



# **SURFING** **AUSTRALIA**

## **Surfing Australia Shark Risk Management Policy**

**VERSION 24 NOVEMBER 2015**

# Shark Risk Management Policy

## 1 PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

- 1.1 As the national governing body of surfing in Australia, we aim to provide successful, safe and enjoyable events across the country. Competitor safety is absolutely paramount and our number one concern.
- 1.2 Surfing Australia and its member State bodies listed in Schedule 1 (the States) have a strong national events portfolio. In partnership with the States we manage and execute events each year to a standard that is recognised by key stakeholders to be of benchmark standard.
- 1.3 This Surfing Australia Shark Risk Management Policy will work towards providing a safe surfing environment at events and includes informed decision-making protocol and specific information on shark risk management and emergency procedures.
- 1.4 Unlike many sports, our sport operates in an uncontrolled and, at times, uncontrollable environment, the ocean. There have been an increased number of shark attacks in recent years. The explanation for this is unknown. Whilst various explanations have been offered by experts, there is no clear explanation for why this has occurred. This Policy attempts to address managing the risk of shark attacks through a variety of different measures, but the reality is that the risk will remain.
- 1.5 This policy applies to surfing events conducted by Surfing Australia and the States. Surfing Australia encourages all affiliated boardriders clubs to comply with this policy.

## 2 SHARK SMART PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 From time to time State Government departments and other organisations issue guidelines for shark safety. Surfing Australia has had regard to these guidelines in developing this policy. It is to be noted that guidelines vary significantly across Australia and regard needs to be made for specific circumstances and knowledge in particular locations. Examples of shark smart guidelines are as follows:
  - (a) Avoid areas with signs of baitfish or fish feeding activity
  - (b) Do not rely on the presence of dolphins to indicate the absence of sharks
  - (c) Avoid running events where animal, human or fish waste enter the water
  - (d) Obey lifesavers' and lifeguards' advice, and heed all sign and safety warnings
  - (e) Avoid running events after dusk, at night, or before dawn as these times may be more dangerous

### **3 SHARK RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY APPROACH**

Surfing Australia will:

- 3.1 Follow the procedures set out in this policy at its events to seek to minimise the risk of shark attack.
- 3.2 Work with the States to have the States adopt Shark Risk Management Policies. The States may have different methods of dealing with their unique and specific risks and circumstances.
- 3.3 Work with the States and their key stakeholders through regular communication on this process to ensure surfers' safety in competitions is number one priority.
- 3.4 Monitor and renew this policy annually or more frequently as required.
- 3.5 Apply this policy consistently

### **4 SHARK INCIDENTS REPORTS**

- 4.1 In all shark incidents the Police and emergency services acts as the first point of call for the event organiser. If a shark incident occurs the event organiser should call the emergency number **000**.

### **5 SHARK SIGHTING IN OR CLOSE TO THE COMPETITION AREA**

In the event of a shark sighting in or close to the competition area, the following actions are to be implemented;

- 5.1 The competition should be suspended.
- 5.2 The competition area should be closed.
- 5.3 All surfers should leave the water until such time as the shark is no longer in the area and the situation is deemed safe.
- 5.4 The competition may recommence once the situation is deemed safe.
- 5.5 If it is observed that the shark is a very small, shark which is unlikely to present danger to competitors or other swimmers, or is of a nature which is non-threatening to competitors or other swimmers, the Contest Director only may determine to continue the event.
- 5.6 It is not required that all shark sightings be reported however it is recommended that sharks that cause suspension or cancellation of the event should be reported. In Western Australia there is a specific 24 hour phone line which is 08 9442 8600. In all other states the local lifeguards and or local council should be notified.
- 5.7 It is a matter for all event organisers as to whether they record a log of shark sightings. In many cases it may serve no useful purposes, but it is a matter for individual event organisers to make its own determination. Event organisers may report shark sighting to Taronga Park Zoo who record shark sightings for scientific research purposes.

## **6 SHARK ATTACK IN OR CLOSE TO THE COMPETITION AREA**

In the event of shark attack in or close to the competition area the following steps shall be taken:

- 6.1 Immediately clear the water – horn blasts/P.A/whistle blasts.
- 6.2 Initially, jet-ski operators to be directed to negate any immediate threat. After an attack, jet-ski operators to assist in bringing victim to shore
- 6.3 If jet-ski is not present, event coordinator to contact local SLSC, Lifeguard and SES to assist in negating any immediate threat and assisting to bringing victim to shore
- 6.4 Event Manager to call 000 or Emergency Services
- 6.5 Senior First-Aid Officer to stabilize the victim until ambulance arrives
- 6.6 Event staff to direct ambulance to emergency access point

## **7 INTERRUPTION OF COMPETITION**

In the event of any heat having to be stopped by a shark sighting as decided by the Contest Director, Head Judge or Event Manager, the following procedures are to be adopted:

- 7.1 Head Judge to stop heat and start continuous horn blasts or whistle blast and moving of timing disc/flags to heat off position.
- 7.2 Use public address system to communicate to surfers to get out of the water immediately or if public address system is unavailable use a whistle to notify surfers of the risk.
- 7.3 If available, communicate with jet skis to remove surfers from the competition area to safety.
- 7.4 When it is determined by the Contest Director that conditions are again safe, the heat will restart with the time left from when the heat was stopped unless the Head Judge deems that conditions have changed or that fair competition between the surfers would be compromised. In these situations, the heat will restart for the full time period.
- 7.5 Where an incident occurs that deems a heat may be re-surfed, the heat will be called as “under review.” The relevant surfers will be notified immediately and should a re-surf be declared, the results earned in the heat that caused the re-surf will be substituted by the re-surf heat results for official purposes.
- 7.6 Officials decision about how the heat will be restarted or re run is final and there is no right of appeal.

## **8 ADDITIONAL MEASURES**

Where there is identified that increased risks exist extra measures may be implemented such as:

- 8.1 Aerial surveillance may be implemented
- 8.2 Close beach and arrange alternate schedule if necessary
- 8.3 Cancel the event if sharks are in the area and are not moving on.
- 8.4 Ensure a water craft and senior qualified experienced first aid officer are on duty.

## **9 CONSULTATION AND CONSIDERATIONS**

- 9.1 The Contest Director may consult with such persons as he sees fit in relation to the postponement or cancellation of the event and the determination of the "result" of the event but the Contest Director's decision is final. It is not subject to review or appeal.
- 9.2 It is acknowledged that surfing events may either be of significant commercial value or, at an amateur level, competitors may have travelled and paid for the opportunity to compete in the event and that postponing or cancelling events from that perspective is highly inconvenient and unfortunate. The personal safety of competitors must be of paramount importance. Those factors will not be taken into account in relocating postponing or cancelling the event.
- 9.3 If the event is concluded because of postponement or cancellation by the Contest Director, that is a necessary result of providing a safe environment the Contest Director shall determine the outcome of the event in circumstances where the event is postponed or cancelled.
- 9.4 Sightings may occur during events and at other times within the competition area and outside. It is a matter for individual States and event organisers as to whether they record a log of shark sightings. In many cases this may serve no useful purposes but it is a matter for individual organisations to make their own determination.

## **10 DECISION MAKING**

- 10.1 The priority is the safety of the competitors. The primary person to make a decision is the Contest Director, but in the event of a shark sighting in a competition area or a shark attack, the Contest Director, Head Judge and Event Manager are all authorised to make a decision to protect the safety of competitors and stop the event.
- 10.2 There is a clear need for immediate response and there is no requirement for any of these people to consult with anyone else in making determinations as to immediate action. It is recommended that Contest Directors, Head Judges and Event Managers consult with each other where there is the opportunity to do so, particularly with respect to restarting an event. These officials are not required to and should not engage with other individuals, either participants, participants' parents, local authorities and sponsors. Officials should keep detailed diary and

notes of the processes followed, discussions held and timing of decisions where any aspects of this Policy are implemented. Officials may consult with such persons as they believe will assist in managing any risks, including lifesavers, lifeguards and local boardrider associations, Police, paramedics etc.

10.3 The decision to restart the competition shall be made only by the Contest Director.

10.4 Where a shark attack has occurred, the competition shall be suspended for the day and if it is the final day of the event, the event shall be cancelled.

## **11 MEDIA STATEMENTS**

### **OFFICIAL POSITION OF SURFING AUSTRALIA**

“Surfing Australia supports our state branches in their respective regions to work with the relevant state government departments and key stakeholders to ensure that everything possible is being done to ensure the safety of our members”

### **OFFICIAL MEDIA STATEMENT AT EVENT**

“Competitor safety is absolutely paramount and our number one concern. Our organisation continues to review various procedures regarding shark safety and event site selection to ensure that everything possible is done to ensure the safety of our competitors.”

“We are working with State and Local Governments and key stakeholders to ensure the safety of competitors.”

## **Schedule**

Surfing Queensland Inc.  
Surfing NSW Inc.  
Surfing Victoria Incorporated  
Surfing Tasmania Incorporated  
Surfing South Australia Incorporated  
Surfing Western Australia Inc.