

Making Waves

for Dolphins, Whales and their Environment



Vision 2030

When you give to the Dolphin Research Institute
you help us protect some of the world's
most-loved creatures and their environment

Research, Education and Leadership since 1991

Making Waves Since 1991



Our dolphins share their home with over 5 million people!

OUR PURPOSE

To empower Victorians to conserve dolphins, whales and their environment

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land and sea where we work and pay our respect to their elders, past, present and emerging.

OUR VALUES

Respect – We honour the people and communities we serve and their desire for a sustainable future.

Integrity – We act with honesty, accountability and transparency, relying on facts and science to guide us.

Collaboration – We deliver impact through the power of shared values and partnerships.

Knowledge – We create and share knowledge in value-adding and innovative ways.

Courage – We lead and advocate for the protection of the marine environment.

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Vision 2030 is an ambitious initiative aimed at empowering all Victorians to play a role in safeguarding our beloved wildlife and their habitats.

Since the Institute's establishment in 1991, Melbourne has grown by three to over five million and is projected to double again by 2100. Given this growth and the looming challenges posed by climate change, there is an even greater need today for our long standing programs to benefit all Victorians.

Currently over fifty communities, spanning from Mallacoota to Portland, miss out on the benefits that our programs offer to communities closer to Melbourne.

Vision 2030 seeks to ensure that every child and adult in communities across Victoria has the opportunity to contribute to citizen science and environmental leadership through our award-winning '*i sea, i care*' School Ambassador Program.

Furthermore, by establishing a larger hub for the Institute's work in Hastings, we aim to create new marine and coastal education and science opportunities for communities in Melbourne.

It may come as a surprise, but the Institute does not receive any ongoing federal or state funding. Our accomplishments over the past three decades have only been made possible through the trust and unwavering support of the communities we serve.

Vision 2030 is an invitation for everyone to join us in significantly improving outcomes for dolphins, whales, their environment, and the community, and to lay the foundation for the Institute's next chapter in its fifth decade.

There has never been a more important time to step up.

I would love to hear from you.

Jeff Weir OAM



Our model for change works through four impact areas with our programs (below) 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.



**School
EDUCATION**

**Community
EDUCATION**

**Dolphin and Whale
DISTANCING**

**Western Port
POD SURVEYOR**

**Port Phillip
POD SURVEYOR**

1. Dolphins and Whales



Until the day we took the above photo in 2020, we knew migrating whales snacked off our coast, but this humpback whale delaying its migration to spend many days feeding off Phillip Island was an important new discovery.

Dozens of dolphins fed with the whale. The one in the image is a short-beaked common dolphin, and there are hundreds if not thousands, of them living in Bass Strait. In 2005, we were astounded to find common dolphins feeding in Port Phillip near Mornington. Today the Port Phillip Common Dolphin Catalogue

has 163 individuals, and a third generation of calves is being born. We also have evidence of dolphins moving from Mornington to Bass Strait near Wonthaggi, being found in both the Port Phillip and Bass Coast catalogues.

This long-term natural history science provides up-to-date knowledge about our dolphins and whales, which we readily make available to the community and environmental managers to shape crucial ecological decisions.

See our website for the annual Research Impact Report.

The issue

Insufficient long-term knowledge of population health, environmental needs, and human impacts in Victorian waters.

Our approach

Critical long-term monitoring and reporting to environmental managers and the community. Including, water-based, shore-based and citizen science research programs.

Our impact goals

Crucial evidence to guide environmental assessments of proposed actions and decision-making. Reduced human impacts on dolphins and whales.

2. Environment



Take some beaming faces, add salt water, some seals and dolphins, and you get 600 environment leaders in our *'i sea, i care'* School Ambassador Program.

Twenty-three years ago, no schools in Victoria had marine environmental leaders. Now, in 2025, 9,500 young grade five and six students have contributed to the program, helping nearly two million people in their school communities to value and protect coastal environments from stormwater pollution.

This year, Ambassadors from Harkaway Primary School took the initiative to peer-teach children in 30 pre-schools and incorporated climate change into their program, gaining recognition from the ABC.

Ambassadors will volunteer over 25,000 hours and teach 44,000 young people in 2025! More than any one organisation could dream of achieving.



Proud recipients of the 2024 Victorian Marine and Coastal Award

The issue

Ecosystem resilience in the face of coastal pollution from a growing population and climate change. Undervaluing our southern marine ecosystems.

Our approach

Monitor health of resident dolphins as indicators of environmental health. Evidence-based behaviour-change programs in our *'i sea, i care'* Ambassador program to reduce coastal pollution.

Our impact goals

Reduced local coastal pollution and ecosystem resilience through changed behaviours in coastal communities.

3. The Community



Ella and Leanne, positioned on the left and right, are our change agents. Their roles as our first Williamson Research Fellows cover science, education, mentoring interns, and community outreach with citizen science and Dolphin and Whale Distancing programs.

They have transformed us, bringing crucial skills, positive energy, and innovative ideas as early career scientists to progress all our programs. Leanne passed her role to Ella in early 2024 and moved on to the next stage of her career, working for the Pacific

Whale Foundation. Leanne's dream as a seven-year-old has come to life.

Both young scientists were influenced by *'i sea, i care'* in their primary schools and were student interns from Monash University. Their work as role models and ambassadors for our programs creates opportunities for the community to work with us to collectively create change. Our long-term community programs really do nurture the next generation of change-makers.

The issue

Lack of stewardship for our southern marine environments and life.

Our approach

Marine education, behaviour-change programs, developing the next generation of environmental leaders and marine scientists. Intern and volunteering opportunities.

Our impact goals

A community that protects and champions our local marine ecosystems and life. Growing numbers of marine leaders and scientists.

4. A Strong Organisation



'Vision 2030' is our plan for a future symbolised by the image of a whale and dolphin in the shadow of the Wonthaggi wind turbines. A future in which the need for our leadership, research data and programs accessible to all Victorians will be more crucial than ever. There are four parts:

1. A significant hub in Hastings that builds on our decades of experience to engage locally with more than 20,000 Victorians every year.
2. Outreach through partnerships and technology to empower distant schools and communities across Victoria to contribute through new versions of *'i sea, i care'* and citizen science programs, to an audience of over 200,000 every year.
3. Strong advocacy to speak out on important marine and coastal issues, providing trustworthy and independent commentary.
4. A sustainable governance and funding model to secure the Institute's fifth decade.

The issue

Adapting to certain change while maintaining sustainable funding, core programs, a positive culture and sound governance.

Our approach

Innovative, impact-driven programs. Professional and diverse fundraising and income program. Effective collaborations and partnerships. Impactful communication program. Sound risk management.

Our impact goals

Resources to support our programs. Growth in funding and reserves. Dedicated and loyal staff, volunteers, funders and partners. Growth in the effectiveness of communications.

Core Programs



Our core programs focus on achieving impacts for dolphins and whales, the environment and the community.

PORT PHILLIP COMMON DOLPHIN PROJECT



The Port Phillip Common Dolphin Project aims to maintain a long-term understanding of Port Phillip's community of common dolphins (*Delphinus delphis*) to inform wildlife and ecosystem reporting and management. This community of dolphins is remarkable as everywhere else in the world but Port Phillip; they live in the open ocean. Our researchers first discovered a handful of common dolphins near Mornington in 2005. Now we have over 160 in the Port Phillip Catalogue and the third generation of calves being born.

Two Bays Whale Project

DOLPHIN RESEARCH INSTITUTE



The Two Bays Whale Project is a citizen science initiative aimed at accurately recording sightings of whales within Victorian waters. The key species of this project are humpback and southern right whales but can also include others, such as killer, minke and blue whales (also occasionally seen locally). We also host the Victorian Humpback Whale Fluke ID Catalogue. We plan to expand the coverage of the Two Bays Whale Project to involve all Victorian coastal communities. We now also host the Killer Whales Australia database.

i sea i care AMBASSADOR

Our award-winning '*i sea, i care*' School Ambassador Program develops marine environmental leaders in primary schools who work in their communities to foster stewardship for our precious coastal and marine life. Over 23 years the program has developed 9,000 young leaders who have engaged with a community of nearly two million! In 2024 they will volunteer over 44,000 hours and peer-teach over 40,000 children!

'i sea, i care' is a recipient of the 2024 Victorian Marine and Coastal Award.

Thank You To Our Major Supporters



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