

Researchers Concerned for Port Phillip's Dolphins

Scientists from the Dolphin Research Institute witnessed vigorous 'tail slapping', where dolphins vigorously bang on the water, a graphic distress response.

MELBOURNE, VIC, AUSTRALIA, January 4, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Scientists from the Dolphin Research Institute are concerned for the welfare of Port Phillip's dolphins after observing mother dolphins with young calves clearly distressed by vessels on Saturday morning.



Port Phillip Common Dolphin Calf With Mother

They witnessed vigorous 'tail slapping', where dolphins vigorously bang their tail fluke on the water in a graphic distress response that can be seen and heard hundreds of metres away.

It's a sign that vessels need to give them space.

The first few months are critical for young dolphins. Not all survive, so it's vital mothers with young calves are respected.

How often a day is it okay for a mother dolphin to be interrupted while nursing her calf, resting, feeding, or being forced to flee from vessels? The ideal is never!

Imagine if a new human mum in a maternity ward had hundreds of noisy strangers visiting her room every day. It would never be allowed!

Port Phillip has at least seven dolphin calves only weeks old and are still totally reliant on their mother. The coming months are crucial for their survival, underscoring the responsibility and urgency we all share to protect these young lives.

"We urge boat owners to respect our dolphins during Summer and not deliberately approach

them”, said Jeff Weir OAM, the Institute’s Executive Director. “If you see dolphins, just slow down or stop if it’s safe; they may even come to you. Enjoy the experience and let them swim off without following.”

The basic rules are not to approach dolphins closer than 30m (swimmers), 100m (boat), and 300m (Personal Water Craft). There are heavy penalties for breaching these approach distances.

For over thirty-four years, the Dolphin Research Institute has tried signs and education to change people's behaviour around dolphins. But five years ago, they developed an innovative approach based on behaviour-change science.

‘[Dolphin Distancing](#)’ is a program developed to change social norms, like a Neighbourhood Watch for Dolphins. The Institute asks caring people to commit to Dolphin Distancing to build a community that respects dolphins on the water by demonstrating respect and reporting poor behaviours.

Thousands of people are involved as individuals and through yacht clubs and other groups.

You can commit to Dolphin Distancing at www.dolphinresearch.org.au. You will receive a sticker for your vessel to remind you and regular updates about the difference you are making.

Community members who witness [dolphin harassment](#) should report it to Crime Stoppers: 1800 333 000.

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Images are available on request.
END

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