







**V-NICK AND HER CALF**

are members of the unique  
community of common dolphins  
living in Port Phillip



## RESEARCH

In 2021 we will work on:

- A new project on Western Port bottlenose dolphins, involving citizen science, university interns and volunteers.
- Monitor the health of the vulnerable common dolphins in Port Phillip.
- The Two Bays Whale Project and Victorian humpback whale catalogue.
- Intern programs to help develop the next generation of scientists.

## EDUCATION

In 2021 we will provide:

- Marine education programs for more than 5,000 primary, secondary, tertiary, early education students.
- Programs for adult groups and community events.
- Mentor education students.
- Innovative on-line education.

## LEADERSHIP

In 2021 we will work on:

- Developing over 500 young leaders in our *'i sea, i care'* Ambassador program (bringing the total to 7,500 since 2001).
- Establishing our *'i sea, i care'* **Communities** program to empower the wide community to protect our bays.
- Actively influencing investigations and policy development relevant to marine and coastal protection.

**The Dolphin Research Institute helps Victorians to care for our dolphins, whales and their environment, especially our wonderful bays.**

Since 1991 supporters like YOU have helped to provide solutions through innovative research, marine education and environmental leadership, to create lasting impacts on laws to protect our dolphins, and culture in our *'i sea, i care'* Ambassador school communities.

**You can help by:** Joining Adopt-A-Dolphin, becoming a Regular Donor, booking an Education Program, Reporting sightings, Volunteering, and having your group join our *'i sea, i care'* **Communities** Program.

Dolphin Research Institute | Western Port Marina, Hastings  
5979 7100 | [www.dolphinresearch.org.au](http://www.dolphinresearch.org.au)



QR Code to videos

DRI Snapshot



Baby Dolphin Rescue





## Welcome to our Winter 2021 Snapshot.

I want to share with you an exciting vision for the Dolphin Research Institute's future and invite you to help us bring it to life.

We did take a moment to celebrate our 30th anniversary in March, but our main focus this year is to ensure we build on the legacy created from the support and efforts of so many people during our first 30 years.

Our dream is to transform the institute from a small organisation doing our best with limited resources, to become an influential and independent institute.

Our unique long-term programs enrich the lives the community we touch. It is a great honour to share some of the feedback we receive:

***"I want to thank the whole Institute for helping to change our family's lives through our son being part of the 'i sea, i care' Ambassador Program."***

*The mother of an 'i sea, i care' Ambassador*

***"I take away from my internship the importance of finding the right scientific questions to ask and the joy of seeing dolphins in the wild. It is probably the best experience I've ever had."***

*A university intern*

***"DRI works closely with the Department of Environment as a respected and highly regarded partner and sets a fine example to other NGOs through a proven ability to deliver through a balanced and collaborative approach."***

*An environmental manager*

***"DRI gives dolphins a voice – our family a voice – and a positive way to support marine life and conservation." "It has and continues to be, such a rewarding journey."***

*A three-decade supporter*

A future with rapidly changing climate and population growth, makes the need for our balanced leadership greater than ever.

### TO PROTECT DOLPHINS AND WHALES YOU NEED TO...

- Understand their lives and needs
- Protect their environment
- Lead behaviour change
- Educate the young and community
- Develop future leaders and scientists
- Champion evidence-based approaches.
- Deliver long-term and proven programs

### ...BUILD ONE STRONG AND CARING COMMUNITY.

People are the common thread throughout. They magnify our efforts to achieve a far greater impact than we can do alone.

It's why our new **'i sea, i care' COMMUNITIES** program aims to develop whole community stewardship. Community champions, like in our schools, will help us achieve behaviour change needed to reduce coastal pollution and harassment of marine mammals on the water.

The previous page outlines our goals and the following pages shows our work to achieve them. I hope you enjoy reading about the progress your support helps to make.

Of course nothing could happen without supporters like you. You are part of all our achievements.

Our dream to transform our organisation is achievable with your help.

Please support our Winter Appeal. Follow this link (if reading online) or go to our website.

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

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Jeff Weir OAM, Executive Director  
director@dolphinresearch.org.au  
03 5979 7100



P.S. On behalf of all the DRI family I want to thank all the individuals, schools, businesses, organisations, foundations and governments who have supported us over 30 years - Thank You All.

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DRI is a Registered Charity with the ACNC. ABN 73097317112

**Our promise to you is that we will always strive to achieve lasting impact, to make the most from your support, and to excel at genuine community-based innovation and leadership.**





## MANDY ROBERTSON - "2020 EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR"

We proudly share that **Mandy Robertson**, DRI's Education Director, received Environment Education Victoria's "2020 Educator of the Year" award in the category of "Community educator of the year (Environmental Education Provider).

The award acknowledges "a major contribution to environmental and/or sustainability education in the financial year 2019-2020, above and beyond their regular duties".

"Above and beyond" describes Mandy who seeks out opportunities to develop skills to improve her work. Training as a Climate Reality Leader and Community Based Social Marketing for example. It also describes the impact that Mandy has on people through her leadership of the Institute's **'i sea, i care'** **School Ambassador Program** and other roles outside DRI.

Mandy's recognition is well earned and adds to other acknowledgements this year for programs that Mandy drives or is part of. This includes the "2020 Environmental Education Award" for **'i sea, i care'**, from Keep Victoria Beautiful, and the "Australian 2020 Award for Small Events" for the Island Whale Festival."

Mandy would be the first to share her acknowledgment with her team of fine educators, our council partners with **'i sea, i care'**, and the teachers, parents and student ambassadors who make her work possible.

Making the world a better place is why people like Mandy work for organisations such as DRI. It's challenging and exhausting and while we don't seek personal acclaim, being acknowledged by your peers is heartening and energising to continue the great work.

We acknowledge the other worthy finalists in the category, Alex Johnson – BirdLife Australia and Madelaine Willcock – Nature Stewards Program.

We also acknowledge Environment Education Victoria for their leadership in the area of environmental education over many decades.

2020 has been a tough year for everyone. Hopefully, these acknowledgements bode well for a great 2021.

Congratulations and well-deserved Mandy.



## Ambassador Jaiden

In our last e-bulletin we shared the remarkable initiative that Jaiden, a champion **'i sea, i care'** School Ambassador from Park Ridge Primary School, had started to raise funds to support the Institute.

The image shows Jaiden with Mandy Robertson, our Education Director sharing his initiative with the judges from the National Keep Australia Beautiful panel who recently visited Hastings and DRI as part of judging the town of Hastings for the national award.

Jaiden is also a part of a cohort of young leaders that this year make 7500 **'i sea, i care'** Ambassadors who have developed through our award-winning program.

**Jaiden's fundraiser raised a fantastic \$1317.50 - a remarkable outcome for a remarkable young man.**

Kids Making a Change was founded by kids wanting to help the environment and earth by raising money and awareness.



## Unravelling the Mystery of Western Port's Dolphins

Western Port is about one-third the size of port Phillip but only seems to have about one-tenth the number of resident bottlenose dolphins. Nearly three decades of community sighting reports and our own surveys suggest there are about twenty.

The above photo shows one of them. These dolphins are a bit of a mystery, so gaining a greater understanding of their lives and use of the bay is crucial to their protection. This was highlighted by the recent environmental investigations into the impacts of the AGL proposal to build a gas import terminal in the bay.

Most sightings come from the western side of the bay, but we also have some from Tooradin, the north of French Island, Rhyll, San Remo and Cape Woolamai. We also know that some dolphins move between Port Phillip and Western Port.

A pilot study is underway to investigate the areas dolphins use the most and how much of their time is spent travelling, feeding, nursing young and interacting with people, vessels and animals.

This is a major focus for our intern and volunteer programs. Locals might see our university interns and volunteers scanning the water from vantage points around the bay.

We discuss our study and concerns with the Department of Environment, Water, Land and Planning to ensure greater protection for these dolphins.

Please contact us if you would like to find out more or become involved.



## Port Phillip's Not So Common Dolphins

The upper image shows a dolphin called Violet with a new calf, photographed recently during a survey in Port Phillip.

These images help us to piece together a history of calves being born and successfully reared by their mothers. Did you know that female dolphins are called cows?

Photos can tell us lots more. If you look closely at the image below, can you see two stripes on the side of the leaping calf? These are fetal folds, creases in the newborn's skin and blubber caused by being curled up before birth. They flesh out in the first week or so after birth, leaving white marks that usually completely fade away by 3 months.



It's hard to tell the age of Violet's calf as you can't see its side, but the little calf leaping is probably only 2 to 3 months old.



## Do Antarctic Killer Whales Migrate To Australian Waters?

Do Antarctic killer whales migrate to Australian Waters? Well thanks to David Donnelly, DRI's Research Officer, and his network of colleagues and citizen scientists, we now know that at least some Antarctic killer whales visit our coastal waters. The work is published in the current edition of Aquatic Mammals.

The Southern Hemisphere is thought to have 5 "ecotypes" of killer whales that differ in size and the patterns on their body. The painstaking work comparing many images dating back to 2008 confirmed the presence of Antarctic types B and C killer whales in our coastal waters. The top image shows a Type C killer whale off Sydney.

It is impossible to over-stress the important role of citizen science in this discovery. It is not an accident. It takes strong and wide networks of professional and community members to share images, along with the leadership to sustain interest and painstakingly tease out questions and new understandings.

The full description is published in the current issue of Aquatic Mammals and is authored by David M. Donnelly, Josh D. McInnes, K. Curt S. Jenner, Micheline-Nicole M. Jenner, and Margie Morrice.

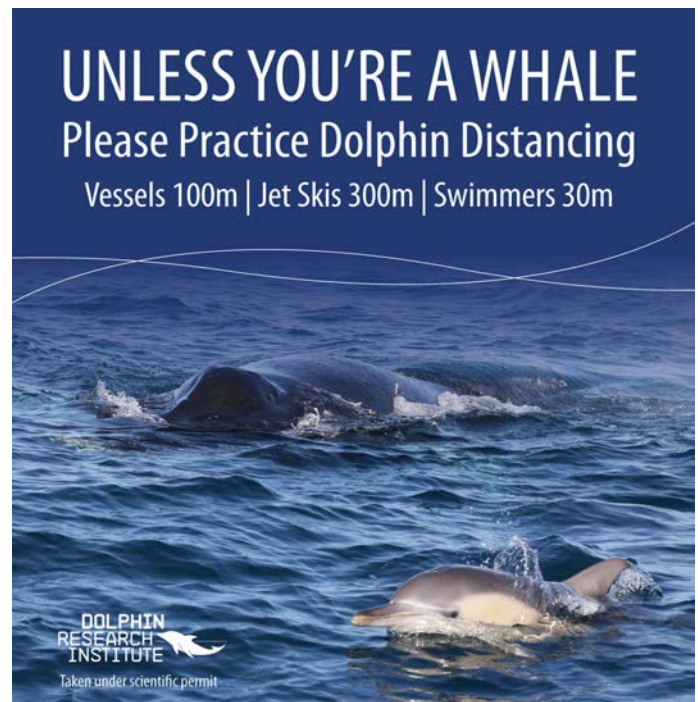
<https://doi.org/10.1578/AM.47.3.2021.292>

## Marine Mammal Harassment Project

We are pleased to report that the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) has created a new project to address the harassment of dolphins, whales, and seals.



A DELWP project officer recently met with us to seek a greater understanding of the issues. This flows from DRI leadership during 2020 and other meetings to raise the issues. We are grateful to DELWP for this important initiative and have committed to doing everything we can to make the project a success. We will keep you posted. Something concrete you can do to help take the pressure off our dolphins is to support our "Dolphin Distancing Program".



## DOLPHIN DISTANCING

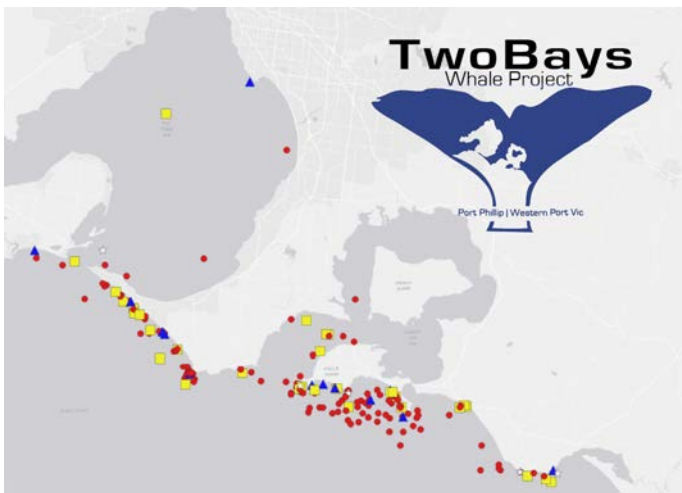
Last Summer we launched a world-first program to improve how people behave around dolphins on the water. In an evidence-based approach we are building bridges to organisations, including yacht, lifesaving, jet ski, seakayak and other groups, to seek commitment from the community to "Dolphin Distancing". We are adapting it for whales in whale season.





## Two Bays Whale Project 2020 Summary Report

The Two Bays Whale Project again proved that a citizen science approach to data collection that includes the use of social media, a sightings hotline, and scientific expertise is a useful and reliable means of monitoring whale presence and movements. This was of particular importance during the COVID 19 restrictions period which was effectively the entire season. Without the citizen science component, the project would not have functioned in any meaningful way.



The map shows the validated sightings of humpback whales (red), southern right whales (blue), killer whales (white) and unidentified whales (yellow).

The relative success of the 2020 season can be attributed to an excellent collaboration between the Dolphin Research Institute and Wildlife Coast Cruises as well as a growing network of enthusiastic supporters. Broader collaborations with State agencies and domestic organisations were also greatly beneficial to data collection and validation of events. This overall success has ensured the continuation of the project into 2021.

The plan for season 2021 will be dependent on the level of restrictions applied in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. Regardless of restrictions, the project will continue to expand networks and improve methods - this will increase the contribution of the project to the overall aim of improving the understanding and management of whales in the Two Bays region and Victorian coastal waters.

The full report can be downloaded [HERE](#). Or go to our website.



## Interns Making a Difference

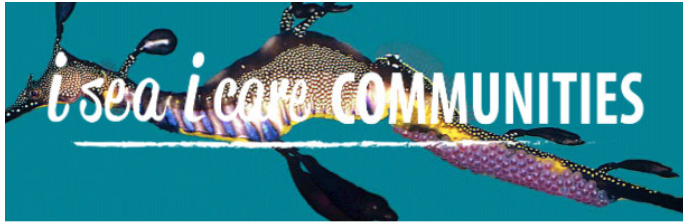
What a Difference an Internship Makes! Internships offer an incredible opportunity to both support our research program and contribute to the development of the next generation of young scientists.

We have interns from five universities during the first half of 2021. They are working on the Western Port Dolphin Project but also helping us by researching the literature about things like the impacts of human interactions on dolphins. Some are also helping with our Dolphin Distancing program.

We made a short video introducing Kira Maher and Kelsey Graham from Monash University who are working on the Western Port and Dolphin Distancing projects. You can view their interview at: <https://youtu.be/lputOCNIols>

Kira and Kelsey's passion is inspiring. What they didn't mention are the significant challenges they had to overcome to make their internship work.

We are very lucky to have so many talented young scientists prepared to both contribute and learn. With all that is going on it gives a glimmer of hope for the future.



## AGL Western Port Project Stopped

The Victorian Planning Minister, Richard Wynn, announced in April that the government would not approve AGL's proposal to establish an LNG import terminal at Crib Point on environmental grounds. The decision flows from the government's analysis of the Environmental Effects Statement (EES) and the large numbers of scientific and community submissions.

This is a positive outcome for Western Port showing that the environmental assessment process in Victoria is effective in stopping projects that do not demonstrate the capacity to understand and mitigate risks they pose. The Institute strongly believes in weighing the evidence before we take a position on important matters. Our review of the EES concluded that the studies did not adequately demonstrate that the environmental risks were understood and consequently, impossible to manage. We recommended that the project should not be approved. Our submission to the EES can be found [HERE](#). Or go to our website.

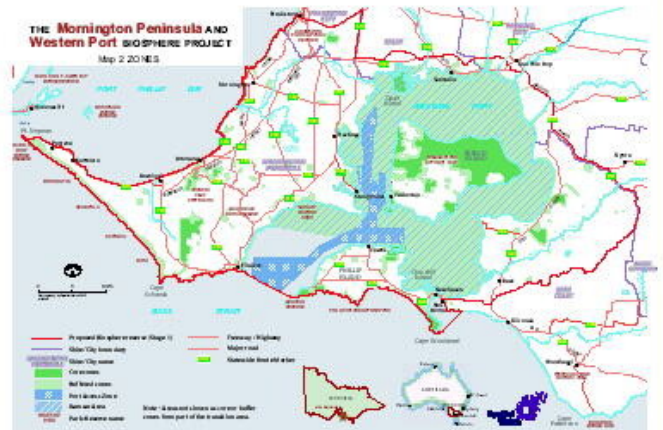


## 'i sea, i care' COMMUNITIES Makes Progress

Thanks to the creative work of Monash Interns, Marta and Frances, our 'i sea, i care' Communities Portal is now live on our website. (<https://www.dolphinresearch.org.au/isicmain>)

- We have wonderful stories about our local marine treasures - a great place for education and interest.
- Stories about ISIC heroes - local people who are leaders in helping protect our marine environments.
- ISIC Businesses - who support our programs and do other things to help the seas.
- Proven Actions - that we can all do to help protect our marine world.

We are adding new stories every week and are looking for all types of organisations to join in. We want to tell the stories of their heroes and help us share the stories to their communities.



## A UNESCO Biosphere

Did you know that all of the Mornington Peninsula and Western Port is recognised under UNESCO's "Man in the Biosphere" program. We are one of 714 Biosphere Reserves in 129 countries.

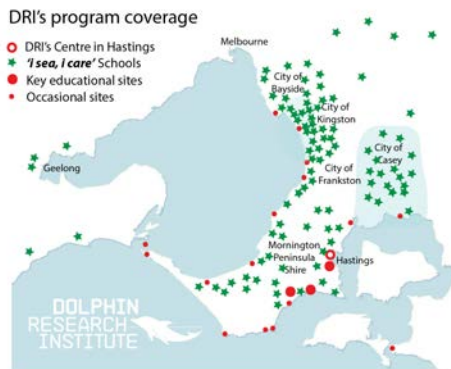
Biosphere reserves promote solutions reconciling the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use. They are learning areas for sustainable development under diverse ecological, social and economic contexts, touching the lives of more than 250 million people. It doesn't mean that development can't occur but that it must be sustainable. Find out more at <https://www.biosphere.org.au/>





## 'i sea, i care' School Ambassadors Return to Work

We are delighted to be again working with our *'i sea, i care'* Ambassador schools around both bays. The green stars show the spread of our ambassador schools around both bays. We are grateful for the support from our council partners; Mornington Peninsula, Casey, Kingston, Dandenong and also Catholic Education, each having a group of schools that we work with.



Most schools have four Ambassadors who we work with during the year to develop into coastal leaders. First we motivate them with a boat trip. Ambassadors from Casey schools visit Seal Rocks, other schools venture out on to Port Phillip Bay to snorkel with seals, sea dragons and dolphins.



For many, these experiences are life-changing, some have never been on a boat before.

Once motivated, Ambassadors attend workshops to train them as peer educators. The idea is that we work with four Ambassadors, then they teach hundreds in every school. We train nearly 500 Ambassadors - they teach over 50,000 children every year!





Ambassadors have a great time learning about our amazing marine animals and habitats, including our impacts on the marine environment. Through highly engaging activities our Ambassadors are empowered to have a role in contributing to a more positive environmental future!



After the workshop, many Ambassadors commented on their newly found confidence in environmental messaging, and that they did not realise how much fun they could have while helping the planet!

Armed with their new knowledge and skills, the Ambassadors then teach a younger class. Through role-plays, storytelling and support, the Ambassadors quickly gain the confidence to share their new skills. It is inspiring to watch them supporting each other while teaching the younger students!



It is inspiring to watch the students support each other during the teaching workshops, particularly after a really rough 2020.



They are so passionate about environmental protection and they understand that marine conservation does not stop for a pandemic!



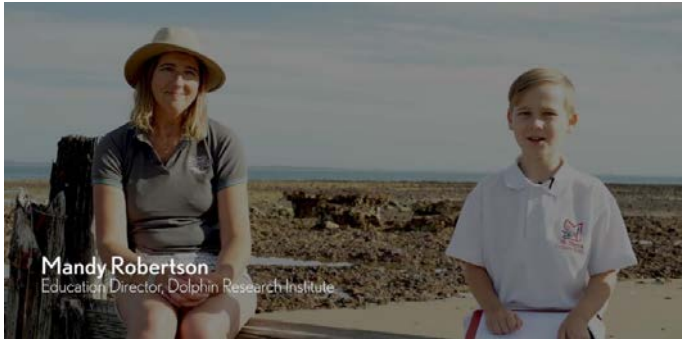
As always we are so grateful to our wonderful host schools, council partners, coordinators teacher, parents/carers for making these workshops possible.

We are very proud of our *'i sea, i care'* Ambassador Program. We know it has impacts in the school communities we work with and lasting impacts with many Ambassadors.

In the words of the mother of an *'i sea, i care'* Ambassador...

***"I want to thank the whole Institute for helping to change our family's lives through our son being part of the 'i sea, i care' Ambassador Program."***





## Harry The 'i sea, i care' Hero

Harry is in Grade 2 at Mount Martha Primary School, one of our much-loved 'i sea i care' schools. He recently interviewed Dolphin Research Institute Education Director Mandy Robertson about all things rockpools and marine conservation. It is hard to believe Harry is only in Grade 2, what an inspiring young chap!

You can view the video at <https://youtu.be/iRpaqDwRsvM>

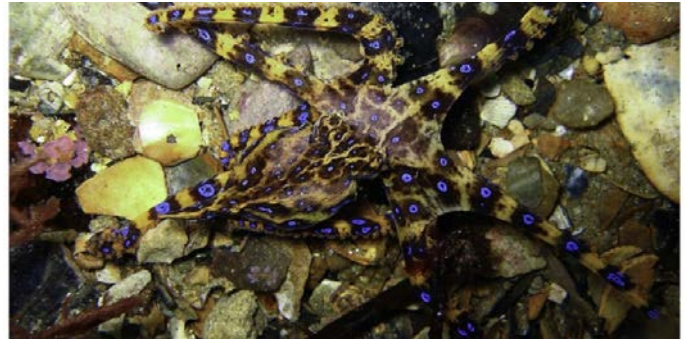


## Marine Education For Kinder Too

As a high school trained teacher, discovering the early years cohort has been both a revelation and a joy. I had an absolute ball recently with local kinder children.

We learnt all about what lives in the rock pools before a session about rubbish finding its way to the ocean. We conducted a science test on our magic drain to see if it would make our rubbish disappear! Guess what - it doesn't work!

By Mandy Robertson (Education Director)



## Creature Features

2020 became the year of "bringing education to the student", with the introduction of Creature Features. These fascinating insights into the secret lives of our local marine creatures are being developed into "e-books" for our schools to use. He's a new one on a very pretty and deadly member of the mollusc family.

The image above is a Southern Blue-ringed octopus, one of ten species of octopus that have these tell-tale blue rings. This species is found across Southern Australia while other species can be found on shallow reefs of the eastern Pacific Ocean all the way to Japan.

This is from one of the many creature features that are now on our website to learn more about the life in our local waters.

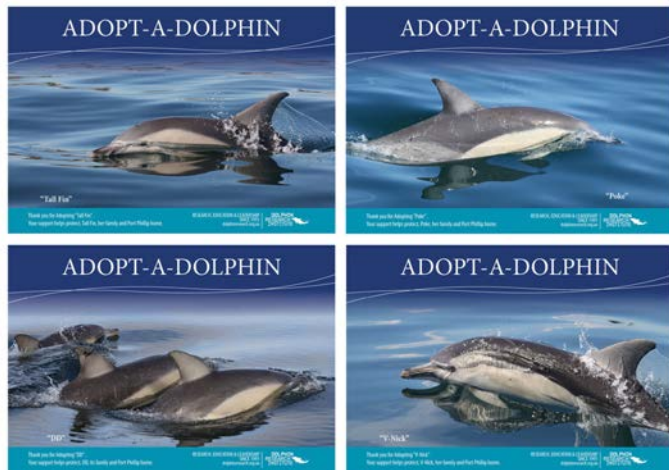
Other creature features include barnacles, abalone, rock lobster, sponges, flatworms, sea anemones, Port Jackson sharks, limpets, periwinkles, crabs, "jelly blubbers", nudibranchs, brittle stars, cone shells, sea urchins, decorator crabs, carnivore snails, chitons, seals, and of course - dolphins and whales have their spots!

We are going to group these into e-books but until then you can look at them if you the blog archive on our website.

You might like to let us know if there are creatures that you would like us to write a feature about!

## ADOPT-A-DOLPHIN - 2021

In our 30th Year we have updated the program to adopt individual dolphins.



We have: **Tall Fin** (the resident male), **Poke** (the champion mum of 4), **DD** (the accident-prone survivor), and **V-Nick** (the champion mum of 3).

**Adopt-A-Dolphin members have been the heart of our organisation for three decades.** They join our loyal family who trust us to make a difference. This is what they say:

*"We Adopt-A-Dolphin because we trust the team and believe in their work to protect marine life and the bays."*

*"We have been part of the DRI family for over 20 years now, and love the visionary approach."*

*"DRI gives dolphins a voice – our family a voice – and a positive way to support marine life and conservation".*

*"It has and continues to be, such a rewarding journey".*

Money raised through Adopt-A-Dolphin supports all the work you see in this Summer Snapshot: **Research, Education** and **Leadership**. All elements work together to protect our living marine treasures, especially our dolphins, whales and bays.

### Adopt-A-Dolphin makes a perfect gift

Gifting membership to a family member, friend, colleague, teacher or other important person in your life, not only shows how much you care about them, it also shows how much you care for the marine environment and its inhabitants. (It's also a perfect gift to yourself).

Adopt-A-Dolphin membership costs just \$98 a year (or a monthly gift of \$10 or more). Call us on 03 5979 7100 or go to our website [www.dolphinresearch.org.au](http://www.dolphinresearch.org.au)

## Thank You To Our Wonderful Supporters...

None of our work would be possible without the generous support from individuals our volunteers and citizen science participants. The many hundreds of loyal businesses who host collection tins and donate to our fundraising auctions. Special appreciation goes to Jean Weir, the JMS Foundation and our loyal Adopt-A-Dolphin members and donors (many for more than 20 years and up to 30 years).



Our partners with our **'i sea, i care'** School Ambassador Program.



Members of our Leadership Circle Program.

## There are many ways you can support our work...

- Volunteer or become a formal intern.
- Join Adopt-a-Dolphin or give one as a gift.
- Become a sponsor
- Donate to appeals, or as regular giving or make a bequest.
- Commit to actions to reduce your impact.
- Host a DRI collection tin in your business.

Call us and speak to our team, email us, or go to our website for more information.

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This document is developed as an e-book first to both consider the environment and maximise our audience. We do print and circulate some copies to reach all our audiences. We use paper stock that is PEFC and Carbon Neutral Certified.