

Beach Closure Policy & Procedure

Objective

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Providing direction for responding to shark attacks and shark sightings, as well as the broader approach to safety warnings and information provided to the public.
- Guide the administration of the City of Albany *Local Government Property Local Law 2011*, under which a sign may be erected to regulate, prohibit or restrict specific activities on the beach or in the water and the giving of directions to swimmers to leave the water if a shark is suspected of being in the vicinity of the beach.
- To provide a manageable from a practicable and resource capacity perspective, while also giving the public the option of making an informed decision about personal safety with regards to entering the water after a confirmed shark sighting / attack.

Policy Statement

The City of Albany is committed to providing a safe and welcoming place for residents and visitors.

The City's actions will be guided by the following considerations:

- Warning the public and closing beaches is a strategy to reduce the likelihood of shark human encounters however complete protection from sharks can never be guaranteed.
- Sharks are very mobile and are capable of travelling large distances in a short period of time.
- Authorised Persons should access credible information to inform response strategies – primarily from Water Police (9442 8600).

Scope

This policy applies to beach areas under the care, control and management of the City, excluding privately owned land and land in National Parks.

Legislative Context

Compliance with the:

- *Local Government Act 1995*, section 2.7(2)(b) Council determines local government policies; and
- *Local Government Property Local Law 2011, Part 5 – Matters Relating to Particular Local Government Property, Division 2 – Beaches*, Clause 5.4 Powers of authorised persons or surf life saving club members.

Responsibility, Review Position and Date

This policy and procedure must be reviewed every two years.

Responsibility for the implementation of this policy rests with the Chief Executive Officer and Executive Management Team and is to inform all strategic and plans of the City.

Associated Documents

The following procedures, references, guidelines compliment this policy:

- City of Albany Ranger Procedure – Beach Closures (attached)

Definitions

Key terms and acronyms used in the policy, and their definitions:

- **Authorised Person** means a person authorised by the local government under section 9.10 of the Local Government Act for the purpose of administering the City of Albany local laws.
- **District** means the district of the local government.
- **SLSWA** means Surf Life Saving Western Australia.
- **Patrolled Beach** means a beach that has a SLSWA beach safety and surveillance service in operation.
- **Confirmed Shark Sighting** means a shark sighting reported to the City by the WA Government Shark Monitoring Network.

PROCEDURE – BEACH CLOSURES

1. Objective

The following procedure provides guidelines for beach closures in response to shark sightings and shark attacks at City of Albany managed beaches. Actions taken will be dependent on jurisdiction and available resources.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to authorised persons appointed by the local government under section 9.10 of the *Local Government Act 1995* to perform any of the functions of an authorised person under the Local Government Property Local Law 2011.

3. Legislative Context

Compliance with the City of Albany Beach Closure Policy position.

4. Responsibility, Review Position and Date

This procedure must be reviewed every two years.

Responsibility for the implementation of this procedure rests with the Executive Director Development Services.

5. Associated Documents

The following procedures, references, guidelines compliment this policy:

- City of Albany Beach Closure Policy
- Surf Life Saving WA Shark Incident Management Protocol

6. Definitions

Key terms and acronyms used in the procedure:

- **Authorised Person** means a person authorised by the local government under section 9.10 of the Local Government Act for the purpose of administering the City of Albany local laws.
- **District** means the district of the local government.
- **SLSWA** means Surf Life Saving Western Australia.
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7. Shark Alerts

All shark sightings are to be reported to Water Police on 9442 8600.

Shark sightings reported to Water Police, or where a tagged shark activates a receiver, an automatic SMS message alert is triggered. Authorised persons will receive these alert messages to their mobile phones. The messages contain information regarding location of the shark, however the species or size may not be identified in the message.

This information is also posted on the SharkSmart website at www.sharksmart.com.au. Beach users should be encouraged to check this website before making a decision about water use.

8. Shark Response Criteria

The City will mobilise Authorised Persons to respond to a confirmed shark sighting where it meets the following criteria:

- **Tagged shark:** Two or more activations of receiver within one hour;
- **Department of Fisheries Notification:** Confirmed sighting of a 3 metres or greater in length or 2 or more sharks 2-3 metres in length;
- **Location:** Within 1km of shore of a category 1 beach, or within 500m of shore of a category 2 beach.

9. Beach Categories

Category 1

Patrolled beaches. These are limited to the following:

- Middleton Beach (when patrolled by Surf Life Saving); and
- Ellen Cove (Shark Barrier).

Category 2

Non-patrolled beaches located on the shores of King George Sound which are managed by the City of Albany. It excludes any beaches on land managed by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation & Attractions. The following beaches are included:

- Emu Point;
- Emu Beach;
- Whaler's Cove (Frenchman Bay); and
- Goode Beach.

Category 3

Not patrolled. No amenities provided.

- All other beaches within the City of Albany not identified as a category 1 or category 2 beach.

10. Response – Confirmed Shark Sightings

Category 1 Response:

- Erect “Sharks. Beach Closed” signage at pre-identified beach access points (refer map in appendix 1).
- Alert beach users where possible.
- The beach will be closed for a minimum of one hour.
- Beach may be re-opened 1 hour after the last confirmed sighting.
- Surf Life Saving life guards will operationally respond to shark sightings on patrolled beaches as per current Surf Life Saving WA Shark Incident Management protocols.

Category 2 Response:

- Erect “Caution Recent Shark Activity in This Area” signage at pre-identified beach access points (refer map in appendix 2).
- Alert beach users where possible.
- Warning signs will remain in place for a minimum of two hours from the time of reported sighting, not from the time of arrival at site.
- If the sighting occurs at dusk, or Authorised Persons are responding to other priority matters, warning signs will stay in place for the remainder of that day, to be removed the following day.

Category 3 Response

- No action will be taken by Authorised Officers.
- Permanent signage may be considered to alert beach goers that this is a non-patrolled beach and that sharks frequent the waters of the south coast.

11. Response – Confirmed Shark Attack

Category 1 Response

- Surf Life Saving life guards will operationally respond to shark sightings on patrolled beaches as per current Surf Life Saving WA Shark Incident Management protocols.
- An Authorised Person will erect “Sharks. Beach Closed” signage at appropriate locations (see appendix 1)
- In consultation with WA Police and Department of Fisheries, the beach may either be re- opened by an Authorised Person the following morning, or remain closed for another 24 hours.
- Where resources allow, an Authorised Person may walk the relevant beach area to notify beach goers of the potential danger.

Category 2 and 3 Response

- An Authorised Person will erect “Sharks. Beach Closed” signage at appropriate locations (key car parks and entry points)
- Where resources allow, an Authorised Person may walk the relevant beach area to notify beach goers of the potential danger.
- In consultation with WA Police and Department of Fisheries, the beach may either be re- opened by an Authorised Person the following morning, or remain closed for another 24 hours.

12. Roles & Responsibilities

- The City will support other agencies such as the Department of Fisheries, Department of Parks and Wildlife, WA Police, Surf Life Saving WA and other local government authorities to respond to shark threat within their jurisdictions subject to resource availability.
- WA Police is the hazard management authority for shark fatality on behalf of the coroner. The City will assist with beach closures, media coordination, as well as community recovery initiatives where relevant.
- Department of Fisheries is responsible for any actions related to the attempted capture and or destruction of a potentially dangerous shark(s).
- The Department for Parks and Wildlife is responsible for shark response protocols associated with beaches / coastline under its jurisdiction.
- The Department for Child Protection & Family Support is available to provide referrals to counselling services for impacted community members where required.
- In the event of a shark related fatality, a debriefing will be organised by the City post event, inclusive of response and support agencies, as well as the public (where relevant), to review and refine response protocols / areas of improvement.

13. Prioritisation of response activities




- Where priority activities or other resource constraints divert City resources from dealing with immediate shark matters, secondary support resources may be activated as soon as possible to assist from the following:
 - Other on-duty City Rangers / other Authorised Persons, other City staff.
 - WA Police and other Emergency Service agencies (where relevant)
 - Neighbouring Local Governments.

14. Communications

- The City will promote to the public relevant information sources to assist education, awareness raising and informed personal decision making.
 - Report Shark Sightings to Water Police on 9442 8600
 - <http://twitter.com/SLSWA> - Surf Life Saving WA Twitter
 - <http://www.sharksmart.com.au> – Department of Fisheries information portal.
- City of Albany website / media releases
- The City may consider installing permanent static signs to notify the public of the potential risk posed by sharks.
- Permanent signage may contain relevant information provided by the Department of Fisheries and Surf Life Saving WA outlining safer water use practices / considerations.




Appendix 1 – Middleton Beach & Ellen Cove



	Flagged Bunting across access tracks.	 <p>The sign is a vertical rectangle with a red top bar containing the text 'City of Albany'. Below the bar is a yellow diamond-shaped warning sign with a black silhouette of a shark. Underneath the diamond is the word 'SHARKS' in bold black letters. At the bottom is a red circle with a diagonal slash over a black silhouette of a person swimming, with the words 'BEACH CLOSED' in bold black letters below it.</p>
	Beach Closed" sign attached to star picket or other structure.	

Appendix 2 – Emu Point



	<p>Flagged Bunting across access tracks. (Approximately 250m in length attached to star picket posts, sufficient to hold bunting.)</p>	
	<p>“Shark Sighted in area, swim at own risk” sign attached to star picket or other structure.</p>	

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0.2	MGR	Draft- v2: Amended: The City has classified Middleton Beach when patrolled, Ellen Cove (Shark Barrier) as a (Category 1), while the remaining City beaches responsibility areas relate to Category 2 and 3.	20/04/2017
0.3	MGR	Approved in principle by EMT, pending Ranger Team review of procedures.	20/05/2017
0.4	MRES	Amalgamation of Policy and Ranger – Beach Closure procedures.	03/07/2017
1.0	MGR MRES	Approved by Executive Director Works & Services (Policy) and Executive Director Development Services (Procedure). NP1769919.	25/08/2017
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