

Australia to test technology after wave of shark attacks

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Youths play on a shark net at Little Manly Cove as shark experts assess cutting-edge technologies to counter attacks at a summit in Sydney on September 29, 2015

Australian shark experts will test cutting-edge technology—including electrical barriers powered by wave energy—following an "unprecedented" series of attacks on swimmers.

The country has one of the world's highest incidences of [shark attacks](#)

and researchers from around the world met in Sydney on Tuesday at a meeting organised in part to address community fears.

"What we've seen is pretty unprecedented," New South Wales state Premier Mike Baird told the conference of a string of attacks in eastern Australia which left one dead and seven injured.

A Japanese surfer died in February after his legs were torn off by a shark but there have been other serious attacks up and down the more than 2,000-kilometre-long (1,243-mile) NSW coast.

There have been 13 [attacks](#) in the state so far this year, compared to three in 2014.

"Ultimately, we've moved from a position in some parts of the coast where the coastline was joy... (to) fear, and we need to take that away," Baird said, adding that his government hoped to test some of the recommended technologies during the upcoming summer.

"The decision-making process (to roll out the technologies) will be on the basis of the science... it will not be knee-jerk, it will not be in relation to any form of populist outcry."

Baird—an avid surfer who has ruled out culling sharks as an option—said he hoped experts would find ways to balance the need to protect humans against reducing the harm to marine life caught in barriers such as nets.

Deterrent technologies set to be reviewed include electrical barriers that can be powered by wave energy, as well as personal devices that surfers and swimmers can wear.

Detection methods include a smart drumline where sharks are removed

from hooks before they die, and the "Clever Buoy", which uses sonar technology to search for shark-sized objects.

Marine biologist Daryl McPhee of Bond University, who helped the state government compile a preliminary list of options, said the recent innovations had increased researchers' understanding of shark behaviour.

"Sharks have seven senses. We don't clearly know how sharks completely sense their environment but we know much more than we did 10 years ago," he told AFP.

"We're able to use the information to potentially design better deterrence (technologies)."

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