



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

November 9, 2018

Tourism Whitsundays Update – 9 November 2018

Today the Queensland State Government held an expert panel to discuss the incident this week and what actions could be taken immediately and long term to improve visitor safety. The panel consisted of representatives from Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association, Whitsunday Bareboat Association, Whitsunday Marine Advisory Group, commercial fisherman, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Queensland Police, Department of Fisheries, Department of Tourism, Whitsunday Regional Council and Tourism Whitsundays.

The outcome of the session was a five point plan. Ongoing safety education and new research will form the key pillars of a community and industry-backed approach to improving safety at Cid Harbour.

Minister Jones & Minister Furner announced after the meeting that the plan will include: \$250,000 towards a scientific assessment at Cid Harbour;

Maintaining Cid Harbour as a no-swim zone until that assessment is complete;

A high-profile education campaign to immediately educate locals and visitors about shark safety including public signage and warning signs at Cid Harbour;

Development of a broader SharkWISE education campaign, similar to the successful CrocWISE campaign running in North Queensland; and

To reconvene the industry consultation session before the end of the year.

Ms Jones said today's meeting gave the local tourism industry an opportunity to work directly with marine experts.

"We've listened to the advice of marine scientists and the local tourism industry and have a five-point plan to improve safety in the waters off the Whitsundays," she said.

"All the experts agree that education is the key – that's why, as a direct result of today's roundtable, we've committed to a 'SharkWISE' campaign to educate people about the risks of swimming in some locations.

"The recent shark attacks in Cid Harbour were unprecedented and demonstrate that we need to do more to understand shark behaviours.

"That's why we've also committed \$250,000 for research so we can get a better grasp on these behaviours.

"We acknowledge the offer by the Prime Minister to assist and request that the Federal Government, responsible for Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, match our funding for this research.

"The Whitsundays is one of the most beautiful places in the world and we want to make sure people are as safe as possible when they come to visit."

Minister Jones, Minister Furner and Whitsunday Mayor Andrew Willcox hosted the discussion, which was attended by representatives from Tourism Whitsundays, local tourism operators, Whitsunday Marine Advisory Group, Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association, Whitsunday Bareboat Industry Association, commercial fisherman, Queensland Police Service, University of Queensland, James Cook University, GBRMPA, Maritime Safety Queensland and Queensland Surf Lifesaving.

Mr Furner said the government's key message remained the same.

"Today was all about getting stakeholders together to discuss a longer-term solution," he said.

"Experts put forward compelling evidence about the dangers of swimming in Cid Harbour. As a result, today we're recommending Cid Harbour as 'no swim zone'.

"We've increased the amount of signage in the area and we'll ramp up our public messaging to make sure locals and visitors, including Schoolies, are as safe as possible in the future."

Mr Furner confirmed there was no plan to place drum lines in Cid Harbour because they could not guarantee swimmer safety.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority advised today's meeting that drum lines and nets could not be deployed without Federal Government approval.

Whitsunday Mayor Andrew Willcox said the council would support the State Government to provide more information to locals and visitors about the dangers of swimming in Cid Harbour.

"A 'SharkWISE' campaign similar to the 'Crocodilewise' program is one great outcome from today's meeting," he said.

"The Whitsundays is one of the most beautiful places on earth and there are plenty of great places for people to swim.

"We're working together with the government to make sure we educate visitors about how to safely enjoy their time in the Whitsundays."

Trevor Rees, President of the Whitsunday Bareboat Association said the bareboat industry went into the meeting with the hope of ending up with a quick solution to the recent attacks.

"The three marine scientists in attendance presented a compelling argument that there was no short term solution to the problem, neither drumlines nor a targeted shark kill was likely to improve safety."

"It was consequently agreed that the state government would commit funding on a study on the issue. In the meantime the safest thing to do was for Cid Harbour to remain closed for swimming until an interim scientific report is released. The Whitsunday Bareboat industry will be working with the state government on the scope of the study. In the meantime they are also exploring a range of new innovative shark protection devices due to become available in coming months."

Al Grundy, Deputy President of the Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association said the shared objective is to ensure the Whitsundays remains a safe, world-class destination for the one million-plus visitors entering our section of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

“We welcome today’s commitment by the Queensland State Government of \$250,000 towards scientific research into shark prevalence and behaviour in Cid Harbour and the establishment of a high-profile education and signage campaign.”

Tourism Whitsundays CEO Natassia Wheeler said today’s discussion had been productive for the local tourism industry.

“Tourism operators can walk away from today’s meeting with piece of mind,” she said.

“We’re committed to informing tourists about how they can enjoy a great holiday in the Whitsundays and stay safe in Cid Harbour.”

Queensland Tourism Industry Council CEO Daniel Gschwind said tourism operators take their duty of care to their guests very seriously.

“We owe it to our visitors to apply the best knowledge and science to any challenge,” Mr Gschwind said.

“We must be able to inform people accurately and truthfully about any risk they might be exposed to, and provide them with guidance on how to enjoy our wonderful environment safely.”

- ENDS -

FOR MEDIA ENQUIRIES, CONTACT:

Natassia Wheeler
Chief Executive Officer
Tourism Whitsundays
Ph: +61 7 4948 5904 or +61 434 278 088
Email: natassia.wheeler@tourismwhitsundays.com.au

To access the Tourism Whitsundays Media Centre click [here](#)