



Friday 3rd March 2017

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

RE: SURFING AUSTRALIA SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO THE EFFICACY AND REGULATION OF SHARK MITIGATION AND DETERRENT MEASURES

Dear Committee Secretary,

Surfing Australia is the peak national governing body for the sport and recreation of surfing. We are a not for profit organisation that is committed to grow and develop the sport nationally and we work with our 6 state member branches to achieve this. Our organisational purpose is to create a healthier and happier Australia through surfing. In working towards achieving this purpose the safety of surfers and anyone entering the ocean remains Surfing Australia's prime consideration at all times.

It is clear that the national surfing community has been deeply affected by the increase in shark attacks and fatalities in recent years. The national surfing community is represented by over 2.5million recreational surfers.

The impact of shark attacks has without doubt negatively impacted surfing across sport, recreation and community through participation decline in attack and fatality regions and also through serious down turn in industries related to surfing included surf retail, manufacturing and surf tourism.

There is strong evidence to show significant down turn of over 20% in participation and revenue of surf schools in the regions where attacks and fatalities have occurred. There is also clear evidence around the down turn in industries related like surf board manufacturing and surf retail. In some cases long term surf shops have been forced to close due to the direct impact of shark issues in their regions and surf board manufactures have indicated significant downturn in board sales in effected areas of up to 50%. Boardriders Clubs in effected areas have seen up to 50% decline in participation due to the shark issue. It is clear that the shark issue is having a serious negative impact in communities around Australia.

University Researcher DR Neil Lazarow in his case study approach to examine the value of recreational surfing to specific locales said *"It is clear that surfing's influence extends beyond recreation and tourism and it can bring a "social fabric" that helps define communities and people. Surfing as an activity and as a culture in particular link generations, bring people together, provide an avenue for outdoor-based physical activity, be good for business, and can help build towns communities."*

The shark issue and increase of attacks and fatalities has certainly placed pressure on these important communities around Australia.

Surfing Australia has come up with a position statement with regard to the current shark situation.

Surfing Australia Position Statement on Shark Mitigation

- The safety of surfers and anyone entering the ocean remains Surfing Australia's prime consideration at all times.
- Surfing Australia advocates on behalf of surfers and we respect the marine environment and firmly believe these positions can coexist.
- Surfing Australia believes that long-term shark hazard policy should be led by scientific research, developing technologies and measures that protect surfers while not harming marine life.
- Surfing Australia supports intervention with traditional nets and drum lines either; as a last resort when the level of risk to surfers and other ocean users in extreme regional cases becomes unacceptably high; or where existing programs have proven to be effective in protecting lives.
- Every Surfing Australia event has a comprehensive shark risk management policy that is updated regularly.
- Surfing Australia supports the establishment of a cross industry Shark Policy and Research Committee which engages with local surfing communities, government, leading scientists and stakeholders to encourage informed dialogue and help formulate effective policy.
- In terms of shark hazards, we acknowledge and accept an element of personal risk will always exist when surfing in the ocean.

The above position statement is respective to this point in time and will be reviewed regularly as the position evolves particularly with respect to the progression of scientific research and the development of technologies and measures that protect surfers while not harming marine life. Surfing Australia strongly believe that long-term shark hazard policy should be led by this science and technology area and we certainly encourage and support any progression in this space.

It is clear that this shark issue is not about to go away and while it is somewhat isolated to specific regions in Australia it is also clear that there are many other regions that may become effected by shark attacks and fatalities.

It is important that Government work with key stakeholders to continue to strive to source the best possible solutions to address this issue and ensure that all factors are considered throughout that process.

Kind regards,

Andrew Stark
Chief Executive Officer