

World-first Pilot to Protect Dolphins - Dolphin Research Institute calls for "Dolphin Distancing"

MELBOURNE, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA, December 11, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Dolphin Research Institute](#) (DRI) is asking boaters to commit to "Dolphin Distancing" this summer to protect our dolphins.

Our bays are giant nurseries for about 140 bottlenose and 40 common dolphins. We also get visits from killer whales – the largest of the dolphin family – as well as humpback and southern right whales.

"It is remarkable to have these animals in our marine backyard, and they deserve our respect and best efforts to protect them", said Jeff Weir OAM, DRI's Executive Director. "It's not about spoiling the remarkable experience of seeing whales and dolphins, just showing respect for the animals and their environment".

Every summer for three decades, the Institute has tried all the usual approaches to get people in boats to be respectful around our dolphins. "Media releases, education programs, signs on boat ramps, surveys of boaters, bumper stickers, calls for more policing – we've done them all," said Weir. "But no more!"

This summer the Institute is piloting a new approach they believe is a world-first, for improving our behaviour around dolphins. Rather than blaming, shaming and complaining, they are asking the community to be part of the solution by creating a new "norm" on the water.

"Dolphin Distancing" is not just a quirky twist on COVID," said Weir. "We saw some appalling harassment of whales and dolphins on the few winter days this year when boats could get out between COVID lock-downs."

DRI is asking people to commit to doing the right thing, then to proudly display a commitment sticker on their vessel. Long-term ongoing communication with participants will reinforce participation and build the program to get many thousands involved.

"We want to build a strong community of Dolphin Distancers. It's crucial for our dolphins' welfare," said Weir. "Our plans for DRI's fourth decade have Dolphin Distancing firmly embedded, after thirty years we know there are no quick fixes and you can trust us to be here

for the long-haul.

The boating industry, boating associations and the general community are already keen to be involved.

It's easy to do the right thing - the regulations say not to deliberately approach dolphins closer than 100 metres (whales 200m) in boats (including paddled vessels), 300 metres on Jet skis or 30m for swimmers. There are hefty fines for breaching the rules, but the Institute wants to concentrate on the positives.

Dolphins are curious and may approach you – sometimes without you even realising! The important thing is to show respect and not deliberately approach them. This is what "Dolphin Distancing" is all about.

It's easy to make a commitment – by going to www.dolphinresearch.org.au

Everyone can help the Institute's long-term research programs by reporting dolphin sightings. They can also join people who have supported the [Adopt-A-Dolphin](#) program for 29 years! Without community support, the Institute's crucial research and education programs to protect our dolphins and bays will not happen.

To make a commitment, report sightings and support the Institute: dolphinresearch.org.au or 03 5979 7100.

END

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