



Pressure on Barnett to order shark cull

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A DELEGATION of Margaret River surfers and businessmen has urged the Barnett government to cull great white sharks that come close to shore at swimming and surf beaches to bring their numbers "back into balance" and restore public confidence.

They want drum lines set to hook sharks behind surf breaks such as South Point, Lefthanders and Umbies, in the Gracetown area, 270km south of Perth, where three surfers have been killed in the past decade.

They believe a deep trench running along that stretch of coast and just off the back of the surf spots could be drawing sharks close to shore.

In a meeting with representatives from outgoing Fisheries Minister Troy Buswell's office and his department, they said the litmus test for shark measures due to be introduced this week would be whether they reduced the frequency of attacks enough to make people feel safe to enter the ocean.

Surfer Chris Boyd, 35, became the latest shark victim while surfing at Umbies reef break last month.

Premier Colin Barnett has flagged widening the scope for killing great whites, which are a protected species, from the current policy where there has to be an "imminent risk" to people to one where sharks are found

lingering in an area. Keith Halnan, a commercial fisherman who runs the Margaret River surf school and surf shop, and businessman Tim Wise, from the Yallingup Boardriders club, went to Perth for the meeting with government representatives.

They want more GPS tagging of sharks and set quotas for fishing them close to shore.

"There should be a strategic reduction of great white shark numbers to bring the current situation back into balance," Mr Halnan said.

"This would involve the use of strategically-set drum lines near shore.

"We don't want to wipe out great white sharks but we do have to reduce their numbers in shore close to where people surf and swim to eliminate that threat to the public.

"The litmus test to the government will be the drop in frequency of shark attacks to where the public feels safe entering the ocean."

There is strong opposition in Western Australia to shark culls on the grounds they are ineffective and could reduce shark populations to unsustainable numbers, and the belief that increased attacks are due to greater numbers of people in the water.

University of Western Australia shark biologist Ryan Kempster argues that culls have not been shown to reduce attacks and are a waste of time and merely an appeasement tactic.