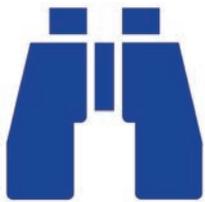


# DOLPHIN RESEARCH INSTITUTE



CARING FOR OUR BAYS SINCE 1991



Report dolphin and whale sightings to [dolphinresearch.org.au](http://dolphinresearch.org.au)  
1300 130 949

All sightings are confidential and not released publicly.



NEWSLETTER  
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[www.dolphinresearch.org.au](http://www.dolphinresearch.org.au)

## CONNECTING WITH OUR WONDERFUL BAYS

Seeing dolphins recently swim through the heart of Melbourne, along the Yarra and Maribyrnong Rivers, is a powerful way to remind us about our close connection with the bays.

Our research team recently recorded groups of more than fifty bottlenose dolphins near Frankston. The nearby community of common dolphins also seems to be rapidly expanding.

During the same time we had reports of killer whales and humpback whales in Port Phillip and Western Port.

At a time when coastal environments around the world, and in Australia, are losing resident dolphins, our bays are very much 'jewels in Victoria's crown'.

But as always the story is not simple and has two sides.

On one hand, Port Phillip and Western Port are remarkable success stories, healthier today than decades ago and with marine species not found anywhere else on the planet. A day on the bay can feel like you are in a living wildlife film!

On the other hand, we have a big problem with record numbers of beach closures due to pollution flushed from the catchments by summer storms. If it's not fit

for us, then it's not fit for dolphins and other species. Whilst we have made progress, our remarkable bays remain at the mercy of what is flushed from the catchments.

This will become even more challenging as we face a future of more extreme weather events from climate change and ballooning urban development from a population expected to double by 2050.

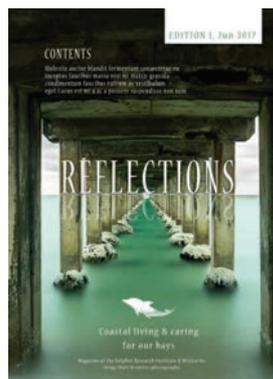
Surveys show that most of us are more concerned about marine life in the tropics than our bays. And we don't think our lives in the suburbs affect the bays – even when we are the source of most pollution.

It is urgent to both change how we value our bays and how we live in the catchment. Your support will help our work to achieve this.

There are no quick fixes. The problems are complex and require innovation and long-term leadership, education and action to make any difference.

Our supporters know this, many passionately believing in our work for more than two decades.

Please consider supporting our Caring for Our Bays Appeal. We can't protect our dolphins if we don't protect our bays.



## REFLECTIONS - OUR NEW MAGAZINE ABOUT THE BAYS

We are very excited to announce the launch of REFLECTIONS, an on-line magazine telling stories about our wonderful bays and the passionate people who live, work and play around them. The goal is to create a flexible, engaging platform to help Melburnians truly appreciate OUR marine backyards.

REFLECTIONS is a partnership with Simon Mustoe of WILDIARIES and will be released quarterly. It will be supported by advertising, so if you would like to be involved, please let us know. The first edition will be released on World Oceans Day - 8 June. You can get it through our website, and we will also post on facebook and send an e-bulletin to members.

## WHAT OUR SUPPORTERS HAVE HELPED TO ACHIEVE ....

At our recent strategic planning day we realised that we don't adequately recognise YOU, our donors and all you do to support us.

For example, our Research Director, Sue Mason can attend and present at international conferences. Without you, there is no way DRI could be at these gatherings of the real, important happenings in marine science. And importantly, bring back knowledge to improve our research work.

Two key research reports in 2016 were identified, designed, developed and delivered to the Minister and DELWP officers. These were about bay users and their knowledge of the approach regulations; and a 'dolphin hot-spot' harassment issue.

Both were self-funded, which means, neither would have happened without your support.

In fact, most important things are kick-started by the funds we receive from donors.

Examples include, improvements to communication with our new website and clearer branding. This comes from the money we earn from our donors.

Most new initiatives, whether developing a new education program or new fundraising initiative, are made possible by our donors.

Of course, funding grants are important; and DRI continues to apply for appropriate projects. But they do not, and never will, cover the critical foundation work in caring for our dolphins and bays.

With over 40% of our income coming through fundraising, DRI has a resilient base to continue our work into the future.

**Volunteers** give in many ways to DRI. The estimated value of volunteer contributions is greater than \$140,000 each year! From helping in the office, servicing our collection tins, participating in our citizen science programs, to serving on our board of directors - thank you to all of our wonderful volunteers.

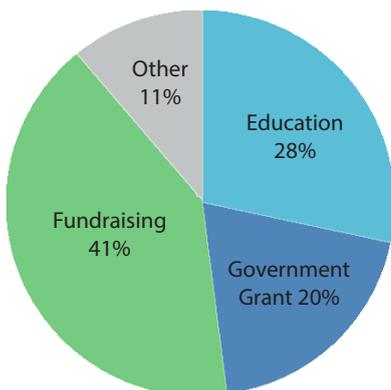
Our '*i sea, i care*' Ambassador program has over 110 schools this year, with the young Ambassadors coming from 7 regions from Geelong to Mornington Peninsula and out to Casey. The retention rate for '*i sea, i care*' schools is a very pleasing 98%.

Retention rates for DRI donors are heartening; 86% are still with us after their first year, and 70% after 4 years.

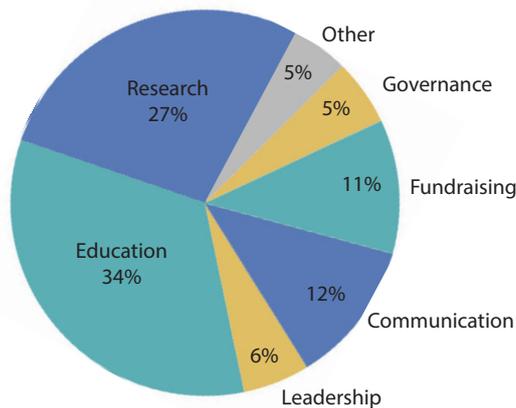
## WHERE OUR FUNDS COME FROM AND ARE SPENT

The pie charts below explain our income and expenditure for 2016. Most of our funding comes from our supporters and donors. This is through being an on-going donor, supporting (or donating to) our raffles and auctions, attending our events, or just as importantly - giving your change to the 'dolphin leaping out of the tin' (we have more than 600 collection tins in circulation).

### INCOME



### EXPENDITURE



## MORE THAN ONLY DOLPHINS - A SNAP SHOT OF DRI'S PEOPLE

Volunteers, Supporters and '*i sea, i care*' Ambassadors



## MORE THAN ONLY DOLPHINS - WHALES AND DRI

It's that time again when whales start appearing along our coastline. After spending summer in the Southern Ocean, they are heading north for the winter. Species to look out for include humpbacks, southern rights and minke, with sightings coming from Portland right around the coast.

This Victorian whale season, DRI (in partnership with Wildlife Coast Cruises) will again be co-ordinating the Two Bays Whale Project. This is the third season for the project and we are calling on our supporters for their help in recording whale movements through our region. The project focuses on the two bays of Port Phillip and Western Port.

It's easy to become a Citizen Scientist and contribute to this growing project, all you need to do is report your whale sightings to the Two Bays Whale Project via the DRI website at <http://www.dolphinresearch.org.au/research/report-sightings/>. The reporting system also allows for images to be uploaded for use in the database.

Already the project database has close to 400 sighting events. Using this information and images collected to date, the Two Bays team has created a humpback whale fluke identification catalogue totalling 42 individual whales! This would not have been possible without the contributions from our wonderful citizen scientists.

The catalogue is a first for Victoria and will contribute valuable information to the Australia-wide effort toward understanding humpback whales and their continued recovery from commercial whaling. We thank all contributors to the project and look forward to your on-going support as we move into the 2017 Two Bays whale season.

(Be sure to keep an eye on the DRI website and facebook page for details of the family-friendly 'Island Whale Festival' to be held on Phillip Island on July 7-9).



Humpback whale off Portsea: DRI Image



Report your whale sightings to the Two Bays Whale Project via DRI's website at [dolphinresearch.org.au](http://dolphinresearch.org.au)

## BACK ON THE WATER

After several months out of action, the DRI research vessel, 'Delphinidae' is back on the water. The original motor had served us well, but the time had finally come to replace it.

Many thanks to the supporters who donated to our recent appeal. A special mention to Thrive Bulk Wholefoods in Mornington for donating a percentage of their sales of kombucha to help buy the new motor.

We also highly value the contributions from Esso-BHP Joint Venture, Bluescope, Honda and MY Marine.

Our vessel is a key part of our research program, allowing transect surveys as well as the monitoring and photographing dolphins for our on-going fin-identification database.

Our researchers have said how much quieter the new motor is "... you can have a conversation, without shouting!" It is also more fuel efficient and economical, and hence - more environmentally friendly; caring for our bays!!



Photo by Jeff Weir, whilst running in the new motor.

## DOLPHINS IN THE HEART OF MELBOURNE

Dolphins are known to be inquisitive, and the sightings of dolphins this year in three of Melbourne's rivers seems to support this. We have sightings of dolphins in the Yarra, Maribyrnong and Patterson Rivers. Sightings of dolphins in these rivers are unusual but not entirely unheard of, with more than half a dozen records in the DRI database.

Whether the dolphins were following bream, a favourite food fish abundant now, or just checking out what's happening out of the bay and up the rivers, we don't know. Either way, it was smiles all round in the DRI team when the sightings started in mid-late May.

The sightings are proving that Melbourne is a pretty good place for dolphins, for now. Although inquisitive and curious, dolphins tend not to move

too far from safety and food. Also at this time were the first sightings of whales. On May 20, two humpbacks were sighted off The Nobbies, Phillip Island. Slowly travelling east, they put on quite a show – with tail slapping and breaching. On the same day, a pod of 6-8 killer whales was sighted at Port Phillip Heads. The pod spent several hours in the area before moving off to the east.



Photo: Erin Lyall

The presence of these amazing creatures in our waters should not be taken for granted, ever! Whales were commercially hunted almost to extinction. Thankfully, we expect to see them in our waters at least by the Queen's Birthday long weekend in June.

How often can you say to a friend from overseas (or interstate) – just wait until June and I'll show you whales, and give me a minute – we've got dolphins out the back all year round!

A great time for Melburnians to 'take our dolphins close to their heart'.

Caring for our Bays - too precious to take for granted.

## OUR PEOPLE ARE OUR FOUNDATION

Another part of DRI's research is the valuable information obtained by our Community Dolphin Watch (CDW) data-base. Through this, members of the public report their sightings of dolphins in Port Phillip, Western Port and the Gippsland Lakes. This data is used by us to 'put dots on the map' for the density of, and important habitats for, dolphins. The CDW data from DRI was relied on for the Environmental Effects Statement during the Port Phillip channel deepening process.

DRI's Community Dolphin Watch is run by volunteers; one of our stalwarts is Denise Matheson. Denise is the Coordinator of CDW. The sightings that are sent to DRI are all collated and documented by her.

Here is, in Denise's own words, why she does it. Thank you, Denise.



*Have you ever asked yourself what you would do as a volunteer if you had the time?*

*For me it was a natural progression of various interests which include Coast Guard Search and Rescue as a radio operator, whale watching in the Great Australian Bight and dolphins in New Zealand.*

*When I retired as a nurse administrator twelve years ago the answer was easy. I approached the Dolphin Research Institute to see what I could do as a volunteer and was offered to monitor the Community Dolphin Watch program. I enter the information you send into our database which assists the researchers in their projects.*

*I enjoy the stories you tell about the pleasure you have watching the dolphins. Many of you have had unique experiences.*

*There is a great atmosphere at DRI to work in and one of continuous learning being part of the team.*

*I feel your passion for the well-being of the dolphins matches mine.*

*Keep me busy by sending many sightings!!*

## BUBBLES, NOT BALLOONS

**When balloons fly, seabirds die.**

Be part of the solution.  
[zoo.org.au/balloons](http://zoo.org.au/balloons)

DRI is in support of the campaign to replace balloons with bubbles. Sadly, too many of these balloons released end up in the sea or on the beach. Here they can all too easily be ingested by marine birds and other creatures.

Create your own bubble mix from dish-washing liquid – so much safer for the birds, and our dolphins and their environment.

Find out more at [zoo.org.au](http://zoo.org.au) and [penguins.org.au](http://penguins.org.au)



## AUCTION

Thanks to all of our magnificent supporters who have once again put their money where their hearts are.

Over \$3000 was raised; all items were donated by our generous supporters and businesses. Look out for our pre-Christmas auction, coming in November.

## SPECIAL THANKS TO A SPECIAL SUPPORTER!

The Dolphin Research Institute wants to say a very special thank you to Sally (and her marvellous companion, Georgia).

Earlier this year, Sally saw one of our collection tins in the Mornington Newsagency. She was so taken by what the owners told her about DRI - that she's now a very special supporter!!



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](http://dolphinresearch.org.au) or 1300 130 949.

## THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS - AND PLEASE SUPPORT THEM!

Bay Fish N Trips  
Bullfrog's Bali  
City of Casey  
City of Greater Dandenong  
City of Kingston  
DELWP  
Department of the Environment  
Dolphin Products  
Eastern District Computer Services

Esso & BHP Billiton  
Good Company  
Kiss Printers  
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