



Southern Cross  
University

# The Great Barrier Reef Dolphin Project

The Great Barrier Reef is visited by more than 30 species of whales and dolphins. This includes the inshore Australian humpback dolphin and the Australian snubfin dolphin. Both of these species are considered threatened because they are found in small numbers, they do not have many young, and they are dependent upon healthy sea country. In the more remote northern regions of the Great Barrier Reef we do not know where they live and how many there are.

To address this lack of information about inshore dolphins, the Great Barrier Dolphin project will conduct an extensive survey of the northern Great Barrier Reef region from Cairns to the tip of the Cape York Peninsula between October and December of 2023.

Project objectives:

- Determine the number of inshore dolphins and their distribution north of Cairns.
- Develop a map of distribution and threats to inshore dolphins along the entire Great Barrier Reef using already existing information from the southern GBR.

The survey will be led by Dr Daniele Cagnazzi from Southern Cross University in collaboration with Dr Guido J. Parra from Flinders University, Blue Planet Marine, Jabiru Environmental, Sci-Eye and the Queensland Department of Environment and Science.

As part of this project, we have started engaging with the Traditional Owner groups of the northern Great Barrier Reef to seek consent to survey within their respective sea country regions. The Traditional Owner engagement stage is being led by Dr Helen Penrose, an independent consultant (Jabiru Environmental). We will be reaching out to all sea country clans in the region to help us to guide this project and to determine the following:

- If there are any sea country regions that can be surveyed for dolphins (i.e. where consent to survey has been granted by sea country clan groups following the principles of free, prior informed consent and an adequate and ethical negotiation and engagement phase)
- If there are sea country regions where the dolphin survey cannot occur in (i.e. where consent is not granted and therefore the sections of the Great Barrier Reef where the dolphin survey will not occur)
- How and to what extent sea country clans would like to be involved in the survey (a range of scenarios can be negotiated). This will require the development of a MoU or Research Agreement with each sea clan group to determine how we will work together and ensure the roles, responsibilities and expectations of all parties are clear and transparent and there is respect and trust between scientists and Traditional Owners.

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## Contact us for more information

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