



CARING FOR OUR BAYS SINCE 1991

ON OUR WEBSITE...

Report your dolphin and whale sightings as part of the Two Bays Project. Go to Two Bays facebook page or through Dolphin Research Institute at dolphinresearch.org.au

Support our Summer Appeal



NEWSLETTER
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COMMON DOLPHINS - ours are not SO common

This Port Phillip common dolphin is officially an international anomaly!

The rest of the world is now intrigued by our resident common dolphins after the recent paper written by DRI's Researcher Director, Sue Mason, was published in the Royal Society Open Science.

The paper presents research dating back to 2007 and confirms that Port Phillip's common dolphins have become permanent residents, with a community of nearly 30 adults, sub-adults and calves. They share the bay with about 120 resident bottlenose dolphins.

Common dolphins (*Delphinus delphis*) usually live in the open ocean, sometimes in large numbers. Some that do live closer to coastlines are referred to as 'inshore', but Port Phillip is the only place in the world where common dolphins are known to reside in such a shallow, enclosed bay; let alone co-existing with a capital city of more than four million people.

The publication in such a prestigious journal is important because of the rigour of the peer review process and calibre of the international scientists who reviewed the work before publication. It is a credit to Ms Mason and the Institute.

More importantly, the publication adds weight to our discussions with government to achieve greater protection for the dolphins and their habitat. It also helps to guide DRI's future planning for research and marine education.

Download the paper: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1098/rsos.160478>



DRI congratulates Sue Mason on having her paper published in the internationally recognised, peer-reviewed journal of the Royal Society, UK. The Royal Society Open Science is an open journal publishing high-quality, original scientific research.

We also acknowledge that Sue is enrolled as a PhD candidate at Curtin University and recognise the support of her supervisors and co-authors.



NEW STICKERS are here to help boaters. They come from DRI surveys finding that 66% of people didn't know the dolphin approach distances.

It's fine if dolphins approach you, but slow down and don't follow them when they swim off. Penalties are very heavy.

To find out about the full details of the regulations go to the 'Report Sightings page' on our website.

Stickers can be obtained through our website or 1300 130 949.



Common dolphins - Cape Woolami 2016

2016 IN REVIEW

Three things come to mind from 2016. The wonderful supporters who renewed their support for up to their 25th year. It is humbling to receive their faith in our organisation for more than a quarter of a century. The *'isea, i care'* awards at the City of Casey and the wonderful work of so many young leaders.

The publication in the Royal Society and also the three issue-based reports to government - all influencing stronger environmental outcomes. "Outcomes" is the key word. We don't exist to run an organisation - we exist to achieve the best outcomes for marine mammals and their environment - and for the community.

We have a duty to run an efficient, ethical and focussed organisation that respects the trust shown in us by our supporters.

Some key information of the past year:

- Of DRI's total revenue, only 8% was spent on fundraising
- Ratio of the value of voluntary contributions to paid staff was 43%

We had over 82% retention of donors and education clients

Efficient expenditure, passionate volunteers and fantastic relationships with donors and clients helps us to make the most out of our resources.

Thank you to everyone who has helped to make 2016 such a positive 25th year. Jeff Weir, Executive Director.

RESEARCH

- Dolphin Health Project - 2nd year
- Two major projects and reports to government
- Skin Map - computerised system for monitoring dolphin skin health
- Establishment of Dolphin Health Consortium
- Research publication in the Royal Society Open Science
- Completed digitisation of 24 years of photo ID database
- Third year of Community Dolphin Monitoring Project
- Response to strandings

EDUCATION

- 104 *'isea, i care'* schools in seven regions, 49 workshops for 450 Ambassadors
- Twelve community engagement festivals including science fairs
- One education teacher placement
- 5200 people reached through 100 education programs: Early Years, Primary, Secondary, Camps, Community groups
- Reconciliation of programs to new curriculum standards
- New educational partnerships

LEADERSHIP

- Dolphin/boat study
- Dolphin Regulations study
- Participation in the State of the Bays Report and Port Phillip Environmental Management Plan Review
- First 'Winter Whale Weekend'
- Two Bays Citizen Science Project
- New Dolphin Regulation stickers
- Community benefit: more than 45 volunteers, five research interns, one teacher placement. Over 3,300 hours of volunteer assistance

ORGANISATION

- New website
- Improved on-line capacity for communication and fundraising
- New branding
- New board members. Ric Bland, Cate Edwards, Amanda Graham, Shane Murphy. Thanks also to Rod Evenden who retired after 4 years
- Continuing to produce our publications, including this newsletter, 'in-house'. The DRI team is versatile and thrifty

2017 LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The only thing that we can be sure about the future is CHANGE. We will see growing environmental pressures on the bays resulting from population growth (predicted to double by 2050). Weather extremes (with climate change), already evident now, are sure to be a major challenge in the future. Equally, we face economic uncertainty and along with it, a community and government that see the environment as a lower priority, especially for our southern marine environments.

DRI is beginning a process to ask what will these changes mean to our priorities and ability to work and adapt as the future changes around us. The need for sustained long-term studies of our dolphins and effective community engagement to alter behaviours and perceptions won't change. But we will question exactly what needs to be studied and communicated. 2017 will be a crucial year to maintain core programs alongside detailed planning for the decade ahead.

The first phase of the Dolphin Health project will finish and we will begin planning for 'Dolphin Health 2' and strengthening the national Dolphin Health Consortium. Plans to develop a long-term social research capacity to monitor community perceptions and the effectiveness of *'isea, i care'* have already begun. We are also working on our organisation so that our management and funding programs will support us into the decades ahead. Your support will make this possible.

DRI Tonga Whale Swim

10-17 August 2017

An exciting opportunity for DRI people next year is a week in Tonga swimming with humpback whales. Some spaces are still available. This will also raise funds for the Institute. See the back page for more details.





PRAISE FOR AMBASSADORS

The Dolphin Research Institute and the City of Casey have had a strong relationship through our *'i sea, i care'* schools since 2013 – there are currently 21 schools enrolled in the program.

A large audience gathered at the council offices for this year's awards night. The winners are shown here with Councillors, the Deputy Mayor and the state Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment, Anthony Carbines MP.

Young Ambassadors learn about the living marine treasures in our bays and waterways, the role of catchments and pollution, and more. They take this knowledge back to their schools – and spread the word through peer-teaching, addressing their school assembly, talking to community groups, and even writing plays and performing songs.

Cr Damien Rosario, the Deputy Mayor, City of Casey said that the council 'looks forward to continuing to work with this exciting and innovative marine education program'. He praised it as a 'wonderful initiative', and the Ambassadors as 'our future leaders'. He added that "Next year we welcome five more schools to the program."

The Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment, Anthony Carbines MP also addressed the crowd. "It will be young people who chose to set the tone for their future, so that those who come after you have a greater environment and an enriched environment."

A list of all the winners is on our website under the *'i sea, i care'* Casey banner. A short video of the awards night is on our facebook page. Be inspired by these 'future leaders'.



DOLLARS FOR DOLPHINS

Recently, Lynbrook Primary School DRI Ambassadors held an *'i sea, i care'* Nude Food Day. Over 950 students came to school dressed in their blue and green t-shirts to represent the ocean and earth. The nude food day encouraged students to be more aware of packaging in their lunch box and challenged everyone to come up with alternatives such as Tupperware containers to reduce the amounts taken to landfill everyday. As part of the day, the donations were put onto a dolphin outline (see above). A total of \$801.85 was raised which will be donated directly to the DRI. The students at Lynbrook Primary have benefited greatly since becoming a DRI school. They have learnt many leadership and public speaking skills and deepened their understanding of the marine environment through the DRI Ambassadors program.

We look forward to continuing to support the Dolphin Research Institute for many more years to come.

*Erin Stevenson, Teacher
Lynbrook Primary School*

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Now in it's fourth year, the Mornington Peninsula Schools Science Fair saw 750 students in Grade 5/6 from nineteen schools across the southern peninsula region attend the day. We were honoured to be one of only two non-school organisations invited. Three of the Dromana Ambassadors hosted an *'i sea, i care'* stall. They did an amazing job of answering questions and demonstrating some of the things they have learned during the year. Well done, Tinker, Max and Roy! Red Hill Consolidated and Crib Point schools also gave presentations on the main stage about the *'i sea, i care'* program and what it has meant for their school.

The Dolphin Research Institute was also at the Doveton Show and the Cannons Creek Community Festival. Once again our 'touch 'n' feel' boxes were a huge hit. This year we had one box with dolphin food and one with platypus food – this led to many discussions about litter entrapment, illegal use of nets in public waterways, and the role of our marine national parks and sanctuaries.

Some people said that they had not been to the beach since arriving in Australia, and some animals were very foreign to them. This was a great way to allow them to ask questions, touch shells and sponges and learn about the issues with litter in their local area.



OUR PEOPLE ARE OUR FOUNDATION

David Donnelly is a key member of DRI's Research Team. We are pleased to have David 'on board' as he is a marine researcher with over 21 years of experience in a range of scientific disciplines. He holds a current AMSA Category 1 Coxswain certification and has worked on large and small vessels with universities, Australian state and federal government bodies, New Zealand's Department of Conservation, the military, NGOs, production companies, tourism and the oil and gas industry. For more details, see our website dolphinresearch.org.au/team.

Some people are known to have 'the eye'. It might be for predicting where a storm is going to hit, when a flock of sheep is going to bolt, or where dolphins might 'pop up' in a research transect. David can 'see' where the dolphins will be, and as skipper of DRI's research vessel he will manoeuvre the *Delphinidae* into the best position possible for the researchers on board and their cameras. Back in the office, he and the other researchers go through the images for our fin id data-base.

David is actively involved with two citizen science projects. He is the manager of Killer Whales Australia. This group works in collaboration with colleagues to build an understanding of Australia's top marine predator. The Two Bays Whale Project aims to better understand whale movements within Port Phillip, Western Port and nearby waters; David is their sightings curator.

SWIMMING WITH HUMPBACK WHALES

Another of David's passion is ethical eco-tourism. He runs whale-swim tours in Tonga in August and September on the Blue Water Explorer. Four DRI folk joined Dave in Tonga in 2016 and DRI's Director, Jeff Weir, wrote the following:

"The wonder of looking into the eye of a humpback whale off Tonga was a remarkable and moving experience that reminded me of why I became a biologist in the first place. David's commitment to the welfare and understanding of the whales, combined with his gift as a skipper and guide, make the Blue Water Explorer whale swims a standout ethical eco-tourism experience that I am delighted to recommend."

We are proud to endorse this venture, and can offer supporters a very special opportunity to join David and other DRI folk for a week during 10-17 August 2017. Spaces are limited so be quick. See our website for details and links for booking.



facebook.com/killerwhalesaustralia/



facebook.com/twobayswhales/



AUCTION SUCCESS

Our first on-line auctions were very successful, with over \$7,500 raised for our research and education programs. Thank you to the local businesses that donated such wonderful, high-quality products and services. The next auction will be early 2017 - keep checking our website for details.

TIN HOSTERS

Thanks to the nearly 400 businesses around the greater Melbourne region that have our donation tins. Look for the leaping dolphin!



The Dolphin Research Institute relies on contributions from donors like you. Your support is a tangible way to help care for our dolphins and bays.

Go to dolphinresearch.org.au or 1300 130 949.

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS - AND PLEASE SUPPORT THEM!

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City of Casey
City of Greater Dandenong
City of Kingston
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