

## **Flat Spell**

*Jake Dean*

### **21 January, 6:03am**

**Surf:** Clean 0-1ft S/SW

**Winds:** Moderate NE

**Weather:** Hot and sunny

**Rating:** 1/10

Sigh. Another lay day I'm afraid. Almost zero swell, though nice offshore winds due to a stubborn near-stationary high sitting over Tasmania, with weak mid-latitude fronts pushing in from the Indian Ocean, dipping south-east while breaking down. Unfortunately, the long-range forecast isn't looking good either. Go get some chores done instead I reckon.

### **22 January, 6:04am**

**Surf:** Clean 1ft S/SW

**Winds:** Moderate NE

**Weather:** Hot and sunny

**Rating:** 2/10

Look, I've bumped up the rating because it's maybe semi-rideable on the western beaches, but you'd have to be desperate and riding a board as big as a cargo ship to get onto a few waves. Apologies if this blip of swell gave you hope, which is obviously in short supply as we continue to endure what the forecasting team reckons has got to be the worst flat spell our sorry coast has experienced since (at least) the nineteen-fucking-sixties. Chin up, folks. We'll get through this.

### **23 January, 6:01am**

**Surf:** Clean 0-1ft W/SW

**Winds:** Light NE

**Weather:** Hot and sunny

**Rating:** 1/10

Back to regular programming. Light offshore winds and beautiful conditions, but barely a drop of swell unless you want to waste a few hours scouring the coast for a random headland out west that might be picking up a thigh-high peeler somewhere. There are reports, however, of a dead whale floating around the shallows near Patrick's Beach, so you'd potentially be sharing the lineup with some enterprising sharks who've found an easy feed. It simply ain't worth it, folks.

**24 January, 5:58am**

**Surf:** Clean 0-1ft W/SW

**Winds:** Fresh NE

**Weather:** Hot and sunny

**Rating:** 0/10

Not sure there's even any point in updating this section anymore. I was doing some back-of-the-envelope maths last night, wondering why the hell we do this to ourselves, and it made for depressing reading. Like, for all the hours we spend pining for and imagining perfect waves, trying to predict what the conditions will be like (only to be, in most cases, let down by the wind/swell/sand banks, or all three), and driving up and down the coast, burning through our petrol and precious time away from work and the family... for how long are we actually enjoying the act of surfing? Say, the average time spent riding along a single wave is about eight seconds, and you'll get, what – nine waves per hour, give or take? That's seventy-two seconds where you're physically riding along a wave per hour (two per cent), with the rest of the time spent paddling, duckdiving and staring at the horizon, willing Mother Nature to provide you with a good one, or at least something fucking rideable. And that's assuming you've performed well on those nine waves, and won't be rueing your missed chances — the blown sections, the shonky bottom turns, and the too-deep take-offs where you chide yourself for your atrophied middle-aged body — for the entire drive home. It's finally starting to dawn on me why so many of us give up in our thirties to take up mountain biking.

**25 January, 6:00am**

**Surf:** Clean 0-1ft W/SW

**Winds:** Fresh NE

**Weather:** Hot and sunny

**Rating:** 1/10

Not much to report out here today, with a small (see: tiny) skerrick of swell being blown almost flat by this strong nor'easterly. As I mentioned earlier this week, that whale is attracting some attention from the men in grey suits, so keep your wits about you if you're planning on finding something surfable out on the western beaches, which I wouldn't recommend. While I've got you — I must apologise for my little rant yesterday. Our owner happened to log on for his semi-regular peruse of our fair region's surf reports and it seems he wasn't pleased with my insinuation you'd be better off giving this surfing caper away, which admittedly wouldn't be good for business. In the interest of keeping me employed, it'd be much appreciated if you don't cancel your subscription, and instead cling to the hope there'll be waves on the way soon. Please and thank you.

**26 January, 6:47am**

**Surf:** who cares

**Winds:** who cares

**Weather:** who cares

**Rating:** who cares

You know what? I rescind yesterday's plea. What's the point of subscribing or even clinging to hope when the entire ocean seems ironed flat by some vengeful deity? What's the point of hope when we're on our fifth consecutive day of forty-degrees-plus, when reddened yobbos across the country are wrapping themselves in Australian flags, when the act of surf forecasting is becoming increasingly fraught amid the chaotic whims of a climate that's being shaken like a snow globe? Let us all abandon this dance we're doing in the face of cataclysm, the soy flat whites we treat ourselves to while on the way to sit at our desks for eight hours a day, the social mores, superannuation, and streaming services. Let us all rise up and strive for something better,

or surrender to our base desires (as long as it doesn't hurt anybody else, and as long as it doesn't require the act of surfing because this is no longer possible, it seems).

**27 January, 6:09am**

**Surf:**

**Winds:**

**Weather:**

**Rating:**

Last night I stared inside the glorious wave-like curl of a Dorito chip for three straight minutes.

**28 January, 4:48am**

**Surf:**

**Winds:**

**Weather:**

**Rating:**

Spent most of last night thinking about the whale. Out there in the dark. Being devoured piece by rotting piece. Can you imagine the stench? The rank oily slick of the water? For the not-so-history-inclined: this coastline was colonised, in large part, because of the abundance of these charismatic megafauna and our brutal desire to impale them, harvesting their oil and bones for lamp fuel, soaps, corsets and other old-timey shit. Picture their stinking corpses crammed into the stations once perched atop these headlands, which help to shape and refract the waves we (used to) ride. What if this flat spell represents some kind of retribution? Have you considered that?

**29 January, 5:58am**

**Surf:** Messy 0-1ft S/SE

**Winds:** Strong SE

**Weather:** Hot and sunny

**Rating:** 1/10

Laugh all you want, but is it really so far-fetched? More than eighty per cent of the world's oceans remain unmapped, unobserved, and unexplored. Jellyfish have been around since before the dinosaurs, having survived five mass extinction events. Some whales live to more than 200 years old (pathetic when you consider the *Monorhaphis chuni* sea sponge, which it's said can live to a sprightly 11,000). What stories do these ancient beings carry and pass on?

**30 January, 5:58am**

**Surf:** Clean 0-1ft W/SW

**Winds:** Light NE

**Weather:** Hot and sunny

**Rating:** 1/10

Today's the day, folks. I'm heading to the western beaches. Perhaps I'll even find a rideable wave, ending this months-long flat spell for good! Because what else is there if not hope? What alternative do I have than to strap my eight-foot soft-top to my roof, and drive down the coast with the windows open and the music turned up loud, a vegetarian pastie with sauce in my hand, the sun shining on my driving arm, giddy with the promise of impending submersion? For if there's one thing I've been reminded of this week, surfing's not just about the act, it's also about all these other small pleasures and rituals. Thank you to everyone in the comments for reminding me why so many of us devote our lives to this maddening and holy pursuit. And that's ultimately why I need to visit the whale. To make sense of it. Perhaps that's all it has been asking of us all along. For a witness, or an interlocutor. An offering?

**31 January, 6:00am**

**Surf:** clean 0-1ft W/SW

**Winds:** Moderate NE

**Weather:** Hot and sunny

**Rating:** 2/10

Not much to see down here today. But some good news. There are waves on the way, thanks to an unseasonal autumn-like swell event, the source of which we've had a go at explaining in the extended forecasting notes. Essentially, there's a powerful low spinning up immediately south of Western Australia right now. This will drive a strong front through the Bight. It should peak here on Thursday afternoon to about 4-5ft with freshening NW winds and great waves at all the usual spots. Looks like this lengthy flat spell is no more. In other good news, the dead whale that was floating around near Patrick's Beach has now been towed out to sea by the environment department. P.S. this is Chris from the metro beaches. I'll be taking over these reports for the foreseeable future.

*Publisher's note: WaveCheck would like to apologise for the content and quality of this week's surf reports. They did not meet the high standards we, and you, expect from Australia's favourite surf forecasting website, and for that we are truly sorry. We have updated our publishing and approval processes to ensure this does not happen again.*

*I would also like to take this opportunity to address reports in the media about our long-time surf forecaster, Geoff Brown, whose blue Subaru Forester was found parked near Patrick's Beach last night. Police and his family have concerns for his welfare. Anyone who sees Geoff or has information on his whereabouts is asked to contact police immediately.*

**Jake Dean** writes stories and rides waves on Kaurna land in South Australia. His fiction has appeared in *The Saturday Paper*, *The Furphy Anthology*, *Verandah Journal*, *Antithesis Journal*, *Schuylkill Valley Journal* (US) and elsewhere. He won the 2021 Microflix Writing Award. You can read more of his work at [jake-dean.com](http://jake-dean.com)