

Thousands rally against shark cull in Australia

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The controversial policy to catch and kill sharks off popular west coast beaches in Australia was given the green light last month

Thousands of people rallied across Australia Saturday against a controversial shark culling policy designed to prevent attacks, saying killing the marine animals was not the answer.

The controversial policy to catch and kill sharks off popular west coast beaches was given the green light last month after six fatal attacks in the

past two years.

It is aimed at reducing the risks to water users and allows baited drum lines with hooks designed to capture large sharks to be set one kilometre (0.62 miles) offshore at busy Western Australian beaches for a trial period until April 30.

Any shark longer than three metres (10 feet) snagged by the lines and deemed to be a threat—including great white, bull and tiger sharks—will be destroyed, with the first casualty reported last week.

The move has angered conservationists and rallies were held at sites around the country, including at least 2,000 people at Manly Beach in Sydney and 6,000 expected at Cottesloe Beach in Perth.

Opponents claim the trial flies in the face of international obligations to protect the [great white shark](#).

Anthony Joyce, who was attacked by a shark off a Sydney beach last October, once shared the Western Australian government's views on culling the animals, but after doing extensive research he now disagrees.

"The amount of sharks they are going to kill is going to make no difference in the scheme of things," he told reporters at Manly.

After speaking with shark experts and marine biologists, he now believes greater government support for marine biology programmes and shark education in schools is the way to go.

Another protestor in Manly, Katherine Cook, said she was outraged at the shark killings.

"I'm really angry and incensed that we can't co-exist with anything," she

said.

"We are going into their (sharks) environment. Why can't we co-exist?"

At Cottesloe, a female activist chained herself to a fisheries boat to prevent it leaving to set and monitor baited hooks off the coast, the ABC reported.

While [sharks](#) are common in Australian waters, deadly attacks are rare, with only one of the average 15 incidents a year typically proving fatal.

But experts say attacks are increasing in line with population growth and the popularity of water sports.

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