



Welcome

We hope you enjoy reading our *Summer Snapshot* with positive stories about leadership, discovery and educating the community.

Our board and team have completed a lot of thinking about driving change by addressing the challenges through four impact areas.

- 1. Dolphins & Whales:** Insufficient long-term knowledge about population health, environmental needs and human impacts.
- 2. The Environment:** Ecosystem resilience in the face of coastal pollution and climate change.
- 3. The Community:** Stewardship for our southern marine life. Opportunities for volunteering and helping to achieve impacts.
- 4. A Strong Organisation:** A role-model for achieving impact with long-term and self-sustained programs.

Of course we address these challenges through our core activity areas of Research, Education and Leadership.

This is what makes DRI unique and effective.



By 2026
100%
growth
on 2022



Education for
16,000 students



1000 i sea, i care
Ambassadors



500 citizen
scientists



20 interns and 50 vessel
surveys per year



50,000 volunteer
hours per year



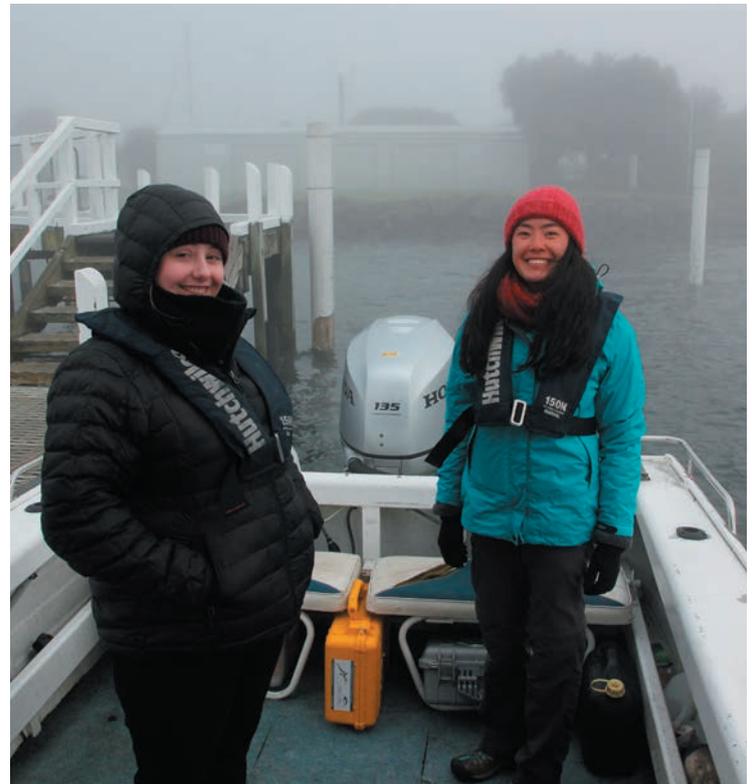
Please help us to share the message of Dolphin Distancing. We ask you to help us recruit commitments to build responsible behaviours around our dolphins during summer. Please point them to the link on the home page of our website.

Paul Ramadge, Chairman

Jeff Weir OAM, Executive Director

Dreaming of Becoming a Marine Scientist...

When Ella and Leanne dreamed of a career in marine science I'm sure they had visions of balmy days, calm seas and dolphins lining up to be photographed, just like the below image with Leanne trying to figure out which one to photograph first! Only hours earlier we launched from San Remo in a sea fog so thick that we had to use sat-nav to find our way out of the channel and under the Phillip Island bridge. They could still manage a smile!



Cover image: A common dolphin adult and calf photographed by Kylie Elliot under scientific research permit.



Asking the Right Questions

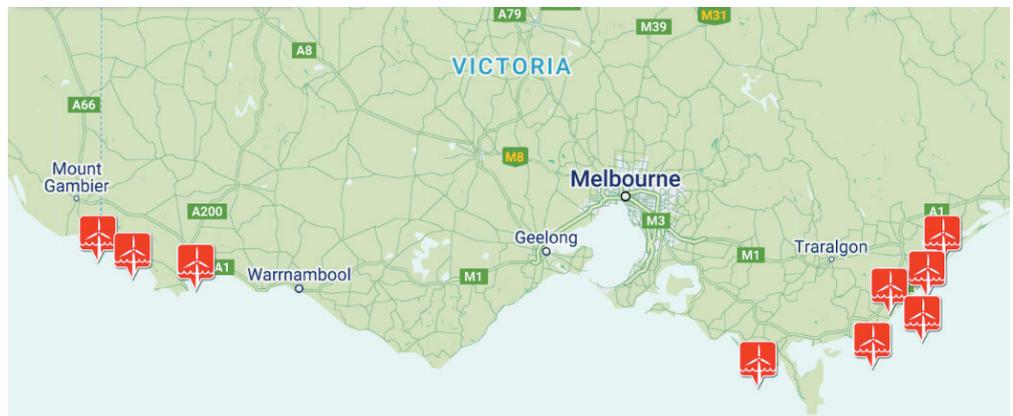
The sight of humpback whales and dolphins with wind turbines in the background will become a familiar sight off Victoria's coast, but from the other perspective, with nine offshore wind farms proposed for our region.

Transitioning to a low-carbon economy is critical to combat climate change, and offshore wind energy generation is essential.

It is crucial, however, to ask the right questions to ensure that all the risks are understood and managed. This applies to all energy proposals proposed in our region, including gas.

What are the potential impacts during construction and operation for whales, dolphins and seabirds? What are the consequences to fishing and other human activities?

We believe there is an urgent need to expand our Two Bays Whale Project from the central region, (Barwon Heads to Inverloch), to another seven sectors across Victoria's coast to maximise the available data well before decisions need to be made. We will seek support from all proponents.



Images: Humpback whale, dolphin and wind turbine (DRI taken under research permit). Map of proposed wind farms (reneweconomy.com.au). Proposed expansion of the Two Bays Whale Project.



A Dolphin Called Traveller

When we realised the common dolphins which came into Port Phillip in 2005 were here to stay, we wondered if such a small group could survive.

Today we have about 100 in the Port Phillip catalogue and evidence of the third generation since 2005 - a truly remarkable story!

Our team always spoke about “transient” dolphins that we occasionally see, often in large groups, that we assume come in from Bass Strait for brief visits.

But we never had proof of animals being recorded inside and outside the bay - until we found a common dolphin called Traveller.

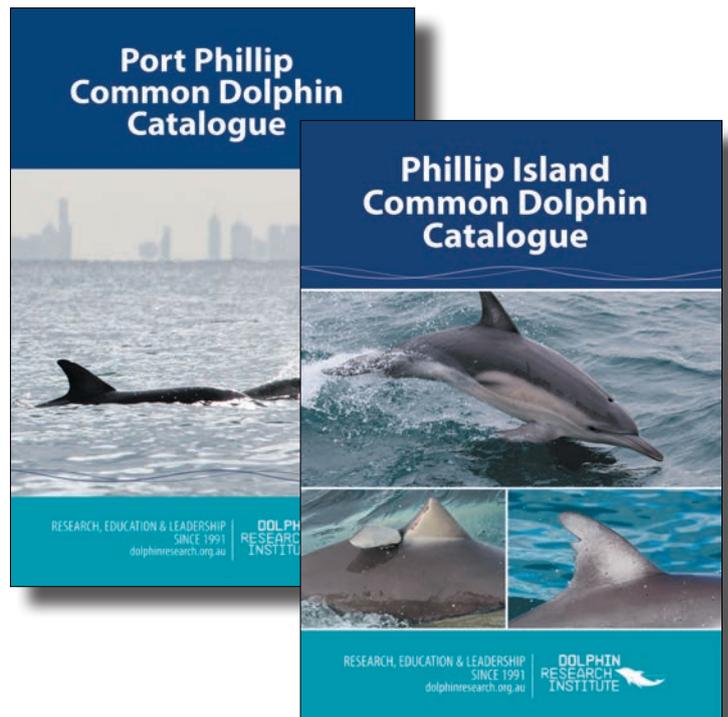
We first recorded Traveller off Phillip Island in June 2016 (top image). Then in October last year, over five years later, we photographed her inside Port Phillip with her very own calf (right image). She was seen again in the bay in late October this year.

We have separate catalogues for common dolphins inside and outside Port Phillip. Traveller is the first dolphin to be matched in both catalogues, providing evidence of movement between the bay and northern Bass Strait.

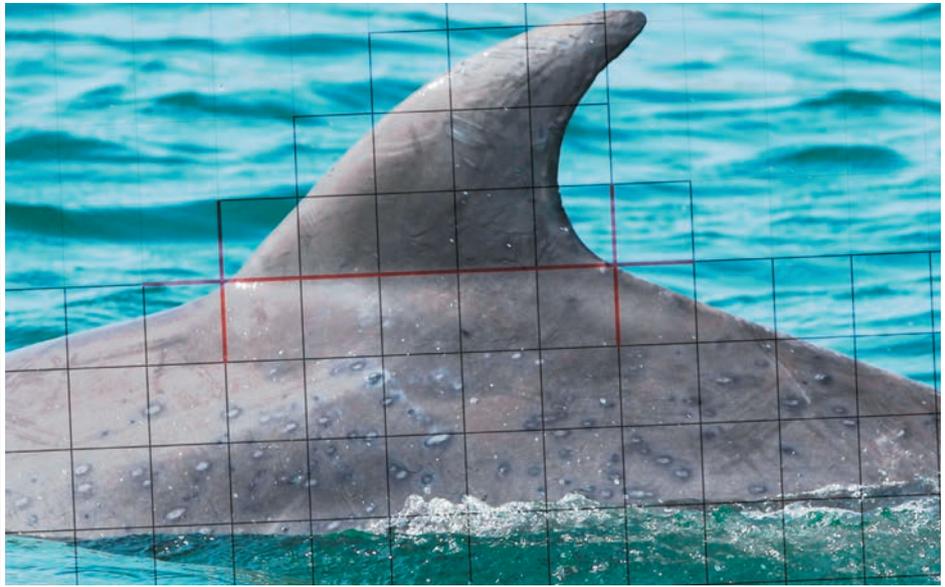
This information is critical for environmental managers, as it indicates that the Port Phillip common dolphin community is not isolated and is part of a broader population out in Bass Strait.

Further research and analysis will help us to understand the mix of resident and transient animals.

This new understanding is excellent news, as a larger community provides greater resilience against pollution and environmental change!



Beach Report and Yarra Watch: 11 beaches are rated Poor and 25 beaches are rated Fair. All Four Yarra Watch locations are rated Poor. For more information go to ow.ly/yfTh50LvnM8



Pollution Concerns for Our Dolphins

The above EPA warning from November 6 advises people not to swim in Port Phillip due to stormwater pollution flushed out of the rivers, creeks and drains by the recent storms.

The EPA map tells the story of a polluted catchment where the outflows of the Yarra, Werribee and Patterson Rivers, Mordialloc, Kananook and Tassels Creeks, are pollution hotspots.

We can choose to stay out of the water. Our dolphins and other marine life have no choice.

In 2011, when storms ended a decade of drought, our dolphins developed severe skin lesions linked to the change in water quality (above right). Fortunately, our dolphins' skin healed as the water conditions improved.

Stormwater pollution carrying sediment, nutrients, toxins, chemicals and litter is the major threat to our bay.

The Dolphin Research Institute takes an integrated approach:

1. Long-term monitoring of dolphins as "top of the food chain" indicators of ecosystem health. The results are fed into the Port Phillip Environmental Management Plan reports..
2. Developing "SkinMap", a digital tool to track the progression of lesions (the overlaid grid in the top image).
3. Surveying Melburnians to find that two-thirds think the rubbish on beaches is left by swimmers, rather the 90% coming from our suburbs.

4. Education programs responding the need shown by our surveys - especially our "Don't Pee in My Pool" program.

5. A core focus of *i sea, i care*. The image below shows Ambassadors during a stormwater pollution workshop where the putrid contents of material washed from local streets are emptied from a pollution trap. At least this material will go to landfill instead of the bay. They share their experience with their school communities.

Regular vessel surveys to monitor skin health, calving success and other measures will be undertaken in the months ahead. We will keep you updated through e-Bulletins and future snapshots.





Having a Whale of a Time

Eyes as wide as saucers, mouths agape – the look on children’s faces when they first see our whale in their school is unforgettable.

Creating unforgettable experiences is the goal of all our marine education programs - experiences with stories about our southern marine life that teachers can build on when they return to their classrooms.

There is a massive need for quality marine education in Victorian schools that focuses on the magnificent Great Southern Reef that stretches across our southern coast.

The forests of kelp and the kaleidoscope of colourful species need to be appreciated and protected from the impacts of climate change and coastal pollution.

Images of our programs on this page share some of the experiences we offer.

- Our Whale Out of Water program, with children inside the whale, to truly appreciate the scale (top and inset).
- The heads-down journey of discovery with Mandy, our Education Director, on a rocky shore (lower left).
- The fabulous Seagrass game, where the

children role-play fish who are safe from the hungry dolphin when they are inside the “seagrass hoops”. When the seagrass hoops all die, and there is nowhere to hide, the fish are all eaten (lower right)!

Our programs are uniquely informed by our research and delivered by a team of trained teachers with over ten decades of combined experience.

We also run adult programs for groups in our centre in Hastings.

Go to our website to inquire for 2023.





The *i sea, i care* Ambassador Journey

Being an *i sea, i care* Ambassador is a year-long journey of discovery, leadership and personal growth.

Peer teaching is a vital part of an Ambassador's job. We train four Ambassadors in each school, and they work with hundreds, collectively reaching close to 20,000 early-grade students every year with stories of Victoria's marine treasures.

Public speaking is one of the biggest fears for most adults, so it's little wonder that peer teaching is both a challenge and a growth opportunity for many of our ambassadors.

At a recent workshop, one very shy Ambassador was so anxious about presenting that she burst into tears. Our team and other Ambassadors supported her and found a way to keep her involved.

Once back in her own school, she gradually gained confidence.

Not long after, when the same Ambassador realised her Mum had arranged an appointment clashing with her group's peer teaching session, she had the appointment changed, so she didn't miss out! A great win that we understand had knock-on effects on her wider classwork.

A crucial part of our program is that it gives students who aren't natural leaders a chance to develop into their roles as Ambassadors.

Guess what?

Most of the younger students want to become Ambassadors when they reach grade 5 or 6 - so it also helps to create the next generation of inspired young leaders.

It is life-changing for some Ambassadors, and we see them return as university interns.



Images: Peer teaching and beach litter survey (top). Analysis of water-bugs to assess pollution and waterway cleanup (above). Learning about indigenous culture, Ambassador award recipients (left).



FUTURE GENERATIONS APPEAL

Imagine if your world turned brown every time it rains - **it does for our dolphins.**

But the colour is only the tip of the stormwater "iceberg" which carries sediment, nutrients, toxins, chemicals and litter, all washed from our gardens, driveways, roads and drains, into our dolphins' home.

After extreme storms recently, the EPA closed every Port Phillip beach to swimming.

"Unfit for humans" - after sewage and the spoils of our lives in the suburbs, were flushed into the bay.

It's also unfit for most life - especially our dolphins at the top of the food chain. Their health reflects the health of their environment.

This is clear from the tragic situation for dolphins in South Australia (right), forcing the government to announce an inquiry into deaths in their Dolphin Sanctuary.

- Dolphin sightings in the Sanctuary have dropped by 30% in the last five years.
- Eight male dolphins have died since 2020.
- No calves have lived beyond 3 years since 2019.

Our current data for Port Phillip dolphins has positive signs. A growing population with excellent calf survivorship that are now successfully reproducing themselves.



(ABC Online Oct 2022)

However, ecosystems and wildlife communities can flip suddenly. Port Phillip has a history of toxic algal blooms, and we have seen skin disease on our dolphins.

This is why our long-term integrated programs are crucial, to empower action and answer crucial questions now before we need an inquiry like South Australia's.

Your generous gift to the Future Generations Appeal is an investment in the future of our dolphins and whales, their environment and the next generation of environmental leaders and scientists.

The QR code links to the appeal page.



THANK YOU Ambassadors!

Leadership is one of those things where you know it's working when your students start to develop their own ideas. This is exactly what happened over the past months with our young leaders contributing artwork to develop a 2023 fundraising calendar!

A huge thank you to Olive, Sukhman, Kara, Mila, Taj, Jessica, Pearl, Kristina, Ben, Olly, Alessia, Ella, Thomas, Liam, Ella, Asha and Peyton.

Calendars are \$15. There are limited numbers left. Contact our Education team if you are interested. education@dolphinresearch.org.au

A Big Auction THANK YOU

We are humbled and grateful to nearly 100 local businesses who donated goods and services - especially in these unsettled times - for our recent online auctions.

The auctions are driven by loyal volunteers with a bit of help from staff.

Of course, nothing would happen without your interest to bid on items - thank you.

Together we raised nearly \$10,000 .

Thank You To Our Valued Supporters



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