

**ACTIVITY:** Diving

**CASE:** [GSAF 2000.11.21.a](#)

**DATE:** Tuesday November 21, 2000

**LOCATION:** The incident took place on a pearl farm near Orpheus Island on the Great Barrier Reef, Queensland, Australia.

*18°37'06"S, 146°29'37"E*

**NAME:** George Lyons

**DESCRIPTION:** He is a 28-year-old male, an experienced diver from the Cook Islands who relocated to Queensland a year ago and was living in Atherton at the time of the incident.



### **BACKGROUND**

**MOON PHASE:** Last Quarter, November 19, 2000. New Moon, November 26, 2000.

**WATER CONDITIONS:** "I'd stirred up mud on the bottom so visibility was only about a metre so I didn't see [the shark] at first," said Lyons.

**ENVIRONMENT:** Lyons said he hadn't seen many big tiger sharks in the area before but bull sharks were fairly common. "I've never had a problem with them," he said.

**DEPTH:** 11 metres

**NARRATIVE:** George Lyons was engaged in shell maintenance work when the shark came from behind, tearing his wetsuit and dragging him by a foot until his swim fin broke free. He said the first thing he saw was "a large mouth heading in my direction" as the shark circled him. "You're not in your natural environment so you stand your ground because you can't outrun what's down there. I just wanted to keep the thing away from me so I tried to keep him in sight but he came in behind and took me for a bit of a drag by the flipper until it came off," said Lyons. "I got a fright when it happened so quickly."

**INJURY:** No injury

**SPECIES:** The incident involved a tiger shark, four metres in length.

**NOTE:** Lyons is the second employee of a pearl farm to escape injury from a shark in less than three years. Michael Crimp, owner of the Cardwell-based pearl company *Indian Pacific Pearls*, said that he fought off a large tiger shark with a hand spear for a terrifying 20 minutes in January 1998 and said it was now time to take action. "It was a serious attack and what's happened to George means it was not an isolated incident and it's now time to change company procedures," he said. Crimp said he intends to introduce a two-diver system, with one on lookout while another works on the pearl beds. "We'll be looking at trialling shark repellents as well," said Crimp.

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**SOURCE:** Robert Reid, Courier Mail, Friday November 24, 2000, page 3