### **NSW Water Safety Advisory Council**

APOLA is a founding and current member of the NSW Water Safety Advisory Council (and the previous forms of this Council since the 1990s) and has participated in numerous NSW government forums regarding shark mitigation.

APOLA has provided presentations and reports from a **water safety perspective** including the **2006 Summit** (***Minimizing the risk of shark attack in NSW10 April 2006***) and was a lead agency providing advice to the then NSW Primary Industries Minister at meeting convened at Parliament House 5 March 2009. Copies of the APOLA Inc. '***APOLA Presentation – minimizing the risk of shark attack in NSW10 April 2006***' presentation including recommendations for the 2006 summit and '***NSW DPI – APOLA Submission May 09***' that was an APOLA submission requested by the then NSW Primary Industries Minister following an industry-wide meeting on shark meshing at Parliament House, 5 March, 2009, are attached.

## Terms of Reference

### *Inquiry into management of sharks in NSW waters*

The following including the attachments attempts to address

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

#### **Patrolled beaches**

Council ocean lifeguards, as the principal providers of beach safety at most NSW popular beaches, are predominantly the first responders to incidents involving humans interacting with sharks, particularly at popular patrolled beaches year-round (including Bondi, Manly, Maroubra, North Cronulla, North Wollongong, Newcastle, Nobbys, Merewether and Park Beach Coffs Harbour) and at other beaches during seasonal spring, summer and autumn periods at more than 200 NSW beaches.

#### **Recommendations for patrolled beaches.**

Consistent with the attachments (*APOLA Presentation – minimizing the risk of shark attack in NSW10 April 2006* and *NSW DPI – APOLA Submission May 09*) the key recommendations, that are indeed consistent with a consensus view established at the recent **2015 Shark Summit** that surveillance from elevated positions is an effective strategy for sighting near shore sharks and subsequently providing an immediate warning system, are:

- That the NSW Government recognize that **elevated surveillance for observation and subsequent action by water safety personnel is key for early detection, sighting confirmation and activation of an intervention strategy whereby lifeguards can use warning audio systems (sirens) and at-the-ready jet skis for lifeguard in-water investigation to minimise contact between sharks and humans**
- That in the acceptance of the above, that the NSW Government **replace the current DPI tower grants program (that only provides for grants of no more than \$3000 to be awarded) with a NSW Government program that provides for Coastal Councils to apply for, on a “dollar for dollar” funding basis with an upper limit of \$100,000 per submission available on an annual basis for 10 Coastal Councils each year) to fund lifeguard surveillance towers that comply with current WHS provisions as well as jet-skis (on a provision that funding for a jet ski would be partnered with a tower)**

#### **Unpatrolled beaches**

Consistent with the attachments (*APOLA Presentation – minimizing the risk of shark attack in NSW10 April 2006* and *NSW DPI – APOLA Submission May 09*) the key recommendation (and this recommendation is applicable across all of the community and not just for those accessing unpatrolled beaches) that is indeed consistent with current approaches in response to recent incidents :

- That the NSW Government continue to provide community education programs and fund programs such as the successful NSW Department Primary Industries *SharkSmart* brochures that were developed in 2009 through DPI, APOLA and SLSNSW collaboration and printed as hardcopies and made available in an electronic form (these brochures have been used in APOLA training and education programs for many thousands of students, teachers, surf coaches and water safety personnel since 2009)

In addition to the above recommendations, and in the context that the successful *NSW Water Safety Black Spot Funding* (2011-14) has been discontinued while traditional water safety funding to Surf Life Saving NSW, Royal Life Saving NSW and AUSTSWIM continues to increase on an annual basis, it is recommend that the NSW Government **complete a financial and performance audit to investigate the level and types of NSW Government funding being allocated to government and non-government agencies delivering water safety such that water safety outcomes can be determined, and as well provide for questions about who, what, when, where and how can be answered, and thus ensure that both government and the community has a clear understanding of the amounts of NSW Government money being allocated to various agencies for particular water safety programs.**

Should further information be required in relation to this submission, please do not hesitate to contact myself.

*John C Andrews*

John Andrews

National Secretary/Treasurer

Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association Inc. (APOLA)

ABN 40 537 467 685

Web [www.apola.com.au](http://www.apola.com.au)

Email [info@apola.asn.au](mailto:info@apola.asn.au)



### **APOLA Postal Address**

PO Box 6700

COFFS HARBOUR PLAZA NSW 2450

### **APOLA's TOP 6 BEACH SWIM TIPS**

1. Bathe and swim between the red and yellow flags which indicate the supervised swimming area: No flags = No Swim
  2. Look for, read and obey water safety signs
  3. Check water conditions and the water depth before bathing or swimming - never dive head first
  4. Bathe and swim under supervision or swim with a mate - never go in alone
  5. Never bathe and swim directly after eating or under the influence of drugs including alcohol
  6. Learn how to recognise rips and keep clear of these areas - if caught in difficulty stay calm, float with the current and wave an arm while call out HELP.
- AND REMEMBER when out in the sun always SLIP, SLOP, SLAP, SLURP and WRAP  
(slip on a shirt or rashie, slop on sunscreen, slap on a hat, drink water, and wear sunglasses)
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# Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association Inc. (APOLA)

ABN 40 537 467 685

Web [www.apola.asn.au](http://www.apola.asn.au) Email [info@apola.asn.au](mailto:info@apola.asn.au)

Ph 02 6650 0366 Ph International +61 2 6650 0366

All correspondence

PO Box 6700, COFFS HARBOUR PLAZA NSW 2450 AUSTRALIA

Peter Gallagher  
Manager  
Fisheries Ecosystems  
Locked Bag 1  
NELSON BAY NSW 2315

Dear Peter

## SHARK MESHING SUBMISSIONS

Please find following the Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association (APOLA) submission in response to the documents provided and also an additional copy of a report prepared for the NSW Primary Industries Minister and tabled at a meeting convened by the NSW Primary Industries Minister, 5 March, 2009, at Parliament House.

I trust that the following shall be accepted on reception as the recent 2009 NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL BEACH INSPECTOR OCEAN LIFEGUARD INDUSTRY CONFERENCE *More than just sandy feet*, held at Coffs Harbour, Wednesday 29 April – Friday 1 May 2009, was key to processes of ensuring adequate consultation with the professional ocean lifeguard industry.

Yours faithfully

John Andrews  
National Secretary/Treasurer  
4 May 2009

### **Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association Incorporated. (APOLA Inc.)**

APOLA Inc is a non-profit professional association that is recognised as the peak professional association for Australian professional beach inspector ocean lifeguards. It promotes best practice in ocean water safety and beach management and coordinates professional ocean lifeguard activity in lifeguard training, community education, tourism support, public relations, regulation and risk management in consultation with Councils and their professional lifeguard services staff. APOLA membership is predominantly career professional beach inspector ocean lifeguards employed by Coastal Councils. Typically Council professional ocean lifeguards wear the nationally endorsed workplace uniform for Council Professional Ocean Lifeguards which includes a long sleeve white workshirt with blue collar and cuffs with the word LIFEGUARD in block red on the front and back worn with blue shorts or blue long pant, or full blue uniforms as seen on the popular television series Bondi Rescue.

**Essential television – BONDI RESCUE 8pm Tuesdays Network 10  
TV Logie Winners Most Popular Factual Program 2008 & 2009**

## SHARK MESHING SUBMISSION

### APOLA SUBMISSION MAY 2009

Please find following the Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association (APOLA) submission in response to the documents *Report into the NSW Shark meshing (Bather Protection) Program and the Draft Joint Management Agreements and Draft management Plan for the NSW Shark meshing (Bather Protection) Program*, as endorsed (Conference recommendation 3 – see below) at the recent 2009 NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL BEACH INSPECTOR OCEAN LIFEGUARD INDUSTRY CONFERENCE *More than just sandy feet*, held at Coffs Harbour, Wednesday 29 April – Friday 1 May 2009

**Conference recommendation 3** – that APOLA continue to communicate with coastal Councils and key government authorities such as the NSW Department of Primary Industries in relation to Bather Protection Programs that assist minimization of human contact with ocean creatures including sharks, and that the APOLA Conference endorse that suggested from the **Conference workshop *Developing a shark warning policy and public water evacuation procedures*** regarding response to the *Report into the NSW Shark meshing (Bather Protection) Program and the Draft Joint Management Agreements and Draft management Plan for the NSW Shark meshing (Bather Protection) Program*, and previous APOLA submissions that identified need for funding Councils with additional resources including observation towers and LPCs.

Please also find an additional copy of a report, *Report to the Primary Industries Minister 5 March 2009*, prepared for the NSW Primary Industries Minister and tabled at a meeting convened by the NSW Primary Industries Minister, 5 March, 2009, at Parliament House.

### APOLA SUBMISSION MAY 2009

- The Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association (APOLA) is in favour of the NSW Shark Meshing Program and believes the increased frequency in checking nets is a positive step
- APOLA is in favour of community education programs that the NSW Department Primary Industries has flagged as this is consistent with programs already delivered by Local Government - long running water safety education programs delivered by Council lifeguard services as recommended by APOLA

- APOLA, as key stakeholder in community water safety education, are in a position to provide advice on the suitability of education material to be delivered across the different target groups including international visitors
- APOLA recommends that DPI consult APOLA with regard to incorporation of water safety messages to do with minimising contact with sharks – the science of shark behaviour must be included, such as sharks are more active early light and late afternoons, as alarmist “jaws” type fear presentations that are sometimes used by uninformed personnel do not achieve sound education outcomes
- As part of the APOLA submission presented to Minister McDonald on 5 March 2009, Report to the Primary Industries Minister 5 March 2009, jet skis and elevated surveillance amenities (lifeguard towers) are the key solutions for observation and action by water safety personnel in the early detection and activation of intervention with jet skis for minimising contact between sharks and humans
- Elevation provided by towers significantly increases the capability of Lifeguards and other water safety personnel such as weekend volunteer lifesavers being able to survey the ocean. Strategically placed jet skis provide for lifeguards using the PWC water craft to investigate and move when necessary sighted sharks (the motor noise of PWCs deters presence of sharks) in the vicinity of swimmers, surfers and other watercraft users – this is cost effective when compared to overhead types of surveillance such as that provided by a helicopter
- Jet skis also provide opportunities for lifeguards to become involved with occasional checking of nets as part of the surveillance routines and when storm activity or large seas cause damage to nets and/or result in occurrences of significant by-catch the jet ski proves to be the ideal tool (this is consistent with that suggested in an APOLA presentation to the NSW 2006 Shark Summit). Subsequent reports generated by Council lifeguards could over time inform DPI. APOLA is prepared to play a role in developing and coordinating reporting systems to meet criteria specified by DPI
- APOLA is not in favour of helicopter patrols as this is a costly exercise that has limited application on a day to day basis

# APOLA Presentation – minimising the risk of shark attack in NSW.

Sydney 10th April 2006

## Surveillance as the key to Prevention

- 1) Overview of who Professional Lifeguards are, where they work, how they work whom they work for, and the hours they work. Council Lifeguard Services are the principal providers and controlling authority
- 2) There are more and more people participating in open water activities in recent years and this is significant in the a higher incidence of reporting of actual shark sightings (just as sightings of whales and dolphins has increased)
- 3) Every year at the beginning of summer and during summer the television and print media show visuals of shark packs close to beaches
- 4) The reporting that shark sightings have increased can be viewed positive in one way in that inexperienced beach goers are more likely to attend supervised locations. For Lifeguards this concern for shark attack encourages behaviours that are consistent with drowning prevention messages of swimming in lifeguard supervised areas, that is, “swim between the red and yellow flags”. A fear of sharks also can be a factor for people staying close the waters edge and not swimming too far off shore. For lifeguards it is easier to supervise areas where people are concentrated and close to shore rather than spread out over a wider area.
- 5) Surveillance is the key to prevention. Surveillance is core to a lifeguard’s work in the supervision of beach patrons.
- 6) How is surveillance best achieved? Elevation. Elevated postions such as towers are used extensively by professional ocean lifeguards. The greater the elevation the greater the surveillance area.
- 7) Lifeguard towers. Decades ago lifeguards would erect portable Lifeguard Towers which were often referred to as Shark Towers just as are elevated towers in many surf clubs referred to as shark towers. The image of a lifeguard sitting in a portable tower with binoculars at the ready with a shark bell under the tower is a common image. The use of portable towers has decreased for good reason (workplace risks) and the majority of coastal Councils have erected permanent tower structures that are superior to the first portable towers. Visitors to popular beaches such Cronulla, Bondi and the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast beaches would be aware of the lifeguard towers. Many Councils in NSW without a long history of using lifeguard towers have developed lifeguard tower plans which aim to deal with the need to increase their surveillance capabilities at beaches. Regional Councils such as Gosford and Wyong on the NSW Central Coast have erected towers at their most popular locations. Budget limitations of Councils are a factor for some areas not being able to install a sufficient number of towers, however there are examples of some NSW communities being able to raise sufficient funds to have Lifeguard towers placed at their selected supervised beaches. The Port Macquarie Hastings Council only a fews years ago were able to benefit from community support initiated by the local Rotary Clubs entitled the *Towers of Strength* program.
- 8) OH&S compliance and the effective use of modern emergency response and resuscitation equipment has resulted in the staffing of a minimum of 2 lifeguards at



beach locations. Binoculars, public address system, polarised eyewear and radio communications are very much standard equipment for lifeguards using towers. Sufficient modern equipment such as Lifeguard powercraft (PWCs) not only serve to increase the efficiencies of rescue but also allow for investigation of shark sightings near shore and can function to move some shark species away from the swimming areas

- 9) Education. Swimmers should swim at supervised beaches. Signage should inform and direct beach goers to the supervised beaches where the red and yellow flags indicate the supervised swimming areas. Once a shark is sighted near swimmers warning systems (public address and sirens) are activated and lifeguards deploy modern equipment to move the shark away
- 10) Aerial Surveillance. APOLA is supportive of Australian Aerial Patrol services. The “eye in the sky” surveillance flights are often referred to the lifeguard in the sky as fixed wing aircraft provide a relatively economic superior surveillance, sightings of swimmers in danger and the presence of sharks which is communicated to lifeguards when necessary. Australian Aerial Patrol also has the capability to deal with routine, emergency and off-shore rescue in support of lifeguard services, Maritime NSW and NSW Water Police.

## **Recommendations**

### **Background.**

Councils are the main provider of funds for beach water safety in NSW and the demands on coastal Councils these days is well documented. Councils could certainly use additional funds to erect more towers now rather than later.

- **It is recommended that an analysis of State and Federal government funding be undertaken with a view to more appropriately support Councils in requesting grants for Lifeguard Tower programs**
- **It is recommended that State and Federal governments support aerial surveillance programs such as the Australian Aerial Patrol**
- **It is recommended that State and Federal governments support related Council programs that reinforce the safety message of using supervised beaches.**

**Ian Vaughan**

**National Vice President (NSW)**

**APOLA**

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