



## THE DOLPHIN CALLED 'KILLER'



**DOLPHIN  
RESEARCH  
INSTITUTE**

David Donnelly image

JOIN US FOR AN ONLINE CONVERSATION  
FRIDAY 17 APRIL - 4 PM



*isea icare*  
**COMMUNITIES**

**RESEARCH - EDUCATION - LEADERSHIP  
SINCE 1991**

[www.dolphinresearch.org.au](http://www.dolphinresearch.org.au) | 03 5979 7100



### V-NICK AND HER CALF

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



## RESEARCH

In 2020 we are working on:

- A new project on Western Port bottlenose dolphins, involving citizen science, university interns and volunteers.
- Monitoring 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 2020 we are providing:

- Marine education programs for 10,000 primary, secondary, tertiary, early education students.
- Programs for adult groups and community events.
- Mentoring for education students.
- Innovative on-line education.

## LEADERSHIP

In 2020 we are:

- Developing over 500 young leaders in our *i sea, i care* Ambassador program (bringing the total to 7,000 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

Welcome to our Winter 2020 Snapshot.

We hope that you and your families are coping well during these challenging COVID-19 times.

Our 29th anniversary in March flashed by as we focussed on staying safe and supporting our *'i sea, i care'* Ambassadors and Research Interns who became isolated overnight.

Field research is only now beginning to restart..

I am very proud of our team's resilience and commitment to still achieve our 2020 goals for Research, Education and Leadership.

The previous page outlines our goals and the following pages shows our work to achieve them.

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

We work with 4 Ambassadors in a school; they work with many hundreds. Over 20 years, 7,000 Ambassadors have probably influenced millions.

Our programs change lives and the impacts span generations. See feature (right) about Dr. Prue Francis.

Ambassadors bloom through their leadership experience; for some, it shapes their life-course. Past Ambassadors come back as University interns. Interns progress to Honours and PhD's, to become the next generation of scientists, teachers and environmental managers.

People are part of the solution but also the challenge. Surveys show that during 2020, public concern for the environment has plummeted. Meaning that in a post COVID-19 world our work will be more crucial than ever.

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 to reduce coastal pollution.

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

There has never been a more important time to support our work. Please help us to build one powerful community of Victorians to protect our marine treasures.

Please support our *'i sea, i care'* COMMUNITIES Appeal. Follow this link (if reading online) or paste it in your browser.

<https://www.dolphinresearch.org.au/support-us/isic-comm-appeal-form/>

Looking forward to hearing from you.

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



## After three decades, DRI's impacts span generations.

A recent ABC feature, The "Great Southern Reef" (i) told the story of Dr. Prue Francis from Deakin University writing a children's book to raise the profile of our southern marine life. We recently heard from Dr. Francis about the impact DRI has had on her.

Hi Jeff, I have been following the Dolphin Research Institute since I was a teenager and in fact, the DRI was one of the driving mechanisms behind me becoming a marine biologist.

During my teenage years, I was part of the "Adopt A Dolphin" program where I saved up my pocket-money to contribute.

Some background: My PhD was on seaweeds (a slight deviation from my earlier dolphin-obsessed days). I am also an ex-high school teacher and combined my passion for education and science by working as the Education Coordinator at Reef HQ Aquarium in Townsville. Now back in Victoria (and the Great Southern Reef), I work for Deakin University at the Queenscliff Marine Station where we run the practical components of our marine science degree as well as the station being a marine hub for research.

I am very passionate about marine education and increasing marine science/ocean literacy in schools. I have a current PhD student working with me who will delve into the nitty-gritty of marine science education, using our Great Southern Reef children's book as a platform. I am familiar with DRI's *'i sea, i care'* program as my daughter's school has been an active participant. I think it is a terrific program and a wonderful marine education initiative. I would love the opportunity to look for opportunities where we can work together.

Kind regards, Dr. Prue Francis. Course Director of Bachelor of Marine Science, Deakin University.

Dr. Francis has kindly agreed to be a Community Ambassador.

Prue is not alone. DRI Alumni include Wildlife Officers, State Biodiversity Manager and Coastal Managers.

(i) <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-19/great-southern-reef-needs-more-attention-scientists-say/12227998>



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DRI is a Registered Charity with the ACNC. ABN 73097317112

### HELLO FROM SOME PUZZLING DOLPHINS...



Dolphins spend a lot of time rounding up food, socialising and sometimes doing things that are hard to understand.

The above image was taken during a recent research survey with the common dolphins living near Mornington. We were taking fin-ID photos to help us estimate numbers, the movement of individuals and their health.

It's always a treat to witness their leaps and sometimes full somersaults, as they herd fish or just seem to play.

Sometimes they do a spyhop where they come up out of the water and splash back down. Their eyesight is good both above and below water, so when they leap or spyhop they can most certainly see other dolphins and boats. Maybe it's like when we stand on tippy-toes or jump to find our kids or partner in a crowd?

**Puzzling though**, was the sight of dolphins playing with the big blue blubber jellyfish that were present in huge numbers. We watched them rub the length of their body against the jellyfish, finishing with a flick of their tail.

These jellyfish are common in Victorian waters and only have a mild sting on their stumpy arms. Who knows - maybe the dolphins were enjoying the sensation of the mild stimulation? Sometimes leaps seem to follow a jellyfish rub. Maybe they were happy? Maybe they were trying to remove the stingers?

Victoria's regulations state that "People shouldn't deliberately approach dolphins closer than 100 metres in boats, 300 metres on Jetskis or 30m for paddlers and swimmers".

Blue-blubber jellyfish are commercially fished, as when dried they are a delicacy in Asian countries. We didn't see dolphins eat them.

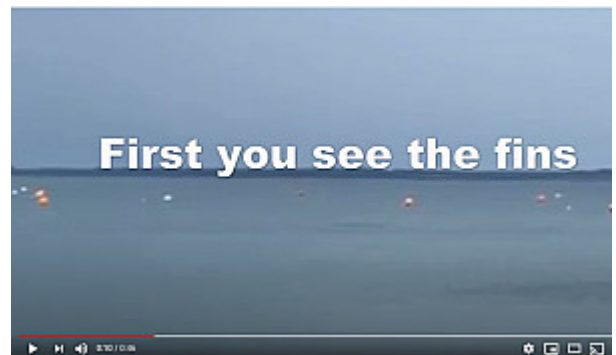
During our time on the water, we did see a vessel approach and closely follow dolphins. We spoke to them politely and they were keen to find out about these special dolphins. We gave them a copy of the regulations and we watched them slowly move off and not chase after the dolphins.

If dolphins pop up close to you or approach your vessel, then ideally stop if safe to do so and watch, or slow down and keep your direction. Enjoy and value our remarkable marine treasures, then let them swim off, without following.

More information about the rules and protecting dolphins are available on the Dolphin Research Institute's website: [www.dolphinresearch.org.au](http://www.dolphinresearch.org.au)

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### First You See the, Fins then...



See some remarkable behaviour of one of our bottlenose dolphins in our bay teaching us how to fish.

It nearly beaches itself to catch a fish and copes well with both the fish and getting back into deeper water.

Keep your eyes open and your cameras ready (when it's safe to return to the beach). The vision was passed on by one of our Uni Interns from a friend who took it some time ago on a phone. It doesn't really matter that it's not the highest quality as it tells a great story.

Click on the graphic (if you are reading online) or paste the link into your browser: <https://youtu.be/vrFilyl7Nwg>

## 2019 Summary Report - Two Bays Whale Project



Tracking the movement of whales past our coast is both challenging and important for their protection.

To meet this challenge the Dolphin Research Institute, led by Project Manager David Donnelly, developed the Two Bays Whale Project. This citizen science program enjoys a strong partnership with Phillip Island eco-tour company Wildlife Coast Cruises and is a big part of David's work as our Research Officer.

Here we are pleased to release the 2019 Summary Report for the Two Bays Whale Project.

The challenges of 2020 may have delayed this report **but not the whales**. Sighting reports have them travelling past Tasmania and we expect to see them in the Two Bays region in the coming weeks.

The report shows a marked increase in involvement by citizen scientists during 2019 as well as the validation of four species of whales recorded during the year. We are grateful for the support of participants and partners. Download the full report below.

While Covid-19 has introduced uncertainties this year for citizen scientists surveying from cliff-tops and tour vessels, we are hopeful that some activity will still be possible.

In preparation, we are working on new tools to strengthen the Two Bays Whale Project for 2020 and beyond. Keep an eye on our blogs and Facebook for more details on how you can get involved.

[DOWNLOAD REPORT HERE](#) (If reading online)

## Good News For Bay Dolphins



Over 40 common dolphins live in Port Phillip Bay. Everywhere else in the world, common dolphins live in the open ocean. The video shows social behaviour including mating.

Calves are born after 12 months gestation. Images of a fetal-fold calf swimming with its mother, taken on the same day, show what looks like vertical stripes. If you look closely, they are actually "puckers" in the new-born calf's skin. These fill-out and fade over the first 3 months of life. Being so prominent tells us that the calf is only days or a week old.

Recent surveys recorded older calves (about 6 months) and sub-adult dolphins (about 5-7 years). Seeing this healthy range of age classes is a positive sign. With the help of our donors, we will continue to monitor these unique dolphins.

The imagery was collected during a survey in March 2020 under a scientific research permit from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

## Environmental Leadership

As part of our role, DRI through our team, contributes environmental leadership in numerous ways:

- Two Bays Whale Project recorded and shared over 1,100 sighting records of large whales in the Two Bays region.
- Long-term contribution to the International Whaling Commission's Scientific Research Archive
- 541 contributions to Victoria's Biodiversity Atlas
- Created and lead 3 citizen science projects
- Provided expert advice to State & Federal Governments
- Developed SkinMap to monitor dolphin skin health
- Supported 4 Honours & 3 PhD research projects
- Active involvement in wide-ranging environmental projects and conferences.
- Provided input to numerous legislative and environmental investigations
- Conducted social research to understand community perceptions



## Our Research Interns for 2020



A sea of smiling faces at a workshop for DRI research interns to kick-off 2020. Pictured from left, Mandy and Jacqui (Education team), Will, Bruce, Fiona, Bec, Lily, Danny, Jess, Jack, Jeff, Ellie, David (Research Officer) and Meaghan. (Franc, Leanne and Heather were away).

The purpose was to share the projects they are working on and to discuss new opportunities to help on a new Western Port project and with the Two Bays Whale Project during "whale season".

Just a few days after this meeting, we were all thrown into lockdown due to COVID-19 and finding ways to work remotely was the challenge.

Remote access to our network and lots of Zoom meetings helped all interns complete their formal Uni requirements. We were fortunate to have such a committed and talented group of young scientists.

Bruce (blue shirt) is also joining us to assist with these programs in his retirement after 40 years at Monash Uni.

The students are a combination of undergraduates with formal internships and postgraduates looking for volunteer experience. They come from Melbourne Uni, Monash Uni, LaTrobe Uni, Deakin Uni, RMIT Uni and James Cook Uni.

### Their projects include:

**Western Port Dolphin Study.** A program developed by 2019 interns to answer important questions about resident dolphins in Western Port. Students will pilot the project and help to iron out bugs. We will then open it up to the wider community to become involved as a citizen science program.

**Two Bays Whale Project.** Helping to monitor the movement of whales in our waters during the "whale season". This includes educating the public at the Island Whales Festival.

**Dolphin Health.** Extending work on the digital tool we developed to describe and quantify lesions on dolphin skin. We believe skin health is connected to both the health of dolphins and the health of their environment. SkinMap is the only tool that we know of to measure skin health, so getting the tool right offers to make a significant contribution to dolphin conservation.

**"Bay Match".** This is a fun online community engagement project to find your perfect match from nearly three dozen residents of the bay. Are you a graceful whale or a scavenging seagull, a coral or a spider crab? Lily and Jack started on this last year and will finish it before they start their respective travels. They had to research all the animals and work out the logic for the series of questions to get your best match.

We are privileged to have such a talented and energetic group of students to work with us in 2020.

## A Dolphin Called Killer



We started online conversations with our broad supporter base to keep up communication during lockdown.

Sessions like this with our own David Donnelly received nearly 100 registrations and took half an hour to answer questions!

If online watch the full broadcast HERE::

<https://youtu.be/5ImD-VIBV4Y>

## The Whales Are HERE!



The first sighting of humpback whales for season 2020 was on Saturday (16 May), off the Mornington Peninsula, heading east near Number 16 Beach.

Our own Mandy Roberston (Education Director) reported this sighting which will be logged as the first sighting for Two Bays Whale Project this season.

Please remember to stay COVID-19 safe and maintain social distancing when you are searching from the cliffs.

### The best land-based locations to see whales in the Two Bays region are:

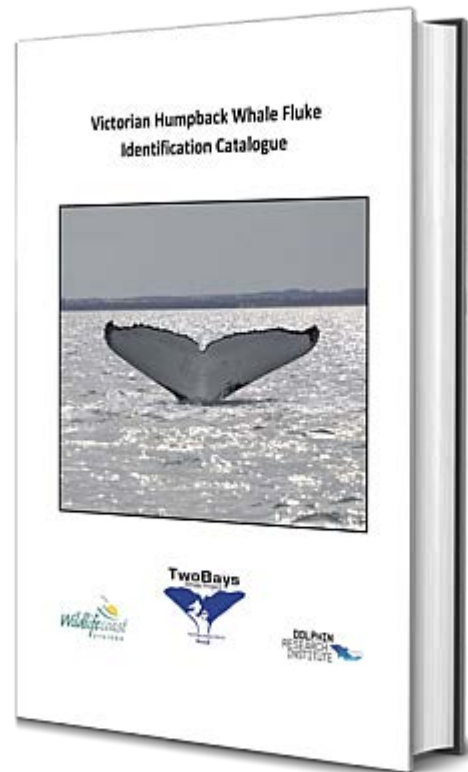
- Barwon Bluff
- Port Phillip Heads
- Cape Schanck
- The Nobbies
- Pyramid Rock
- Cape Woolamai on Phillip Island and
- the Bass Coast.

Please report sightings via PodWatch.



Access PodWatch first time through our website.  
[www.dolphinresearch.org.au](http://www.dolphinresearch.org.au)

## Victorian Humpback Catalogue



It took more than a decade of painstaking work for David Donnelly and many passionate citizen scientists to add the 50th ID fluke image to the Victorian Whale Catalogue. But less than three years to add the 100th fluke!

This important outcome reflects the growth of the Two Bays Whale Project, a partnership with Wildlife Coast Cruises, the Dolphin Research Institute and a growing number of passionate citizen scientists.

This document is the first and only identification catalogue for humpback whales in Victorian Waters and fills an important gap in the understanding of this species in the region. It will support the long-term protection of humpback whales in Victorian waters.

Access the report (if reading online) [HERE](#)

### Ambassadors Plunge into 2020!

This year nearly 550 students across Melbourne will represent their schools as Marine Ambassadors, using their student voice to care for and protect the local marine environments of Port Phillip and Western Port Bay.

After a great start to 2020 with boat trips and other workshops, everything suddenly stopped. The following stories relate to both pre- and post-COVID-19.

*1 sea, i care'* Ambassadors from the Port Phillip Regions of Bayside, Melbourne and the Mornington Peninsula had an inspiring experience learning first hand about the bay's living marine treasures for their first workshop aboard the Moonraker. (Special thanks to Torie and her awesome crew who help make our *1 sea, i care'* program possible!!)



Flat seas, clear waters AND dolphins greeted our Ambassadors, cruising right up to the boat. The seal swim at Chinamans Hat was a highlight, and for some Ambassadors, it was their first snorkel! For staff and students alike, this was a fabulous experience they will never forget! A big high five to all the Ambassadors, especially those who snorkelled for the first time!!

*1 sea, i care'* Ambassadors learn more than just about the issues facing our marine treasures and their habitats. These experiences motivate and prepare them for their role as environmental leaders in their school communities. For many, it is a life-changing experience.

### Supporting Our Ambassadors During COVID-19



"Pivoting" is the latest jargon to describe adapting to the challenges COVID-19 - and our Education team of Mandy, Jacqui and Russell have been "pivoting like ballerinas" to ensure that our *1 sea, i care'* Ambassadors do not miss out.

If Ambassadors can't come to the sea -- then we are bringing the sea to them!

Wednesday afternoon Zoom sessions are now a fixture to keep Ambassadors engaged and components workshops are being pre-filmed and shared through Zoom meetings.

Filming our seagrass collection activity at Blairgowrie gave the opportunity to check if the annual aggregation of Spider crabs had arrived...they have not arrived yet, but we will be there to film them when they gather in their thousands to moult under the pier at Blairgowrie.

Wednesday's Zoom session with Ambassadors discussed issues such as the types of litter we are finding during this quarantine time, and our Ambassadors had so many great ideas about how we can reduce our plastic consumption.

It has been both, a very exciting and challenging time for our Team and Ambassadors. We look forward to sharing the Ambassador's journeys throughout the rest of 2020...



## Celebrating World Wetlands Day what great start to 2020!!



This year our first Ambassador Catchment Workshop was soon after [World Wetlands Day](#).

Experiencing the magnificent [Warringine Park](#) in Hastings were Ambassadors from [Billanook College](#), [St Margaret's School](#) and [Berwick Grammar School](#).

The students had a great time emerging themselves in nature while developing a better understanding of the importance of coastal wetlands and the significance of Warringine Park as part of a listed Ramsar site, with over 110 bird species that visit or reside in this beautiful wetland.

Students also gained an in-depth understanding of the importance of mangrove ecosystems as a carbon sink, habitat, and as a protective buffer against fires, tides and storms in a future of climate extremes.

If you are interested in joining in one of our public or school guided walks, please do not hesitate to contact us at Dolphin research Institute  
<https://www.dolphinresearch.org.au/education/>

After 20 years of the '[i sea i care](#)' program, the number of Ambassadors that have participated is almost 7000, and many have continued to be strong advocates for the future of our planet.

The continued reach and success of this program would not be possible without the many wonderful partners that support us, and they include the Mornington Peninsula Shire, City of Kingston, City of Casey, Catholic Education Melbourne, City of Greater Dandenong and Melbourne Water.

## Peer Teaching Workshops and I SEA I CHAT sessions make online learning so much fun!!!



The Peer Teaching workshops give Ambassadors the confidence and knowledge to share their stories about Victoria's own marine treasures and how we can reduce the pollution that is flushed from our suburbs.

We had had another great week with our '[i sea, i care](#)' Ambassadors during their Peer Teaching Workshops and weekly chat sessions.

Our I SEA I CHAT session for the last week of May looked at all things re-purposing and upcycling.

Ambassadors were very interested in upcycled items already available, and ideas for upcycling at home rather than throwing items away.

We were also so inspired to see how Ambassadors were re-purposing in their households!!

The first week of June was World Environment Week, and we had I SEA I CHAT sessions every day from Monday to Thursday, leading up to World Environment Day on Friday 5 June.

World Oceans Day is 8 June, and we will be talking about whales, dolphins, stingrays, Spider crabs and more!!

## Kingston Ambassadors Off To A Flying Start In 2020



Recently, *'i sea, i care'* Ambassadors from schools across the Kingston region participated in their peer teaching workshop. The workshop comprises interactive activities designed to help Ambassadors develop the knowledge and communication skills to teach their peers, families and wider communities about why our marine environments are special, and how we can all help to protect our beautiful planet!

The workshop includes a range of impacts humans can have upon the ocean, and simple solutions toward reducing plastic consumption, and the amount of litter entering our waterways.

The students were brilliant, and many commented that this workshop helped their self-confidence for public speaking, and of course, as with all of our workshops, it was great fun.

Thank you so much to Serena Gillot from the City of Kingston for attending, Esther Gilmore and Mentone Primary for hosting, and the wonderful parents and teachers who brought the Ambassadors along for this valuable experience!

## Casey Kids Carnival



Dolphin Research Institute had a stall at the carnival and were delighted to share our marine and coastal stories to such a diverse and interested community.

The Casey Kids Carnival is one of the City of Casey's most celebrated events and includes a FREE day of activities and performances. The carnival is aimed at children aged 0-12 and their families.

Our role in this festival is part of our partnership with the City of Casey with our *'i sea, i care'* School Ambassador Project. We greatly appreciate their support.

## 'i sea, i view' TV for Ambassadors



World Environment Week: Day 1 with the Education Teams at Tirhatuan Wetlands

During World Environment Week, Mandy and her team filmed at the locations where they normally would have Ambassador Workshops in each region.

This edition was filmed at Tirhatuan Wetlands in Dandenong. It is a thriving ecosystem that is crucial for cleaning the stormwater that drains from our suburbs before it is flushed to Port Phillip.

You can view it by clicking the link if you are reading online, or pasting it into a browser: <https://youtu.be/L7weNNijCGA>

This is part of our efforts to "bring the environment to our Ambassadors" during COVID-19, so that they don't miss out. This is part of what you are supporting.



## Litter on our local beaches...what are we finding?



Our Education Team headed to Dromana Beach on the Mornington Peninsula to film a litter collection workshop where we sort and report litter found on a beach.

This is so we can provide our *'i sea, i care'* School Ambassadors with resources we can deliver via Zoom while excursions are not possible.

The collection of beach litter is only one part of this activity which involves identifying the types of litter we find on particular beaches and reporting the findings to organisations such as Tangaroa Blue and Litter Stop.

The goal is to stop litter at the source - before it's flushed down drains to the bay.

The more we report the types of litter ending up on our beaches the more power we have to lobby government and industry to change behaviours and implement alternatives to single-use plastics.

The soy sauce bottle may have been flushed down the stormwater drains which flow into the bay then floated in at high tide, or been dropped by a beach visitor after using it on take-away food. This item is an example of a single-use plastic for which alternatives are readily available. For example, a retailer could have large Soy sauce bottle to pour on food rather than requested; or soy sauce fans may have a bottle in the car, or take one with them when they are heading out for take-away. These are just a few simple solutions to a common single-use plastic item found on many of the beaches around our bays. If you would like to learn more about litter sorting and reporting, or to join one of our litter activities contact our education team through our website.

## Ambassador Newsletters



Every term newsletters are created for all our *'i sea, i care'* schools to reinforce the great work Ambassadors do and help them communicate to their school communities.

There are four terms, 100 schools means a potential audience of 400,000 sets of eyes every year!

*'i sea, i care'* has been going for 20 years this year with about 7,000 young leaders given the opportunity to develop their leadership skills and champion Victoria's southern incredible marine environment.

## Thank You

### Thank You To Our Wonderful Supporters...

Our loyal Adopt-A-Dolphin members and donors (many for more than 20 years and up to 29 years).

Our volunteers and citizen science participants.



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



Members of our Leadership Circle Program.

The many hundreds of loyal businesses who host collection tins and donate to our fundraising auctions.

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

Give a gift that 'keeps on giving' - an **Adopt-A-Dolphin** membership for yourself or a loved-one:

<https://www.dolphinresearch.org.au/2019xmas/>

**Join our education team** for a memorable experience. Schools, Probus (and like), As well as learning and having fun, your fees help to support our organisation's work. (Subject to COVID-19)

<https://www.dolphinresearch.org.au/education/>

**Become a Citizen Scientist.** Report your sightings of dolphins and whales and help us to answer important questions about their movements and needs.

<https://www.dolphinresearch.org.au/report-sightings-page/>

### Donate to our Appeal.

<https://www.dolphinresearch.org.au/isic-comm-appeal-form/>

Volunteer or undertake a formal Internship with DRI. Last year all our volunteers (board, interns, office, fundraising and research) contributed over 5,000 hours to DRI.

<https://www.dolphinresearch.org.au/volunteers-and-interns/>

Commit to an "action" to help protect our dolphins and their home.

<https://www.dolphinresearch.org.au/isic-communities/>

Host a collection tin or our new "tap and go" fundraising terminal in your business. Call 5979 7100 to find out more.

### We Hope Everyone Had a Lovely Mother's Day



We hope everyone had a lovely Mother's Day! Our 2020 online auction was a great success and raised nearly \$3000 to help support our research and education programs...

None of this would have been possible without the generous support from our generous business donors and our fabulous community who had so much fun bidding!

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