



## Position Statement

### The Shark Issue (Bite-off)

*Recfishwest has great concern about the impact shark bite-offs are having on fishing experiences. We recognise this is a complex issue and one for which the solution must be led by science.*

*Resolving the shark issue requires multiple approaches. Improved understanding of shark populations and behavior, adoption of emerging deterrent technology and fisher education are key elements to address the issue and protect the social and economic benefits fishing provides.*

#### Background

Nothing ruins the fishing experience quite like a shark taking a prized catch before it is landed. The shark issue has become increasingly common over the last decade to the extent that shark bite-offs are the number one issue facing recreational fishers in coastal waters north of Geraldton.

Recfishwest believes a solution lies in an evidence-based framework comprising deterrent devices, education and better understanding shark populations.

#### *Deterrent Devices*

Recent scientific trials of selected shark deterrent devices clearly demonstrate these devices reduce the incidence of shark bite-off under certain conditions. Refining the way these deterrents are applied and continued testing of emerging deterrents are likely to result in even greater reductions in bite-offs. While the use of deterrents is encouraged, they are only ever likely to be a part of the solution.

#### *Education*

An increased awareness in fishers and changes in fishing behaviour also plays a role in reducing shark bite-offs. Education can support moving location when sharks turn up, breaking up the predictability of fishing spots, fishing over a broader area, moving spots regularly, highlighting problem areas as well as identifying sharks on sonar images. The development of practical advice and its adoption by fishers is best when supported with science.

#### *Understanding shark populations*

Understanding changes in shark populations and shark behavior in recent times will help support finding solutions and education messages. These aspects are not well understood and require more data on sharks. Recreational, charter and commercial fishers can assist in providing this data.

While we do have some answers, more work is needed and Recfishwest will throw support and resources behind good ideas. We are keen to hear from fishers and will work with other water users who can help support solutions to this issue.