

044	Shark Hazard Response	V1 Current
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## 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to –

- 1.1. Provide direction for responding to shark attacks and shark sightings, as well as the broader approach to water safety warnings and information provided to the public.
- 1.2. Guide the administration of the City of Busselton Property Local Law 2010, under which a sign may be erected to regulate, prohibit or restrict specific activities on the beach or in the water and the giving of directions to swimmers to leave the water if a shark is suspected of being in the vicinity of the beach.

## 2. SCOPE

This policy applies to beach areas under the care, control or management of the City, excluding privately owned land and land in National Park, extending along the coast from the Shire of Capel boundary to the Shire of Augusta Margaret River boundary.

## 3. INTERPRETATION

**Authorised Person** means the Chief Executive Officer or a person or class of persons appointed under section 9.10 of the Local Government Act 1995 for the purpose of administering the City of Busselton Property Local Law 2010 and Jetty Local Law 2014

**SLSWA** means Surf Life Saving Western Australia

**Patrolled Beach** means a beach that has a SLSWA beach safety and surveillance service in operation.

**Unverified Shark Sighting** means a shark sighting reported to the City from Water Police WA and forwarded to the City from the Water Police WA.

**Verified Shark Sighting** means a shark sighting reported to the City by the SLSWA Helicopter service and or WA Government Shark Monitoring Network.

## 4. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 4.1. The Chief Executive Officer will prepare more detailed internal procedures/protocol to supplement this policy and to guide operational staff in the exercise of their functions. The Chief Executive Officer will consult with Councillors as appropriate in the development of those procedures/protocol.
- 4.2. This policy recognises that at a beach patrolled by SLSWA, the on duty life saver will be responsible for implementing shark sighting response in accordance with the SLSWA standard operating procedures.
- 4.3. The City will engage with the Margaret River Busselton Tourism Association and Busselton Jetty Environment and Conservation Association with the aim of having these organisations assist the City's response to shark sightings including the

active placement of shark sighting signage at the Busselton Beachfront and on the Busselton Jetty generally in accordance with this policy.

- 4.4. Shark sighting reports received from the SLSWA helicopter surveillance service and Shark Monitoring Network generally provide details about the location of the shark, size, species and in some instances direction of travel, which are essential for making decisions about swimmer safety. The SLSWA helicopter surveillance and Shark Monitoring Network service when available, will inform the City's response to a shark sighting.
- 4.5. In the event of a shark attack fatality, WA Police are the lead agency. The City will provide assistance with the management of the shark attack and implement beach safety measures as considered necessary and under the direction of the WA Police.
- 4.6. Where an order to capture a shark has been granted to the Department of Fisheries and a direction given to swimmers to leave the water following a shark attack, the decision to re-opening a beach for swimming should be not less than 24 hours after the shark attack occurred and or after the Department of Fisheries advise that the order to capture the shark has been lifted.
- 4.7. Better community awareness and education about the shared responsibility of risk is needed. The City will actively promote the WA Governments Shark Smart website, SLSWA twitter feed and other communication platforms in place to inform the community of recent reports of shark activity.

## **5. POLICY CONTENT**

- 5.1. At a Patrolled Beach, an SLSWA life guard is the authorised person for responding to a shark sighting and for implementing the SLSWA response procedure which may include sounding alarms to alert swimmers, clearing the water of swimmers and monitoring shark presence.
- 5.2. City Rangers are authorised persons for the purpose of responding to a shark sighting. Subject to availability (i.e. during rostered hours, usually 6am-6pm, seven days per week, and when priorities allow, noting that fire/emergency management response, dog attacks or other work that addresses more pressing risks will be prioritised when there is a need to prioritise due to resources being finite), City Rangers will respond to a verified shark sighting at an unpatrolled beach as follows:
  - 5.2.1. If the shark sighted is less than 2.5 metres in length, the City will maintain normal operations and not take any action.
  - 5.2.2. If the shark sighted is greater than 2.5 meters in length and less than 500 meters from the shore, temporary signage is to be placed on the beach immediately adjacent to the shark sighting location, at intervals of approximately 500 metres and/or on key beach entry points, for a distance of approximately 500 meters from a point on the beach immediately adjacent to the shark sighting location.

- 5.2.3. Signage installed on a beach shall not mean beach closure and shall be advisory signage only and remain in place for at least two hours from the time of installation after the last shark sighting (if after 5pm, signs are to remain in-situ overnight).
- 5.3. Unless the authorised person has a very clear basis to think there is a significantly high risk than is normally the case (i.e. there is always a level of risk as only a very small portion of shark activity is ever seen) the City will generally not install signage and patrol beaches as a response to an unverified shark sighting where the report relates to an unpatrolled beach, except where the unverified shark sighting is more than 2.5 meters in length and is within one 500 meters from the Busselton Jetty and or within 500 meters of the Dunsborough beach area adjacent to the intersection of Dunn Bay Road and Geographe Bay Road.
- 5.4. In response to a shark sighting at the Busselton Jetty an authorised person will install on the Busselton Jetty in an appropriate location, signage approved by the City to inform the public entering the Busselton Jetty of the time and location of shark sighting. Signage shall remain in place for at least two hours after the last shark sighting (if after 5pm, signs are to remain in-situ overnight).
- 5.5. Community awareness of shark hazard will be promoted by:
  - 5.5.1. Providing information on the City website about how to access recent reports of shark activity from the WA Government information and communication platforms including Shark Smart website and SLSWA Twitter feed, the times and dates of SLSWA patrolled beaches to encourage swimmers to SLSWA patrolled beaches and the beach enclosures at Dunsborough and Busselton.
  - 5.5.2. Installing permanent signage at key beach car parks to inform and promote to beach users, how to access the most recent information on local shark activity and include appropriate QR codes for international visitors.
  - 5.5.3. Temporary signage installed in accordance with this policy shall inform beach users and swimmers that a shark has been sighted in the vicinity and provide information on how to access the latest shark sighting report information from SLSWA and from the WA Government information and communication platforms.

### **Policy Background**

Policy Reference No. - 044

Owner Unit – Environmental Services

Originator – Manager, Environmental Services

Policy approved by – Council

Date Approved – 14 October, 2015

Review Frequency – As required

Related Documents – N/A

Last updated 14/10/2015 (implementation)

**History**

<b>Council Resolution</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Information</b>
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