



Hon Leanne Donaldson MP
Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries

Reference: CTS 02848/16

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Ms Nicole McLachlan
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Dear Ms McLachlan

I refer to your email of 6 February 2016 to the Honourable Anastacia Palaszczuk MP, Premier and Minister for the Arts regarding Queensland's Shark Control Program (the Program). As this issue falls within my ministerial responsibilities, a copy of your email has been referred to me for direct reply.

I understand you met with officers from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and staff from the office of former Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Minister for Sport and Racing, in 2015 to outline your concerns. While your view on this matter is acknowledged, the Queensland Government does not support your hunger strike action. The Government's position is that human safety must be the first priority and the Government does not intend to make any changes to the Program at this time.

Successive governments have recognised the vital role the Program has played in protecting human life at those popular beaches which attract tourists from all over the world and throughout the year. The Department informs me that the Program commenced in 1962 following a number of shark attacks. Between 1916 and 1962 there were 36 shark attacks recorded in Queensland, resulting in 19 fatalities.

The success of the Program is represented by Queensland having only one fatality on a protected beach since 1962. This is despite Queensland's population increasing and Surf Life Saving Queensland reporting more than 13.5 million beach visitations in 2013-14.

The Queensland Program is not designed to reduce the shark population in Queensland waters. Rather, it seeks to catch large sharks that may pose a threat to swimmers in the immediate vicinity of popular bathing beaches. Given the limited area of operation, around 0.5 per cent of Queensland's coastline, the Program is unlikely to impact upon the sustainability of any shark population in Queensland waters.

Over the past 53 years, the Program has invested significant resources into monitoring and trialling alternative shark control methods, including electromagnetic shark barriers. This technology is, however, still developmental and, as a consequence, traditional control methods remain the most effective to reduce the risk of shark attack.

Over the years, the Program has integrated technology and methods to reduce the impact on marine animals accidentally captured. Queensland has trialled and used various types of acoustic alarms (pingers) and in 2014 nets were fitted with a new pinger that has resulted in a 40 per cent reduction in the number of dolphins caught. Around 90 per cent of turtles caught in nets are now released alive.

The Department is monitoring the progress of trials being conducted in New South Wales and if new technologies are shown to be effective in preventing marine life fatalities, and are practical for use, they could be considered for the Program.

The Queensland Government is committed to maintaining this important safety initiative. The Program has strong support from local governments, the Queensland Surf Lifesaving Association, business, and tourist agencies, as it continues to provide a safer swimming and surfing environment at popular beaches in Queensland.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'LD' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

The Honourable Leanne Donaldson MP
Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries
Member for Bundaberg