



AUSTRALIAN CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

March 9, 2017

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

RE: Submission to Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communication on Shark Mitigation and Deterrent Measures

The Australian Conservation Foundation would like to thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on Shark Mitigation and Deterrent Measures. The ACF is Australia's national environment organisation. We are over 350,000 people who speak out, show up and act for a world where forests, rivers, people and wildlife thrive. We are proudly independent, non-partisan and funded by donations from Australians.

Please find our response to the key Terms of Reference below.

Key Recommendations to Terms of Reference

a. research into shark numbers, behaviour and habitat;

There is a lack in fundamental understanding of range of ecological and societal drivers for variation in the presence and behaviour of sharks and humans. There is a need for further research into scientific knowledge of shark numbers, behaviour and habitat to justify large scale killing as an appropriate or effective strategy to reduce unwanted interactions.

This is further substantiated in the submission made by Mr Duncan Leadbitter (Submission number 7), who raises concerns about white shark population impacts from lethal shark control programs. He clearly indicates the need to establish population levels, examine cumulative impacts of current and expanded shark control programs, and the need to establish target and limit reference points for the population.

b. the regulation of mitigation and deterrent measures under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, including exemptions from a controlled action under section 158;

Under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, the ACF notes that the Minister is not limited in the matters he/she may consider but also notes that the specific mention of national defence or national emergency gives important context to the types and scale of matters, to be considered that form the intent of the exemption of the clause.

We would like to bring to the Committee's attention that unwanted interactions with sharks should not constitute a national emergency of any kind also further implementation of lethal methods. Furthermore, we would argue that the damage to threatened species such as



dugongs and turtles caused by shark nets and drum lines is against Australia's national interest.

As such we do not think that exemptions to the EPBC act for lethal shark control measures are justified or advisable.

c. the range of mitigation and deterrent measures currently in use; & d. emerging mitigation and deterrent measures;

ACF has concerns around methods that are lethal in nature, and cause unacceptable impacts on the natural environment via the killing of a broad range of marine species, both targeted and non-targeted. Lethal techniques are outdated and do more harm to marine biodiversity than good. There is a range of new and emerging mitigation and deterrent measures available or under development and we encourage innovation and trialling/implementation of non-lethal alternatives to shark nets and drum lines.

d. bycatch from mitigation and deterrent measures;

One of the key concerns from the environment movement, including ACF is regarding the bycatch (alongside targeted catch of vulnerable species). Especially regarding the impacts of using methods such as shark nets or drum lines. The committee will be aware of catch statistics for the shark netting and drum line programs in Australia and will understand that a majority of animals caught are non-target species and that a majority of these do not survive capture by these devices.

ACF would like to draw your attention to the detailed analysis done by the Australian Marine Conservation Society on these impacts.

e. alternatives to currently employed mitigation and deterrent measures, including education;

ACF strongly supports the expansion of the public education program. The education program should create awareness on the impacts of indiscriminate killing of marine life in the name of shark control.

g. the impact of shark attacks on tourism and related industries;

The ACF would like to insist that the committee pays due attention to the to the positive impacts that sharks have on tourism both in their role in maintaining a healthy marine ecosystem and directly through contributing to the expanding tourism industry in our coastal areas.

For more information:

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The ACF community speaks out for a healthy environment, Australia's special places, climate action and for lasting social and economic change. Visit www.acf.org.au.