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ABN: 39 638 876 538



Reference: 001-25 SJ

Thursday 6 March 2025

The Hon. Penny Sharpe, MLC  
Minister for the Environment  
52 Martin Place  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

The Hon. Tara Moriarty, MLC  
Minister for Agriculture  
Parliament House  
52 Martin Place  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Ministers,

**Re: NSW Government Shark Meshing (Bather Protection) Program**

I am writing to express our gratitude for your recent initiative to seek the preferences of local councils on the use of shark nets in the Sydney region. This consultative approach is greatly appreciated and demonstrates a commitment to collaborative decision-making that duly considers the perspectives of local communities.

**Impacts to marine biodiversity is alarming**

As you are aware, shark nets have been a topic of considerable debate due to their impact on marine biodiversity. While they are intended to protect swimmers from shark encounters, these nets often pose significant threats to various marine species. Non-target species, including dolphins, turtles, and rays, frequently become entangled in the nets, leading to injury or death. This bycatch not only affects individual animals but also has broader ecological consequences, disrupting marine ecosystems and threatening the biodiversity that is vital to the health of our oceans.

The NSW Government's [2023/24 Shark Meshing \(Bather Protection\) Program Annual Performance Report](#) has identified concerning data for non-target species. Of the 255 species caught by mesh nets:

- Only 15 were target species (6%), while 240 (94%) were non-target species
- 22% of the mesh net interactions involved threatened species including Grey Nurse Sharks, Green Turtles, Leatherback Turtles, White Sharks, Loggerhead Turtles, and Great Hammerhead Sharks
- 3.5% of the interactions were with protected species (Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphins, a Humpback Whale, Common Dolphin, Olive Ridley Turtle, and a Hawksbill Turtle)
- 36% of total species caught were released alive.

## Use of alternative measures greatly supported

Our member Councils are deeply concerned about these environmental impacts and are keen to continue to explore alternative measures that can provide effective shark management while minimizing harm to marine life. We believe that the measures that have been trialled successfully in the Sydney region, such as drone surveillance and the use of SMART drumlines, offer a more sustainable approach to ensuring the safety of beachgoers.

Among our member Councils, four councils oversee several beaches within their LGA that operate under the NSW Government's Shark Mitigation Program - Northern Beaches, Randwick, Waverley, and Sutherland Shire Councils. Collectively, these Councils manage 23 of the 51 beaches under the Program, reflecting significant local interest and relevance to the program.

Your recent consultation process, including the preferences survey, is greatly appreciated. It provided our member Councils with the opportunity to share their input on this issue in consultation with their local communities. The table below outlines each of their responses to the alternative mitigation measures.

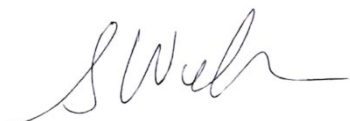
SCCG Member Councils in the SMP	Number of Beaches operating under the SMP	Responses to Preference Survey			
		Drones	SMART Drumlines	Tagged listening stations	Nets
Northern Beaches Council*	15	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Randwick City Council	2	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Waverley Council	2	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Sutherland Shire Council*	4	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

\*It should be noted that the Northern Beaches and Sutherland Shire Councils have provided their own letters to the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) regarding their support for the removal of the mesh nets and these letters should be read in conjunction with our member Councils letters.

As such, the SCCG urges the NSW Government to prioritise the immediate replacement of shark mesh nets with modern, non-lethal shark mitigation measures that effectively safeguard both marine life and recreational water users.

Thank you once again for your leadership and commitment to protecting both our communities and our natural heritage. We look forward to hearing from you with the outcomes of the survey and the NSW Government's response.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Shannon Welch  
Chair of the SCCG