

# Moreton Bay Dolphin Research Expeditions 2025



*Join us for an unforgettable exploration into the world of  
wild dolphins*

## Eco-Volunteer Information



**Dolphin Research Australia**  
Knowledge, Awareness, Action – Conserving Our Seas



# Dolphin Research Australia

Knowledge, Awareness, Action - Conserving Our Seas

## About Dolphin Research Australia

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### *Our Purpose*

Throughout the world dolphins are exposed to an increasing number of threats and decreasing health of the marine environments. In all oceans, dolphins are exposed to a cocktail of threatening processes and activities from human sources. Those species that reside along the coastal zone are particularly vulnerable and face an uncertain future as the pressure to survive increases with the inundation of increased pollutants, boating, commercial activities, fisheries practices and climate change, to only name a few. In recent years, there has been a general increase in the number of strandings of dolphins in Australian waters, more cases of disease, entanglements and evidence of human interference posing a risk to individual dolphins, their communities and environments.

Dolphin Research Australia a charitable organization working to increase the understanding of the ecology of dolphins, whales, their needs for survival and to improve conservation efforts. Our projects are diverse, from developing early primary education programs and adult education programs to research that investigates the habitat use, abundance trends and social systems of cetaceans and other marine species. Each of these projects aims to increase the awareness and engage the public in conservation efforts and increase the knowledge about marine life and the marine environment.

### *Our Vision*

Conserve and protect dolphins, whales and other marine life and habitats through advancing knowledge and understanding.

### *Our Mission*

- Aid in the protection and conservation of dolphins and other marine species through research and education.
- Undertake research into key ecological aspects of dolphins and whales to improve the understanding of their requirements for survival.
- Advance knowledge on the impacts of human activities on the health of dolphins, whales and the marine environment.
- Raise environmental awareness and conservation issues through education and training programs.

# Moreton Bay Dolphin Research Project

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Bordered by the bustling cities of South East Queensland and the beautiful Moreton, North Stradbroke and Bay Islands, Moreton Bay is a special place. It is home to a diverse array of marine life, including multiple species of coastal and oceanic dolphins. Similar to other areas in Australia, the local populations of dolphins in Queensland are considered to be vulnerable to decline or localised extinction because of small population sizes, low population growth rates, high site fidelity and geographic isolation.

Two species of dolphins, the Australian humpback dolphin (*Sousa sahulensis*) and Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops aduncus*) inhabit Moreton Bay all year round. These species are the focus of our research project, particularly the humpback dolphin which has been classified as Vulnerable and a species of high priority. Assessing the trends in abundance and ecology of dolphin populations requires long-term research projects to determine the health and risks associated with threatening processes.

The project aims to:

- Assess and monitor the health, status, abundance and trends of coastal dolphin populations in the Moreton Bay Marine Park;
- Examine the use of habitat areas over space and time to identify critical areas;
- Investigate the social systems and ecology of coastal dolphins in Moreton Bay Marine Park;
- Establish a baseline acoustic catalogue of communicative sounds used by coastal dolphins in Moreton Bay;
- Understand the impacts, resilience and vulnerability of dolphin populations to threatening processes in Moreton Bay;
- Assess the spatial and temporal exposure and impact from threats to coastal dolphins to threats in Moreton Bay;
- Provide opportunities to enhance public engagement, awareness and action of the Moreton Bay environment through a citizen science program and multi-media interpretive materials.

Outcomes from this research provide crucial information on the health, status, ecology and conservation needs to inform directly management actions and ensure the protection of dolphins and their habitats now and into the future.





## Eco-Volunteering

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Eco-volunteers play a crucial role in our research projects! The eco-volunteer expeditions are for highly motivated individuals who are keen to learn, contribute and be part of increasing the knowledge, awareness and conservation of dolphins and their marine habitats. Eco-volunteers will be required to actively participate in research expeditions, collecting data from research vessels and data entry. Dolphin Research Australia is not a tour company and the aim of expeditions is entirely based on conducting research and obtaining scientific data. We do, however, design expeditions for the enjoyment of participants whilst contributing to a research project. Eco-volunteers will live with the researchers at the Moreton Bay Research Station on North Stradbroke Island and be involved in everyday tasks including preparation of meals and cleaning dishes. The eco-volunteers will also have the opportunity to learn directly from researchers, not only in the field, but in evening discussions and presentations.

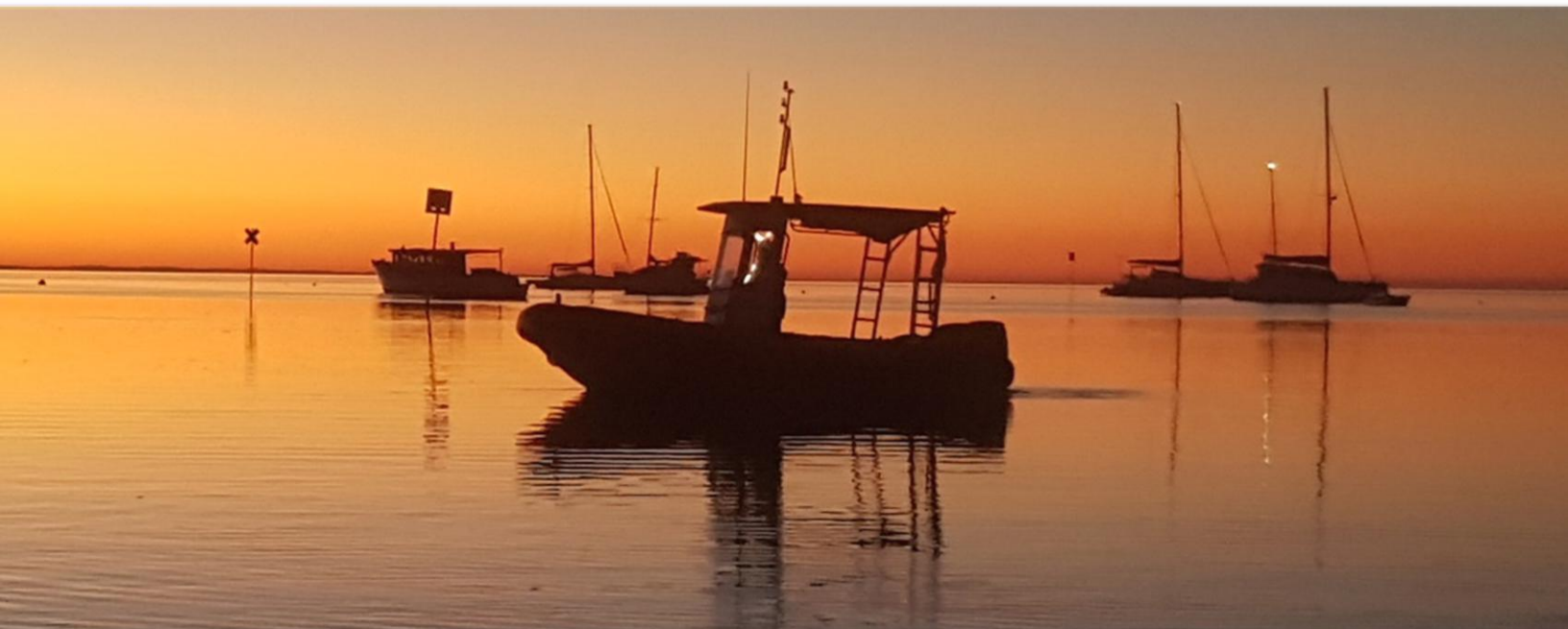
Participants will also have the opportunity to explore North Stradbroke Island on free days and as part of the experience. Funding received from eco-volunteer participants goes directly towards covering the expenses of the expeditions including accommodation, meals, insurance, contribution to field surveys and transport for participants. We do not make a profit from expeditions.

### ***Testimonials:***

*“What a great few days ... truly an amazing life experience .... Thanks for giving me the opportunity.”*

*- Pete*

*“The effects on these beautiful creatures clearly needs to be spread further and I for one gained so much useful information over the course of the weekend. Liz, you are a true inspiration and a beautifully unassuming person for someone that is such an expert in her field and creating real change in the world. I would like to thank you for sharing your knowledge and allowing us to be part of such important research. Being up close with the dolphins was extremely humbling.” – Vikki*



# Dolphin Research Expedition Team Leader

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## Dr Liz Hawkins

Born and raised amongst the islands of Moreton Bay, Dr Liz Hawkins is an expert in marine mammals with over 22yrs experience researching the ecology of dolphins and whales in Australia. She is the Chief Executive Officer and Founding Director of Dolphin Research Australia and will be your Expedition Leader. Dr Liz's work has featured in many media articles including New Scientist, Animal Planet and the BBC. Her research has included examining different aspects of the ecology of dolphins and more specifically, population trends, social systems and communication. She is also marine tour guide, environmental consultant, an artist. She has a passion for marine life and teaching others about their incredible lives and how we can all help to conserve them.

During your expedition you will also be joined by other experienced members of the Dolphin Research Australia crew.

## Your Role as an Eco-Volunteer

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Your voluntary contribution is greatly appreciated and we hope you will gain an invaluable experience. At all times you must behave in a professional manner, as you are a representative of Dolphin Research Australia, but most of all you are expected to enjoy the experience.

There is no previous experience needed to partake in our expeditions, however, there are a number of requirements we seek from all eco-volunteers:

- Have good physical condition
- Have no experience of debilitating sea sickness (you will need to work on the boat)
- Speak English
- Be over 18 years of age for a single traveler (for families, children must be over 15years)
- Be prepared for long days in the field and work with small teams of volunteers from different experiences and backgrounds
- Have a positive attitude, be willing to help, be enthusiastic and respectful



- Abide by the Dolphin Research Australia Code of Conduct and workplace health and safety requirements

## Expedition Program for Eco-Volunteers

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As the weather will guide our day-to-day activities, the following program is only an example of what you might experience. Every expedition is different and the amount of time in the field and in the office will vary depending on how the weather and the dolphins behave. As with all participatory expeditions, the more you put in, the more you'll enjoy!

### ***Example of 8-day program:***

Day 1: Arrive at the University of Queensland Moreton Bay Research Station; induction & training

Day 2: Boat survey; hands on experience observing and recording dolphin behaviour; data entry

Day 3: Boat survey; hands on experience observing and recording dolphin behaviour; data entry

Day 4: Opportunity to explore North Stradbroke Island, assist with data entry, head for a dive and relax

Day 5: Boat survey; hands on experience observing and recording dolphin behaviour, evening presentation; data entry

Day 6: Off water day due to wind, back in office helping with data entry and analysis. Assist with marine debris beach survey at Point Lookout and explore the North Gorge; evening presentation

Day 7: Boat survey; hands on experience observing and recording dolphin behaviour, data entry; evening presentation

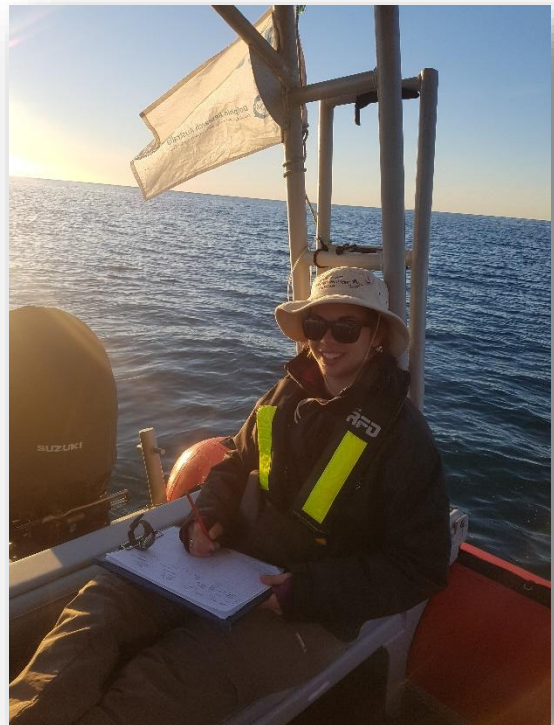
Day 8: Departure day

### ***Example of our 4-day program:***

Day 1: Arrive at the University of Queensland Moreton Bay Research Station; induction to station, research training, brief exploration of North Stradbroke island & evening presentation.

Day 2: Boat survey (weather dependent); hands on experience observing and recording dolphin behaviour; data entry.

Day 3: Boat survey (weather dependent); hands on experience observing and recording dolphin behaviour; data entry. Evening presentation.



Day 4: Boat survey (weather dependent); hands on experience observing and recording dolphin behaviour; data entry. Late afternoon departure.

*Please note that we will be doing land-based surveys if the weather prevents us from heading out on the boat.*

## A Day in the Field for Eco-Volunteers

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During expeditions, all activities, especially boat surveys, are entirely weather dependent. We need calm conditions to locate and observe dolphins in the wild. The surveys are allocated to take advantage of the best weather conditions on average for Moreton Bay, however, we are likely to experience several bad weather days per expedition. We will work hard to get participants out on boat surveys for 70% of the days during their stay, however, we are unable to guarantee that you will be able to be on the boat every day during your stay. We work with wild dolphins and as such we cannot guarantee that each day you will encounter dolphins, but we'll try our hardest to find them during the surveys.

*Our fieldwork is also based from boats and does not involve any swimming with dolphins.*



### ***A typical day in the field ....if the seas are calm***

6am breakfast and get ready for a day out on the boat. At 7am the boat is launched and start our survey and scanning the water for any signs of dolphins. Once we find dolphins it's all hands on deck. One volunteer will be required to write notes and record the encounter, other volunteers will be required to keep track of the location of the dolphin group and the group's behaviour, others will be required to prepare the sound recording equipment and make recordings of the dolphin vocalisations, while others will assist with taking photographs for the individual identification of dolphins. To collect the information we need, we'll spend up to one hour following each group of dolphins (unless they show any signs of stress or disturbance from our presence). We'll then head off and continue our survey to hopefully find another group of dolphins.

By 4pm, we'll be heading back to the Research Station. Once at the Research Station, volunteers will be required to assist with downloading the day's recordings and entering the data into our databases.

7.00pm – dinner is served and dishes are done.

### ***If the seas are rough...***

As all of our boat based surveys are weather dependent, we can expect a couple of poor weather days during your stay, but we've organized plenty for you to do. If the weather is poor, we spend the day at the Research Station entering and analyzing data. We'll also have presentations on dolphin ecology and conservation by Dr



Liz Hawkins. Depending on the weather, we might also head over to Amity Point or Point Lookout to do some land surveys and marine debris beach clean-up and survey.

For those staying with us for two weeks, you'll also have the opportunity to explore the beautiful North Stradbroke Island with a trip to North Gorge at Point Lookout to enjoy the spectacular views and coastline.

## 2023 Research Expedition Dates

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We have a number of expeditions available during 2023. The dates for the coming year are as follows:

### Moreton Bay Dolphin Research Expeditions 2023

Expedition #	Arrival	Departure	# Days	Cost per person*	# Places available
1	1 <sup>st</sup> July 2025	4 <sup>th</sup> July 2025	4 (3 nights)	\$1,860	4

## What's Included in the Expedition?

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The following is included in the expedition price:

- Accommodation & meals;
- Passenger ferry transfers to North Stradbroke Island from Cleveland to Dunwich;
- Dolphin Research Australia Expedition Pack (incl. t-shirt, tote bag, Dolphin Watching Guide and volunteer handbook);
- Copies of the best photos from the your expedition;
- Year membership to Dolphin Research Australia;
- Training and presentations from experienced crew including Dr Liz Hawkins who will be leading your expedition;
- Access to our whale and dolphin citizen science online training program and materials.
- Hands-on, participatory and unique experience collecting observational data on Moreton Bay's dolphins;
- Land-based surveys of dolphins and marine debris surveys (when we are unable to do boat-based work)  
When we are not in the field, the team will also have the chance to assist with data processing back at the Research Station;
- Certificate of participation (digital).
- We keep our expedition groups small to increase the enjoyment for you. Each research trip has a maximum of 4 places, so get in quick to reserve your place!

### **What's not included:**

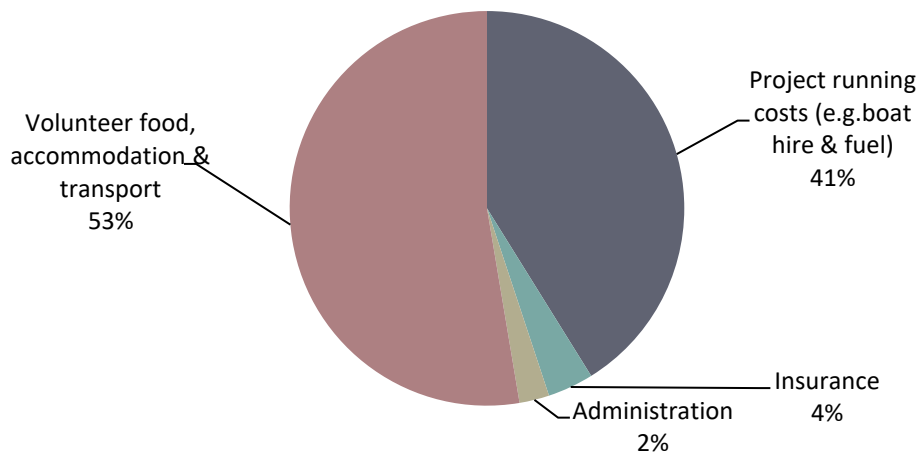
- Personal travel insurance we *strongly* recommend you obtain your own personal insurance prior to joining the expedition.
- Travel to and from the meeting point at Cleveland, Queensland (price does include the ferry from Cleveland to Dunwich, North Stradbroke Island)
- Any additional food and drinks including alcoholic beverages\*



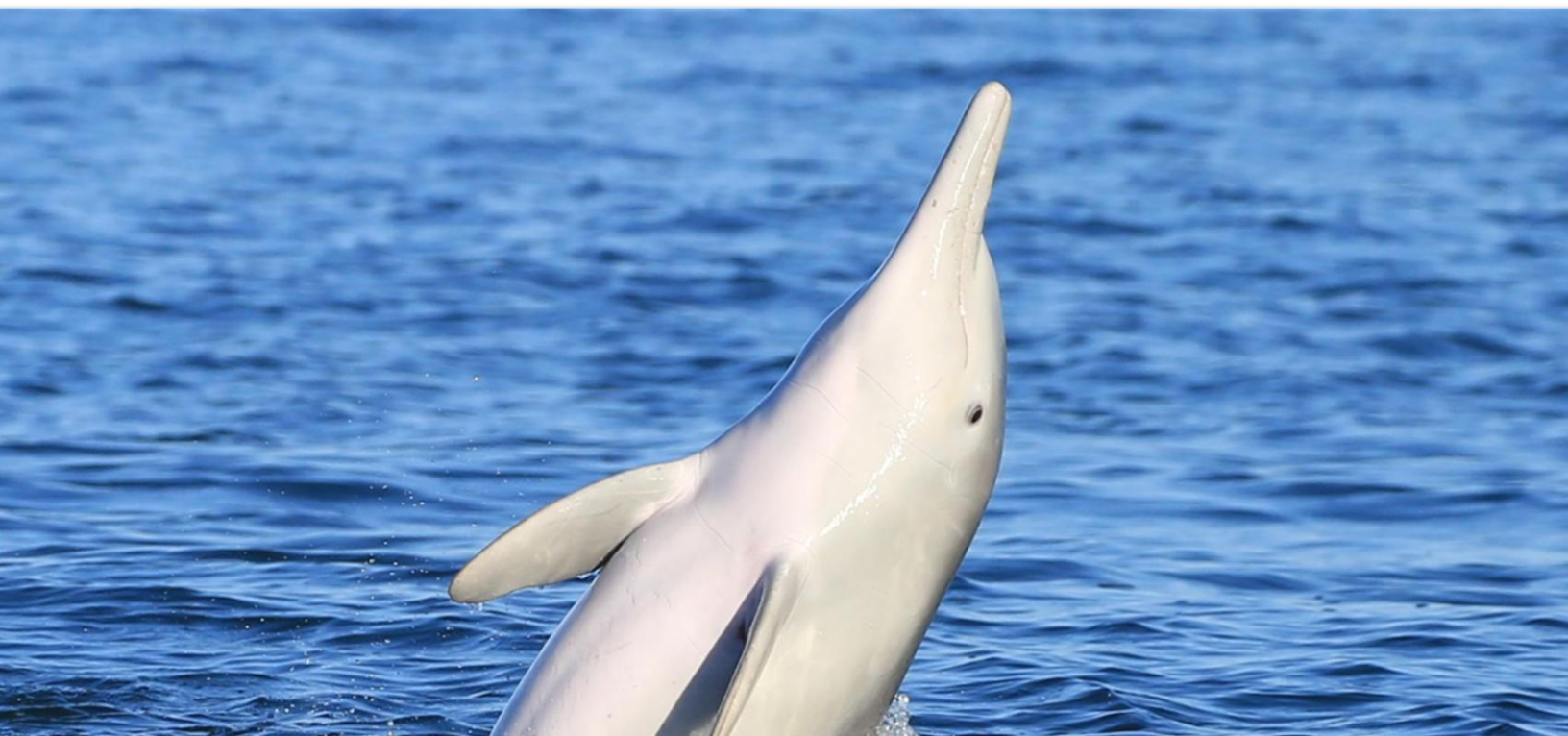
\* Please note we have strict restrictions on the consumption of alcohol during expeditions and zero tolerance for illegal drug use policy.

## Where does your Money Go?

***Eco-volunteers play a crucial role in our research projects!*** Running marine mammal research is an extremely costly task and as an eco-volunteer you are not only part of the research team, but also a financial sponsor of the project. Each year, research projects such as the Moreton Bay Dolphin Research Project, cost over \$100,000 and your contribution goes a long way in helping to cover some of these expenses. We are also lucky on occasion to have the assistance of small grants from private and government bodies, however, these grants do not cover the full cost of the project and it is through the generous donations from our supporters that makes this critical research possible. The cost of ecovolunteer expeditions covers the immediate expenses directly related to the fieldwork and costs of each expedition including accommodating volunteer teams.



Financial breakdown of your financial contribution to the expeditions.



## What to Bring

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Be prepared to be exposed to the elements and make sure you are ready for almost anything.

We recommend that you bring:

- Sunscreen
- Hat (mandatory)
- Sunglasses (mandatory)
- Windproof & waterproof jacket
- Warm clothing (it can get cold on the boat)  
– make sure you have lots of layers to keep you warm on the boat.
- Swimmers
- Beach towel
- Reusable water bottle
- Reusable lunch boxes
- Camera (for your own photos and memories - it is not a mandatory item)
- Thongs & covered shoes
- Sun protective clothing (including long-sleeved shirt & light long quick-dry pants)



Space is limited at the research station, so pack economically and practically. There are laundry facilities in Dunwich village.

## Accommodation & Meals

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Our research teams will be accommodated at the University of Queensland Moreton Bay Research Station at the small village of Dunwich on North Stradbroke Island. Accommodation is in shared bunk rooms in either the Research House or in the dorm-style rooms at the main Research Station facility with shared bathrooms. Each facility has a common room for the team to enjoy each other's company and relax at the end of the day. If you are travelling with friends, be sure to let us know so that we can make sure you are sharing a room.

We will provide you with breakfast, lunch and dinner options. We encourage participants to be part of meal preparation and meal clean ups. If you have any good recipes or love to cook, let us know and we can roster you on for being the lead chef for a night or two during expeditions. Meals will be basic and we can cater for different dietary requirements, please let us know beforehand if you have specific needs.

There is Wi-Fi available at the Research Centre.





Moreton Bay Research Station, Dunwich, North Stradbroke Island Accommodation at the Moreton Bay Research Station: Research House common area (left), dorm-style bunk rooms and bathroom (photos on right)

## The Boats

We will be working from two different types of small rigid hull inflatable boats. We will primarily be doing our boat surveys from the Moreton Bay Research Station vessels which are between 5.4m and 5.8m. On occasion, surveys will also be made from the Dolphin Research Australia vessel *'Delphi'* a 3m rigid hull inflatable boat.



University of Queensland Moreton Bay Research Station research vessels *'Pelagia'* (left) and *'Glaucus'* (right).

## Meeting Point

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The meeting point for groups is at the Gold Cats Stradbroke Flyer at Cleveland at the time arranged once your booking is confirmed.

Address of Gold Cats Stradbroke Flyer:

End of Middle Street, Cleveland, Queensland (it's the yellow and blue office right at the end of the street)

Make sure you meet at the yellow and blue ferry as there is more than one company that works from the facility.

Groups will meet at the ferry 15mins prior to ferry departure. Please make sure you allow enough time to be there with sufficient time to check in to the ferry.

### ***Getting to the Meeting Point***

#### *Train & Bus*

There are regular trains from Brisbane that go to Cleveland train station. The courtesy bus for the ferry picks up from the Cleveland Train Station 10minutes before the ferry departs and from outside the Commonwealth Bank on Middle St, Cleveland 15minutes before the ferry departs.

#### *By Road*

Parking is available at the ferry terminal – please make sure you allow plenty of time to meet the ferry if you are driving! By road, simply follow google maps to the Cleveland ferry terminal on Middle Street. Cleveland is approximately 20-25mins from the M1 highway from the north or the south and located to the east of the City of Brisbane.





# Moreton Bay Marine Park & North Stradbroke Island

Moreton Bay Marine Park covers more than 3,400km<sup>2</sup> and hugs the South East Queensland Coast and encompasses coral reefs, islands, sheltered inlets and open ocean. Established in 1992, the Moreton Bay Marine Park protects many ecologically significant habitats and species. The Bay is inhabited by the southern-most population of dugongs (*Dugong dugon*) in Australia that graze along the seagrass beds with green turtles, hawksbill turtles and loggerhead turtles are also commonly seen. The Bay is a haven for shorebirds with numerous RAMSAR listed sites for migratory bird species.



North Stradbroke Island is one of the largest islands in Moreton Bay and is 38km long and 11km wide. The Island is simply stunning! Known for its surf beaches, fishing and diving, North Stradbroke is full of surprises. There are three main townships on the Island, Dunwich, Amity Point and Point Lookout being home to 2500 permanent residents. Being only 30km from Brisbane, it is also a popular holiday destination. North Stradbroke Island and Moreton Bay are truly amongst the top destinations in Australia.

The Quandamooka People are the Traditional Owners of North Stradbroke Island and surrounding area. The Quandamooka People settled over 25,000 years ago on the Island and have a unique cultural heritage and strong connections to Sea Country. In 2011, the Quandamooka People were officially acknowledged as the traditional owners through their native title rights to areas of North Stradbroke Island and the surrounding waters.



Location of Meeting Point (Cleveland) and North Stradbroke Island, Queensland, Australia

# Reserving Your Spot

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## ***Reserve a place***

There are limited places available for each expedition, so bookings in advance are essential. To book simply send us an email with the completed booking form attached. Following this, pay your deposit if booking at least 30 days prior to departure. If less than 30 days, full payment is required.

## ***Deposit & Payment***

A \$200AUD non-refundable, non-transferable deposit\* is required for your booking to be confirmed. If your booking is made within four weeks (30 days) prior to the date of departure, full payment is required at the time of booking. The balance of payment is due four weeks (30 days) prior to departure.

Payment can be made using direct deposit into the Dolphin Research Australia account, online shop, or using PayPal (please note that PayPal payments will incur a 3% surcharge on top of expedition price).

## ***Cancellation policy***

Dolphin Research Australia realizes that most people who cancel their booking do so out of necessity. However, cancellations are costly to administer and involve time and resources of the organisation. Therefore, all cancellations after booking are subject to deductions to help us cover the organisation's administrative expenses (which we do as volunteers).

In the event of a cancellation by the participant:

- Cancellation more than 30 days prior to the start of the expedition will incur a \$200AUD fee (equivalent to the non-refundable deposit).
- Cancellation 30-14 days prior to the start date of the expedition will incur a 30% fee (including the deposited amount) of the total expedition cost.
- Any cancellation of less than 14 days before the start date of an expedition, will infer 100% forfeit of the expedition cost.
- There are no refunds after the starting date of the program. If the participant fails to join the program or leaves the program at any time, no refunds will be issued.
- Please note that the deposit is not transferrable to any other year, product or service.

## ***\*Please note:***

- In the unlikely circumstances where the expedition is cancelled by the organisation if the participant level is below the required number or natural disasters or other external events, you may choose between us applying the amounts paid toward an alternative date or expedition or receiving a full (100%) refund. In the circumstances where there are too few people for an expedition to go ahead, the organisation may request a change of dates or alternatively you will receive a 100% refund.

- The organisation is not responsible for any incidental expenses that you may have incurred as a result of your booking such as visas, vaccinations or flights.

- All expeditions are subject to COVID-19 restrictions. Where COVID-19 restrictions prevent the expedition from going ahead (i.e. postponed, cancelled or otherwise), a 100% refund (including deposit) will be issued.

## ***Amendments to your Reservation***

If you wish to change the expedition you have reserved to another within the same year or have any other amendments that you may wish to inquire with us about, please contact and arrange as soon as possible.

**Dolphin Research Australia Inc.**  
**Moreton Bay Dolphin Research Expedition**  
**Reservation Form**



Please complete the below form and send to us at [info@dolphinresearchaustralia.org](mailto:info@dolphinresearchaustralia.org) to confirm your booking.

<b>Name of Participant:</b> First Name: _____ Surname: _____
<b>Address:</b>
<b>E-mail:</b>
<b>Phone number:</b>
<b>Date of Birth:</b>
<b>Nationality:</b>
<b>Which Expedition you would like to book?</b>
<b>Dates of Expedition:</b>
<b>Total Expedition Fee due:</b>
<b>Are you travelling with a partner or friend?</b>
<b>Have you any previous boating experience?*</b> <i>*We do not recommend this expedition if you suffer from debilitating sea sickness.</i>
<b>What is your interest in participating in dolphin research?</b>
<b>Do you have any medical conditions?</b> <i>Please inform us of any conditions that we need to be aware of.</i>

**Have you experienced seasickness in the past?**

**Do you have any dietary requirements (including preferences, allergies & intolerances)?** To help us cater for your dietary needs, please be specific e.g. if you don't like some types of vegetables, prefer a particular type of milk etc.

**As part of your package, you'll receive a Dolphin Research Australia t-shirt. What T-shirt size would you like?** Please let us know your size and if you would prefer a women's or men's cut shirt (you can view our Protect What You Love t-shirts via our online shop <https://www.dolphinresearchaustralia.org/product/protect-what-you-love-tshirt/>).

#### **Payment**

To secure your booking you are required to pay a non-refundable deposit of \$200AUD. If you are making your booking less than 30days prior to the expedition, full expedition payment is due. Please pay deposit and expedition fee via direct bank transfer.

*Bank details:*

Dolphin Research Australia Inc.  
Summerland Credit Union  
BSB: 728 728  
Account #: 22306117  
Ref: yourlastname

Alternatively you can pay via our online shop at:

<https://www.dolphinresearchaustralia.org/product/moreton-bay-expedition-deposit/>

\*Please email us at [info@dolphinresearchaustralia.org](mailto:info@dolphinresearchaustralia.org) when you transfer any funds so we can double check all has gone through. Upon receipt of payment, you will receive a receipt of payment along with confirmation of your reservation.



**Declaration**

- I understand the terms of reserving my position as an Eco-volunteer and the Dolphin Research Australia refund policy associated with the Moreton Bay research expeditions.
- I understand that my eco-volunteer reservation will not be confirmed until a deposit has been received.
- I understand that my participation as an eco-volunteer is also subject to completing a signed code of conduct agreement upon arrival following induction at the commencement of your expedition.

**Signed****Date****Contact Details**

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions regarding the expeditions and reservations process at

Email: [info@dolphinresearchaustralia.org](mailto:info@dolphinresearchaustralia.org)

Ph: (02) 6608 3893

Website: [www.dolphinresearchaustralia.org](http://www.dolphinresearchaustralia.org)

ABN: 42095866467

*\*\* Dolphin Research Australia Inc. is a charitable marine conservation, education & research charity –find out more about us & how you can help at [www.dolphinresearchaustralia.org](http://www.dolphinresearchaustralia.org) \*\**