

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**  
**Legislation Committee**  
Answers to questions on notice  
**Environment portfolio**

**Question No:** 47  
**Hearing:** Budget Estimates  
**Outcome:** Outcome 1  
**Programme:** Wildlife Heritage and Marine Division  
**Topic:** SHARK POPULATION - RESEARCH INTO NURSERY AREA IN WA  
**Hansard Page:** 58  
**Question Date:** 27 May 2014  
**Question Type:** Spoken

**Senator Siewert asked:**

Senator SIEWERT: Maybe you could take this next one on notice. Do you have any information on the research that is being undertaken on a possible nursery area off the coast of WA? And has there been any progress?

Dr Dripps: I am sure we could take that on notice. The staff who look after shark population data in the department belong with the Wildlife, Heritage and Marine Division, who were here previously. I have personally been briefed on the east coast nursery populations but not the west. So I am sure we have officers who have relevant information to hand, but I am not sure that they are here.

Senator SIEWERT: That would be really useful, if you could take that on notice. Thank you.

**Answer:**

The Australian Government, through the National Environmental Research Program (NERP), has recently funded a project to attempt to locate nursery areas for juvenile white sharks off the south and west coasts of Australia. This project builds on work undertaken on the east coast white shark population and is a necessary step towards understanding the size of the west coast population and whether the population is recovering. The Australian Government has contributed \$379,000 to the project. The CSIRO and WA Fisheries Department will also provide significant in-kind contributions.

Preliminary work on the project has begun, but most of the field work will take place between September 2014 and March 2015. The final report from the project is due in April 2015.

The project has four components:

1. Survey of possible nursery areas off the south coast

A combination of commercial fishers' data and habitat assessments has identified possible areas for white shark nursery areas in South Australian waters. These areas will be aerially surveyed at times between September 2014 and March 2015. Equipment and survey techniques will follow procedures developed under the NERP Marine Biodiversity Hub aerial surveys of white shark nursery areas in NSW. If juvenile sharks are located, on ground tagging of juvenile white sharks (using electronic tags) in these areas will be used to confirm the location of nursery areas.

2. Survey of possible nursery areas off the west coast

The methodology is the same as for the South Australian survey.

### 3. Satellite tagging of mature female sharks

Tagging mature, pregnant female sharks with satellite tags provides the potential for following them to a pupping ground (and hence identify likely nursery areas) within the approximate 6-month lifespan of the satellite tag. Mature females are known to appear at the Neptune Islands during winter and the project will work with commercial cage diver operators to tag mature female sharks *in situ* without the added stress of capture. This approach has previously proven effective. Additional mature male and female sharks will be targeted for tagging if observed.

### 4. Acoustic tagging and monitoring

Juvenile white sharks, if located, will be targeted and tagged with acoustic tags to further identify possible nursery areas and provide long-term data on their movements.