



## Operation Apex Harmony

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To: State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee

Regards: Submission to Fisheries (Sustainable Fisheries Strategy) Amendment Bill 2018

Sea Shepherd's Operation Apex Harmony has been campaigning against the Queensland Shark Control Program (QSCP) for four years now. Our work has undertaken to bring transparency to the program that does not otherwise exist. We do this to achieve our goal of having the government move from lethal to non-lethal shark bite mitigation methods. We are open and transparent about this and ask that the Qld Government and Department of Agriculture and Fisheries be equally open and transparent in their work, methods and its results.

We gained access to the catch and by-catch data of the QSCP through a FOI process in 2014/5. Since then, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries has publicly released catch and by-catch data.

We have many instances of documenting animals caught in the SCP gear. Some of these animals have been vulnerable and protected species, some alive and some deceased. At all times, we have achieved this documentation safely and without interference of the gear. We have had many interactions with the Manager of the SCP when undertaking this work – always at our instigation so as to remain open and transparent.

Our concern with the Fisheries (Sustainable Fisheries Strategy) Amendment Bill 2018 is with "Clause 31 Exclusion Zone". Whilst the explanatory notes cite reasoning around public safety, we feel that the clause is really about targetting our work. Confirmation is on Page 15 of the notes: "This offence does not apply to a person in control of a boat that transits through the exclusion zone for shark control apparatus without stopping." Our work necessitates being close and stopping at the SCP gear.

A true democracy should be able to withstand public scrutiny of government programs. Therefore, campaigns like ours should be welcomed. Government should not be afraid to allow direct scrutiny. Queensland's SCP does not have adequate oversight and so campaigns such as Sea Shepherd's Apex Harmony must be allowed to continue its work. There is no independent observer program. And there have been glaring problems come to light such as the QSCP contractor from Rainbow Beach being convicted for finning sharks and other crimes. Our campaign has documented animal cruelty, unwillingness to attend to target and non-target animals caught in the gear and inconsistencies in the data produced by the program.

If the department feels it is necessary to introduce an exclusion zone in the name of public safety, then there must be a way found to allow work that provides scrutiny to continue. This may be achieved with written authorisation from the chief executive as per Clause 31, Section (2).

Sincerely,

Jonathan Clark  
Qld Coordinator - Apex Harmony Campaign  
Sea Shepherd Australia  
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