

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

19th August 2004
Mr Phillip Ingram
President
Anglers Action Group (Sydney Northside) Inc
PO Box 630
Narrabeen NSW 2101

Dear Mr Ingram,

Thank you for your letter of 13 July which, in line with ABC complaint handling procedures, has been referred to me for response.

The following points deal with the concerns you raised, in the order presented:

- The grey nurse shark figure of 300 was based on published surveys and the ABC is satisfied that this was accurate. I am advised that according to new NSW fisheries material the numbers may be up to 416-466, however, this information is yet to be published. If this is true it is better news, but does not detract from the central argument of this report that the grey nurse is in major trouble.

The more general point arising from this was that Wayne Smith, the dive-boat operator in the story, said a species was headed for extinction. There are also grey nurse populations in Western Australia and South Africa and they too, like sharks all over the globe, are under immense pressure from over-fishing.

- The ABC has double checked the figures suggested by the Nature Conservation Council and I am advised they appear to be accurate.

- As you point out, sharks move up and down the coast. However, scientists explain that they congregate in key areas and obviously they move between locations. This does not remove the possible need - put forth by the Nature Conservation Council - to have restricted zones around habitats. The argument being, that while in those habitats they stay within a kilometer and a half of the islands, reef or rocks. The ABC is satisfied that this was appropriate for inclusion in the report.

Your further comments regarding the Nature Conservation Council and Dive Charter Industry are noted. However, the ABC is satisfied that this report, which featured a variety of views including those of commercial and charter fishermen, was accurate and balanced, and in line with the requirements of the Corporation's Editorial Policies.

I enclose a copy of the ABC's Code of Practice for your reference.

Yours sincerely
Denise Muako
Audience Liaison Manager