



Dolphin health research to ensure long-term conservation

Fremantle Ports supports dolphin research

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The research will enable Fremantle Ports to plan port development and maintenance that has minimal impact on the Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins and the wider environment.



Australia’s ports are committed to understanding our operations on land and at sea and supporting the marine environments in which they operate.

Research programs are essential to understanding these environments.

Fremantle Inner Harbour is at the mouth of the Swan River and a key foraging site for a pod of Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins.

The dolphins inhabit the Swan River and adjacent offshore waters but use Fremantle Inner Harbour each day for feeding as well as accessing areas further upstream.

To better understand their behaviours, Fremantle Ports has been providing in-kind support for dolphin research since 2001 and funding support since 2010.

In 2010, a study conducted by Curtin University’s Centre for Marine Science and Technology (CMST) and funded by Fremantle Ports showed that during pile driving in the Fremantle Inner Harbour, fewer dolphins were detected transiting the area within the immediate vicinity of the work than when pile driving activity was absent.

Acoustic readings were made during pile driving work at one end of the harbour in 2015. Data from both studies is being analysed to define the time required for dolphins to return to previous activity levels after pile driving stops.





Solution

Fremantle Ports has recently committed significant funding support for a new two-year research project by Curtin University.

This project will study dolphin foraging behaviour and the effects of pile driving in the Fremantle Inner Harbour.

Observations of dolphin activity each year will be complemented by fish surveys to map fish and plankton. Underwater baited video cameras will identify fish species.



Outcome

Fremantle Ports' support of dolphin research is an example of ports supporting conservation and safeguarding the environment.

The research aims to ensure the long-term conservation of these highly intelligent and engaging marine mammals.

The current research project is nationally and internationally significant and will fill a significant gap in knowledge about the potential impacts of pile driving on dolphin behaviour.

The research is key to developing a better understanding of dolphin behaviours and marine ecology, and will support the management and conservation of coastal dolphins worldwide. It will also enable Fremantle Ports to plan port development and maintenance that has minimal impact on the Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins and the wider environment.



For more information visit:
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