

# Coastal Safety in Regional South Australia

The District Council  
of Streaky Bay  
Experience



# Setting the Scene

## October 2023: A Community in Shock

- Todd Gendle's death at Granites Beach during a shark attack.
- National media descended on the town while locals were grieving.
- Behind the scenes, Council began lobbying for shark mitigation and water safety measures in regional SA.
- No regional shark mitigation measures existed in SA, while WA had invested \$50M and similar amounts were invested in New South Wales
- Council was notified in November 2024 by Surf Life Saving SA that they had received funding for shark mitigation and consultation was due to occur in mid-January.



# A Tragic Catalyst for Change

January 2025: Another Loss at Granites

- On 2 January, in the morning there were reports of a shark taking a lobster pot; that evening, surfer Lance Appleby was taken.
- Two fatalities in 16 months at the same surf break.
- Initially Council was busy with assisting the search efforts, working to get mental health services deployed, and responding to the media.
- Focused on being respectful and protecting community dignity. Especially with the click bait media frenzy which was occurring

# From Grief to Action



## Why Council Acted



- Shark mitigation outside Council's remit, but this was personal. It also was affecting our tourism economy.



- Council staff lost close friends and were witnesses; the community demanded leadership.



- Used invitation-only consultations to manage grief and anger.



- Outcome: Coastal Risk Assessment (CRA) with Surf Life Saving SA.



# Community Tragedy Extends Beyond Sharks

March 2025: Drownings at Back Beach

- Two locals drowned while fishing.
- Reinforced the need for a broader coastal risk approach beyond shark mitigation.



# The Coastal Risk Assessment (CRA)

*Partnership:* District Council of  
Streaky Bay + Surf Life Saving South  
Australia

*Purpose:* Assess hazards, improve  
safety infrastructure, recommend  
mitigation.

*Scope:*

- 9 sites assessed
- 28 recommendations
- Community & stakeholder input  
informed outcomes.



# Immediate Actions

1. Shark Sighting Boards – installed with QR codes for sightings.  
<https://share.viostream.com/rinunf4rinumbg>
2. Warning Flag System – red-and-white flags for 'Evacuate the Water' alerts.
3. Trauma Kits – 24/7 accessible with training for locals.
4. “What three words” system introduced.
4. Education & Signage – brochures, school programs, and tourist hub info.
5. Advocated and received a dedicated Rescue Vessel for VMR
6. Community drone program currently being deployed



South Australia

# DRONE OPERATORS

SEEKING EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

District Council of Streaky Bay  
Published by Penny Williams · 15 October at 11:43 · 🌐

Expressions of Interest: Community Drone Operators Wanted 🌐



# Long-Term Initiatives

## Future Phases:

It's becoming a regional effort with the EPLGA driving the following projects:

- Telecommunication black spot improvements
- Shark tagging and acoustic receiver feasibility

Council is also exploring other initiatives, such as:

- Emergency Response Beacons (ERBs)
- More water safety measures are being looked at

# REGIONAL WATER SAFETY

## STREAKY BAY LEADS THE WAY IN COASTAL SAFETY

Australia's regional coastal communities are setting a new benchmark in public safety, with Streaky Bay emerging as a standout of innovative, community-initiated initiatives. As part of a government-funded project led by Surf Life Saving South Australia (SLSSA), coastal areas are receiving a targeted safety enhancements to protect locals and visitors.

will soon be following Streaky Bay's lead with the implementation of tailored safety measures. In addition, SLSSA has already started engaging other priority coastal locations, ensuring a wider network of regional communities benefit from these initiatives.

The project's first phase, successfully completed nearby Granites, introduced practical safety measures including advanced shark awareness signage, community-managed shark-sighting boards, and strategically positioned trauma kits, stocked with specialist equipment for critical incidents. These resources empower the community, encouraging locals and visitors to play an active role in maintaining safety.

Beyond infrastructure, SLSSA is delivering interactive water safety education programs to regional schools, fostering awareness from a young age. Students learn about shark safety, emergency response, and responsible beach behaviour, equipping them with the knowledge to enjoy South Australia's pristine coastal environments safely.

part of this initiative is a commitment to evidence-based decisions. Streaky Bay, identified as a priority site due to its exposure to a history of aquatic incidents, has benefited from a comprehensive Risk Assessment (CRA). The CRA, completed by Streaky Bay and Lower Yorke Peninsula, has identified key risks and recommended safety measures.

This initiative also includes the establishment of regional drone surveillance hubs, operated by trained local volunteers to support rapid response and strengthen community confidence.

Streaky Bay's proactive approach, alongside Elliston, Lower Yorke Peninsula, and other

Peninsula, and other priority sites, demonstrates the power of collaborative effort. SLSSA, local councils, and the Government, by co-funding infrastructure, and fostering a culture of responsibility along regional coasts.

This story is just the beginning. In the coming months, these measures will continue rolling out across priority regional coastal towns, ensuring more communities benefit from these innovative safety measures. For Streaky Bay and other coastal towns, the message is clear: enjoy our beaches safely, be informed, and be prepared.



# Regional Efforts and Recognition Beyond Our Community

## Results:

- The program is now receiving national recognition.
- Model for regional shark mitigation and coastal safety.
- Approach replicated in Elliston, Lower Yorke Peninsula, and beyond.

# Key Learnings for Coastal Councils

1. Leadership Beyond Jurisdiction
2. Community-First Approach
3. Respect, Communication & Education
4. Practical Innovation: simple, low-tech measures can save lives.



# Looking Ahead

*“Would Lance still be alive if that flag had been raised?”*

That question drives our commitment every day.

This is also a question of equality with 60% of all drownings occurring in regional and remote areas.

Therefore, the journey for us a council has just began.



## Acknowledgments

Surf Life Saving South Australia

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(CFS, SES, VMR)

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