

# Shark nets pose 'crash risk'

## Angela Pownall

Surf Lifesaving WA says people could be injured if shark barriers are installed at some beaches named as potential locations in the State Government's latest shark prevention plan.

SLSWA community safety manager Chris Peck said the exclusion nets were a possible "recreational risk" to ocean users if erected at beaches with waves. Government environmental consultants identified up to 22

WA beaches that could be fitted with nets to keep sharks and people apart in the ocean.

But Mr Peck said Cottesloe and Fremantle beaches, which were put forward in the report, were "high-energy" and not suitable for barriers because of the risk of people crashing into them.

"While it would be the easy answer to put a barrier in place, I don't think anyone's looked at the recreational risk that comes with putting a barrier in a high-energy beach where you've got people

who are there because they want to catch the waves," he said.

"It's a whole range of issues that need to be managed and it's all very well for the proponents to say 'I've got a design to do that', but then whose responsibility is that to manage the risk.

"You're eliminating one risk, called shark, and you're potentially introducing a whole range of other risks."

Mr Peck said Old Dunsborough and Busselton, the first beaches to get permanent nets, were "ter-

rific" locations because they were calm beaches where sharks were sighted.

He did not think the Government would put barriers at high-energy beaches suggested in the report, but Premier Colin Barnett told *The West Australian* that no locations had been discounted.

Mr Barnett said the report's findings were still being considered after this year's net trial at Old Dunsborough but there would also be an enclosure at

Busselton, and a metropolitan trial was also being explored.

Mr Peck said even at calmer beaches, shark nets would not always be the solution.

Consultants at Hydrobiology said a shark barrier could be deployed at Cottesloe from December to avoid the significant swell that made it a popular winter surf spot. It also suggested barriers at Busselton, Meelup, Eagle Bay and Bunker Bay for summer.

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