



GOVERNMENT OF  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

## **GUIDELINES FOR SHARKS POSING A SERIOUS THREAT TO PUBLIC SAFETY – AS AMENDED OCTOBER 2018**

### **Background**

These guidelines describe the circumstances in which gear may be set to relocate or take a shark.

The guidelines apply in State waters (typically within three nautical miles of shore) where the relevant and appropriate exemption/s or other authorities have been issued for this purpose.

The guidelines:

- are given effect by Fisheries and Marine Officers operating by exemption under the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994*; granted by the Minister for Fisheries, and following an order issued by the Deputy Director General, Sustainability and Biosecurity (Deputy Director General) of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (Department); and
- are not definitive as it is recognised that every situation where they may be applied is likely to be different, and as such judgement will need to be exercised based on the available information.

### **Responding to a serious threat to public safety involving a shark**

In the event of a serious or fatal shark attack, the Deputy Director General may issue an order to capture a shark in order to relocate or take the animal where there is a risk to public safety.

In exercising these powers the Deputy Director General must always place public safety as the first priority.

A range of measures, including those listed below, are available to the Deputy Director General in the event of an incident involving a shark impacting on public safety:

- Deployment of a Fisheries vessel to the area;
- Beach closures and ordering people from the water through the relevant land manager (e.g. local government, Parks and Wildlife Service or Surf Life Saving WA);
- Helicopter, if available, to conduct patrols to assist in beach closures and advise on shark sightings;
- The deployment of mobile monitoring equipment to provide additional assessment of any ongoing risk;
- Beach patrols by Fisheries Officers or Rangers;
- Deployment of a drone, if available, to assist in making a final evaluation before a beach is re-opened;
- Issue of a media alert with safety information and regular media updates;
- Fisheries scientists to provide advice on possible species or size of shark responsible for attack, based on best available information; and

- Continued liaison with Water Police and other relevant authorities.

## **Feasibility and Capability**

Where consideration is being given to an order to set capture gear under these guidelines, the feasibility and capability of fishing for the shark/s should be assessed.

This assessment should have regard to whether:

- a suitable vessel with appropriately trained personnel, capture equipment, and bait can respond to the location;
- a response can be undertaken in a reasonable timeframe to provide an opportunity to capture the shark/s;
- the master of the vessel has deemed current and forecast marine conditions as safe working conditions for the deployment and retrieval of the capture gear (with or without a hooked shark);
- the relevant authorities (such as local government, land manager or surf lifesaving clubs) have been requested to administer beach closures in waters in the proximity of areas where capture gear is to be set;
- the necessary approvals are obtained if within marine parks and other prescribed areas; and
- the remoteness of the location.

## **Rescinding an order**

Ongoing assessments will be made on the continuation of the operation by Fisheries Operational Managers.

The order to set capture gear in order to relocate or take a shark or sharks is only expected to remain in place where a serious threat to public safety continues to exist.

An order may be rescinded if it considered the threat has passed. Information regarding the decision will then be conveyed to the public.