

Labor Senators' dissenting report

1.1 Labor's National Platform states:

In Australian waters and throughout the world's oceans, Labor will encourage protection for iconic marine species like whales, dugongs, turtles and sharks, and will promote the conservation and research of key bioregional health indicator species.

1.2 Labor has a proud record of conservation and ocean protection—it was a Labor Government that initiated the protection of the Great Barrier Reef and in 2012 put the world's largest network of marine parks in place.

1.3 Labor's network added 40 marine reserves around Australia and increased marine protection to over 3.1 million square kilometres. This world leading conservation step is now under attack from the conservative Turnbull Government.

1.4 Labor Senators thank the individuals and organisations who provided evidence to the committee and appreciate their knowledge and insights.

1.5 Labor Senators support almost all recommendations in the committee's report. We took part in the committee process in good faith to seek policy improvement options. Labor supports evidence-based policy—this means solid research and ensuring data and information are available to researchers and policy makers.

1.6 Shark management is a controversial issue and steps are being taken around Australia to deliver improved shark protection and safety for beachgoers.

1.7 Advancements such as SMART drum lines and non-lethal shark mitigation and deterrent measures are steps in the right direction and States should be encouraged to use new technology and approaches wherever possible.

1.8 Labor Senators support actions such as those of the Western Australian Government to undertake aerial and beach patrols, beach enclosures, ongoing research into shark behaviour and innovative programs such as the Beachsafe app. More recent measures such as the below are also supported by Labor and these actions should be looked at by all jurisdictions:

- a trial rebate of \$200 for independently verified devices purchased by surfers and divers;
- grants for local councils to install Beach Emergency Numbering signs to improve emergency response times; and
- funding for Surf Life Saving WA to use drones to monitor beaches, two additional receivers to detect tagged sharks and funding for an additional beach enclosure.

1.9 Labor Senators note the concerns raised around some personal deterrent devices not being independently verified and support recommendations that 'products marketed as personal shark deterrent devices are independently verified as being fit-for-purpose'.

1.10 The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) is the Commonwealth law that protects sharks and relates to lethal shark control programs.

1.11 The EPBC Act has been in place since the Howard Government and has been applied by both Labor and the conservatives. The Act is the reason that world heritage properties such as the Great Barrier Reef are protected and is the basis of marine reserve management planning. The EPBC Act also means that threatened species such as Blue Whales, Flatback Turtles, Koalas and some sharks are protected.

1.12 Labor Senators note that the EPBC Act is being reviewed in 2019 as per section 522A of the Act and the advice that preliminary work by the Department of Environment and Energy on the review has begun. Labor Senators note that section 158 relating to lethal shark control programs will be included as part of the statutory review.

1.13 Labor Senators consider it unfeasible to place a blanket restriction on the Minister for what could be over 24 months. However, Labor Senators note that the concept of conducting a 'shark cull' program to rid our ocean of a particular species as been floated by the previous Western Australian Government was absurd.

Senator Anne Urquhart
Senator for Tasmania

Senator Anthony Chisholm
Senator for Queensland