

Australia shark attacks spark kill orders

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This file photo shows a shark swimming among bathers at Oceanworld in Sydney, in 1999. Sharks that stray too close to beaches on Australia's west coast will be caught and killed under a new government plan in response to an unprecedented spate of fatalities.

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[Western Australia](#) Premier Colin Barnett unveiled a Aus\$6.85 million (US\$7.12 million) package in shark [mitigation strategies](#), including a track, catch and destroy programme, in the wake of five fatal attacks over the past year.

Fisheries Minister Norman Moore said the move would enable "proactive action" as soon as a shark was detected close to beachgoers instead of waiting for the animal to strike.

"Previously the orders were used in response to an attack, but now proactive action will be taken if a large [white shark](#) presents imminent threat to people," said Moore.

The funding package includes Aus\$2 million for shark hunting and killing and Aus\$2 million for a tagging and tracking programme that is already underway and providing real-time alerts on social media when sharks enter populated areas.

A further Aus\$2 million would be set aside for shark research, while the remaining funding would be devoted to extra jet-skis for life guards, a study and trial of enclosures and a smartphone application for shark alerts.

"These new measures will not only help us to understand the behaviour of sharks but also offer beachgoers greater protection and confidence as we head into summer," said Barnett.

Western Australia's government has come under growing pressure to increase protection measures after the five deaths over the past year—an unprecedented number for such a short period.

The most recent [fatality](#) was in July, when a surfer was bitten in half in a savage attack near Wedge Island, north of Perth, with another mauled but escaping alive last month at far-flung Red Bluff.

Most fatal attacks in the region involve great whites, among the largest [shark species](#) in the world and made famous by the horror movie "Jaws". They can grow up to six metres long (20 feet) and weigh up to two tonnes.

[Sharks](#) are common in Australian waters but deadly attacks have previously been rare, with only one of the average 15 incidents a year

typically proving fatal.

Experts say the average number of attacks in the country has increased in line with population growth and the popularity of water sports.

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