



Welcome

We are excited to share our Summer Snapshot, showcasing the inspiring contributions of our young leaders, the success of multiple generations of dolphins, and our Marine and Coastal Award.

However, we recognise that we need to do more.

Since our establishment in 1991, Melbourne's population has nearly doubled to over five million and is projected to double again in the coming decades. This growth, coupled with the challenges posed by climate change, highlight the urgent need for our longstanding programs to be accessible to ALL Victorians.

Over fifty remote communities, encompassing 150 primary schools from Mallacoota to Portland, miss out on the benefits our programs provide to those closer to Melbourne. To address this, we have launched an ambitious initiative called Vision 2030. This vision aims to empower every child and adult across Victoria to engage in environmental leadership through our '*i sea, i care*' School Ambassador and citizen science programs.

Vision 2030 will revolve around the innovative concept of a 'virtual' centre, leveraging creativity and technology to bridge the gap created by distance. It will also strengthen the Institute's hub in Hastings and open new avenues for marine and coastal education and science for all communities.



We look forward to sharing this transformative journey with you and new supporters who will join us. Together we will enhance the well-being of dolphins and whales, their environment and our community, and lay a strong foundation for the Institute's next chapter and our fifth decade.

We will keep you updated as Vision 2030 evolves and wish you and your families a safe and joyous Christmas and Summer.

Jeff Weir OAM, Executive Director

Make Your Commitment to Dolphin Distancing

Dolphin Distancing is like Neighbourhood Watch for our dolphins. It seeks to change the "norm" out on the water, so responsible skippers model respectful behaviour around dolphins and report problems they see. Dolphins will often come to you - that's fine - slow down or stop - and enjoy it. The rules are to stop vessels deliberately approaching them closer than 100m in a boat, 300m on a Jet Ski and 30m for swimmers.

It's easy to make your commitment on our website and we will send your sticker to remind you and others about these important regulations.



Our model for change works through four impact areas with our programs working in synergy to achieve impact goals: The four impact areas are highlighted on the following pages and are: 1/ Dolphins and Whales, 2/ the Environment, 3/ the Community and 4/ a Strong Organisation. The following program areas (and more) are delivered by a dedicated team of volunteers and approximately five FTE staff.

**PORT PHILLIP
COMMON DOLPHIN
PROJECT**

**DOLPHIN
RESEARCH
INSTITUTE**

**Two Bays
Whale Project**
DOLPHIN RESEARCH INSTITUTE

**i sea i care
AMBASSADOR**

**Pod
Watch**
REPORT DOLPHIN AND WHALE SIGHTINGS



**DOLPHIN
RESEARCH
INSTITUTE**

**TwoBays
Tracker**

**School
EDUCATION**

**Community
EDUCATION**

**Dolphin and Whale
DISTANCING**

**Western Port
POD SURVEYOR**

**Port Phillip
POD SURVEYOR**

Cover image: Port Phillip common dolphin calf and mother. All images of dolphins and whales are taken under scientific research permit.

2024 Victorian Marine And Coastal Award

These Awards are run by Victoria's Marine and Coastal Council, which guides marine and coastal policy and strategy across Victoria's coast.

The Institute was awarded the '**Inspiring Community Engagement and Education**' category in the subsection for Professional Agencies, Large Organisations, and Industry. Melbourne Water with RMIT and Zoos Victoria with the Victorian Fisheries Authority were also worthy finalists.

Our commendation for the award reads:

Since 2001, the Dolphin Research Institute's 'i sea, i care' program has developed senior primary school students into Victorian coastal and marine ambassadors, who have engaged nearly 2 million people across greater Melbourne.

The year-long program leverages the efforts of 500 young marine ambassadors annually, significantly extending the outreach capacity of the Institute (of approximately five full-time staff) and allowing the program to remain affordable, accessible and sustainable.

With regular workshops on Victoria's environment, young marine ambassadors are trained to peer teach the rest of their school and communities in all aspects of the marine environment - linking the choices we make way up in the catchment to the impacts on our bays through drains and waterways.

By peer teaching junior grades about Victoria's environment, the program provides a platform to engage and inspire younger students to also become environmental leaders, further developing the next generation of marine champions.

Twenty-three years ago, few schools had marine leaders championing the Victorian coast. There are now 9000 marine ambassadors advocating for change in their communities.

Thank you to our '**i sea, i care**' partners:



The award hand-crafted by glass artist David Hobday

International Marine Mammal Conference

The Society for Marine Mammalogy is the peak global organisation for Marine Mammal science and publisher of the prestigious journal - Marine Mammal Science. They also run a Biennial International Conference, this year in Perth.

Ella Hutchinson and David Donnelly represented DRI (right).

David presented on aerial surveys for whales, conducted by our partner organisation, Fathom Pacific, to inform decision-making about windfarms in Bass Strait. (David works mostly for Fathom Pacific and Ella also assists with aerial surveys).

Ella, our Williamson Research Fellow, presented her work on the three generations of common dolphins in Port Phillip. She is pictured with Dr. Peter Gill (right) at the conference with her poster.

Dr. Gill is Director of the Blue Whale Study Inc. a pioneering researcher on blue whales in our region.

This is wonderful opportunity for Ella as an early-career scientist, to both share her work and also to develop connections and new ideas to improve our programs.



The main focus for Ella's poster was the reproductive success of our common dolphins, resulting in eight third-generation calves since they first came into the bay in 2005.

Our common dolphin study is unique in the world with the two-decades time-frame and the precision to pin-point most birth dates to within a month.

A summary of Ella's poster follows on the next page.

Dolphin Family Trees

Five years ago it was not possible using normal fin-ID methods to map all our calves to their mums and grandmas, so we designed a solution and applied it to two-decades of photo data!

The solution we now use is shown in the graphic at the bottom of the page. It enabled us to go back and find images of mothers we knew with young calves and to use subtle, temporary markings to track their progress. The outcome of two decades of work is summarised in the family tree below.

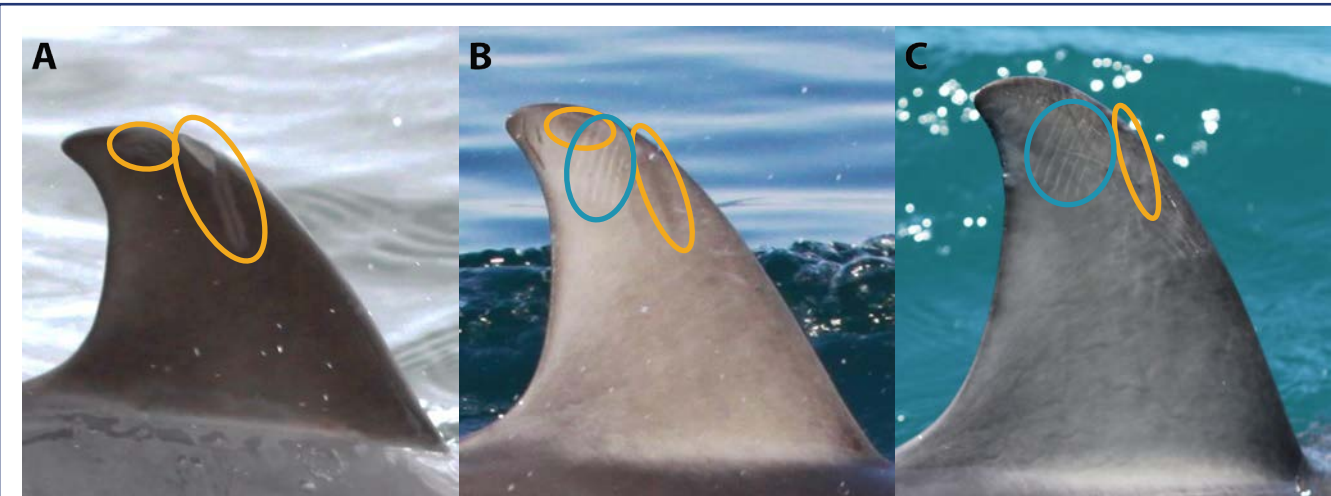
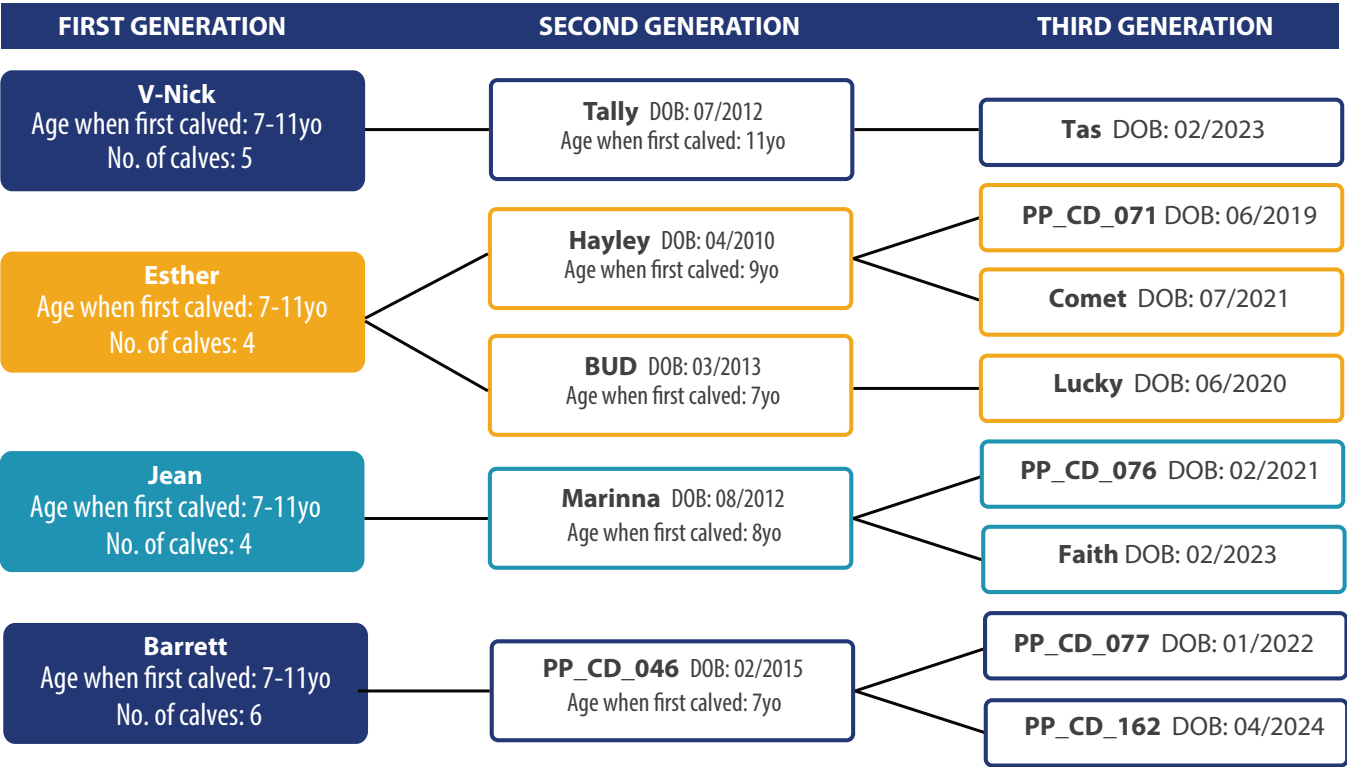
You might remember from earlier Snapshots, the story of Jean's calf, Marinna that was nearly paralysed by a back injury at two years of age. Not only did she survive but she is now a mother to two healthy calves with Faith, the most recent born in February 2023!

Why is this knowledge so important? Because reproductive success across generations is one of the most important measures of the health for any living community.

In many dolphin communities in Australia and around the world calves don't survive to adulthood to reproduce for themselves. Maintaining long-term studies over decades is crucial to pick up changes early, when it may be possible to respond. We must be vigilant.

Something for the grandmas in our audience to consider. V-Nick who we first saw in 2005, her own youngest calf is younger than her grand-calf Tas!

Some of these dolphins are wonderful mums and crucial to the success of dolphin communities!



Tracking calves: Example of tracking calves using subtle markings on its dorsal fin. Image A is the right side dorsal fin of Tally (a second generation calf) at two months old. Image B is the same dorsal fin at 10 months old, initial scars having faded and an additional tooth raking scar now present. Image C is the same dorsal fin at 40 months. Yellow circles indicate initial scarring used to track Tally has faded over 3 years. Blue circle indicates a newer scar that can be used for tracking after the others fade. The small nick on the trailing edge, left of the blue circle, is potentially a more permanent mark that will last into adulthood.

The Two Bays Whale Project is dedicated to creating a lasting record of whale movements along our beautiful coastline, ensuring that every sighting is acknowledged and remembered. This vital work is only made possible through the commitment and enthusiasm of our incredible network of citizen scientists, who share our passion for these magnificent creatures. The project encompasses three key components.

First, we have general sightings reported via the Podwatch App on our website. Each report is carefully validated before it becomes part of our database, which has been building since the 1980s, so that we can trust the information we share.

Next, our Two Bays Tracker program trains citizen scientists to conduct timed surveys at important vantage points along the coast. This collaborative effort allows us to compare the number of sightings per 100 hours over the years. Now in its fifth year, this program has seen over 1,000 hours dedicated by our devoted volunteers, who play a crucial role in advancing our understanding of these whales.

Finally, our Victorian Humpback Fluke Identification Catalogue has grown to include 357 individual whales, with 70 new additions so far in 2024. By matching these flukes with the online database Happy Whale, we've



Image credit: Georgie Puschner

discovered that 23 of our whales have also been spotted in Queensland, New South Wales, and even Western Australia.

Through the collective efforts of the Two Bays Whale Project, we gain essential insights into whale movements in Victorian waters. This knowledge is incredibly important as it informs crucial decisions regarding the proposed windfarms off our coast, helping to protect these magnificent beings and their habitat for generations to come.

Image: Georgie Puschner



Killer Whales Australia

This year, the Dolphin Research Institute proudly began hosting Killer Whales Australia, a citizen science project helping to better understand the movement, population estimates and individual associations of killer whales in Eastern Australia. Since taking on Killer Whales Australia, our Williamson Research Fellow Ella has been working on updating its catalogue of known individuals. So far this year 26 sightings of killer whales have been reported

Image: IanR Photography

from Tasmania, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and even a sighting as far as the Northern Territory. Closer to home, a well-known family group was spotted around Phillip Island in August. This sighting was especially exciting as not only was Split Fin (pictured), one of our Adopt A Killer Whales, seen with the group another well-known individual, Square Notch, was accompanied by a young calf!



2024 ISIC School of the Year Winners

Educating students about the environment at 30 different kindergartens, hosting a bake sale to raise over \$300 for the Dolphin Research Institute, after school litter pick ups with their families, need we say more! This is what the ambassadors Lia, Rachel and Taylor and their coordinator Julie Bellio from Harkaway Primary have been up to this year. Lia, Rachel and Taylor are pictured with our Ellie (Education Manager) and Jacqui who are the drivers behind *'i sea, i care'*.

These three students have shown initiative, leadership and excellence as environmental champions so we could not be prouder to recognise the well-deserved recipients of the 2024 *'i sea, i care'* School of the Year Award!

The ABC heard about their great initiatives and the other dimensions they brought to their peer-teaching work by including climate change. So they were filmed by the ABC news!



A Change for Behaviour

You don't get a child to eat broccoli by "teaching" them about the health benefits!

No, it's got to become part of their families culture and norms. *'i sea, i care'* is built on this understanding, to change the culture in schools.

One of our *'i sea, i care'* schools, Moorooduc Primary took the learning from our programs to educate their families and make a pledge to change their behaviour to help the environment.

This is why we ask Ambassadors to go beyond the teaching and make personal commitments.

This is what having an impact is all about!





Climate Change Hits Our ‘i sea, i care’ Home

In the early morning of September the second, our coasts were pummelled by winds exceeding 140km/h. To give context, a Category 2 cyclone has wind gusts from 125-164km/h.

Every weather report during the days before contained severe weather warnings of coastal damage - just like the flood and fire alerts that we are more used to.

In the aftermath, we saw wrecked beach boxes and our friends at Bay Fish N Trips lost their historical vessel, the Plover.

Our ‘i sea, i care’ Ambassador coastal workshops later that week saw huge amounts of rubbish flushed from our suburbs. The image above shows the result of about 10 minutes of our Ambassadors collecting rubbish washed up on Frankston beach during their workshop. The image of the viaduct under Nepean Hwy in Mordialloc (right) where we normally walk our Ambassadors was underwater from the flooded Mordialloc Creek.

Now that is real-life experience that will not be forgotten and to be shared back at school.



2024 WRAP UP

Ambassadors from St Joe’s Chelsea received our award for the highest fundraisers for an ‘i sea, i care’ school in 2024. They are pictured with our Education Manager, Ellie Collins (right).

Learning about Indigenous connection to country is a key part of coastal workshops for all our Ambassadors (middle).

Teachers don’t forget to contact Ellie so your kids can do ‘i sea, i care’ in 2025!



FUTURE GENERATIONS APPEAL



Squiggly with her mother V-Nick

Your loyal support allows our small but dedicated team to achieve all you see in our Snapshot, and much more. Also, remember, we are only the equivalent of five staff plus volunteers, and receive no ongoing government funding.

By contributing to the Future Generations Appeal, you have the power to ignite change and build on our proven programs, fostering a hopeful future for our dolphins and whales, and future generations of young leaders and scientists.

Our Vision 2030 recognises the imperative to find answers to crucial questions about the health of dolphins and whales in our waters, and the need to empower all Victorians to make a difference.

We aim to permanently fund two Research Fellowships and double the number of Ambassador schools - including a new program empowering distant schools to contribute.

Together, **we aim to raise \$20,000 in our Summer Future Generations Appeal** - generous donors have already committed \$10,000. Your contribution, no matter the size, is a vital part of this collective effort.

Your donation is a beacon of hope.

We promise to strive to achieve a lasting impact on behalf of you and all our donors, and the communities we serve.

On behalf of everyone at the Dolphin Research Institute, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to you, our cherished donors, for your unwavering support and commitment to our cause.

Thank you.

Jeff Weir OAM,
Executive Director.

The QR code takes you directly to our appeal page



Welcome to JBS&G Pty. Ltd.

The Dolphin Research Institute proudly acknowledges the support of JBS&G as a Philanthropic Partner.

JBS&G is one of Australia's leading environmental consulting agencies with offices nationwide and more than 250 multidisciplinary professionals.

They specialise in providing solutions to complex environmental problems, including legacy issues from previous generations, to create better places for future generations to work, live and play.

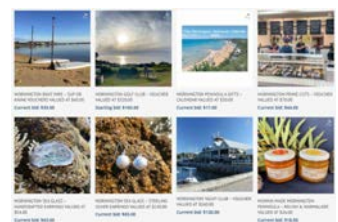
Our partnership is based on shared values and goals to achieve positive impacts for the environment and community. It's an opportunity for our staff to work together to support the Dolphin Research Institute's mission.

Collection tin hosters - a huge thanks!

Our heartfelt appreciation is also extended to the hundreds of loyal business who host our collection 'tins', helping to raise over \$20,000 every year!

If you see a collection tin in a business let them know that their generosity is appreciated.

Christmas Auction. Thank you to 80-plus generous businesses who donated goods and services, helping to raise an incredible \$7,000! Thanks to the bidders too!



Thank You To Our Valued Supporters



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This document is available as an e-book to consider the environment and maximise our audience. When we do print copies to reach all our audiences we use paper stock that is PEFC and Carbon Neutral Certified.

All dolphin and whale images are taken under the authority of a Scientific Research Permit from the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action.