

Researcher Dr. Chris Neff with our favourite mascot  
@ 'The Great Shark Debate' April 2014



**SEA LIFE Trust Inc.**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**2013/14**



Image: Silke Stuckenbrock/ TwoHandsProject

## SLCF Management Committee 2014

**President** – Claudette  
Rechtorik, SLCF  
Manager

**Vice President** – Craig  
Thorburn, SEA LIFE Life  
Science Manager,  
Australia/NZ

**Treasurer** – Sebastien  
Maupas

**Secretary** – Amy Wilkes,  
Aquarist SEA LIFE  
Sydney Aquarium

**Public Officer** – Steve  
Williams

### Ordinary Members:

Anissa Lawrence,  
Director Tierramar  
Consulting

Ben Chinnock,  
Fundraising Manager,  
Down Syndrome NSW

Adam Clifford – IT  
specialist NAB

Rob Smith – NSW  
Cluster Manager, Merlin  
Entertainments

Cheryl Laks – Education  
Supervisor, SEA LIFE  
Melbourne Aquarium

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The first bit of big news is that we are now the **SEA LIFE Trust (SLT)**! This will be the third and final time we change names. It comes about as we align with the UK's Trust to co-ordinate across SEA LIFE globally. This is super exciting as we begin collaborating on local, regional and global marine conservation issues so be sure to watch this space!

In a world first, we funded research to find out what our visitors think of sharks and whether aquaria help to dispel perceived fears (page 8). Dr. Chris Neff of the University of Sydney surveyed aquarium visitors in order to improve shark conservation outcomes. You'll be surprised by the results.

In January drum lines were deployed in WA in response to 7 shark attacks over 3 years (page 10). The policy was met with community outrage yet despite the backlash, the WA Premier has sought permission to extend the program for 3 years. The sprint has turned into a marathon as we continue to fundraise and support stopping this cruel and ineffective policy.

We continue to chip away on the issue of our endangered turtles and other marine critters getting fatally caught in witches hat crab traps, a recreational fishing gear type only used in NSW (page 7). We have upcoming meetings with NSW DPI to continue the push to ban this gear and replace with turtle friendly alternatives.

As a result of our project '1,000km Habitat Challenge' restoring freshwater habitat, we were asked to join the inaugural 'Fish Habitat Partnership' a collaboration between conservation groups, recreational and commercial fishers, aquaculturalists, farmers, and Indigenous to improve habitat outcomes for sustainable fisheries.

These are just a few of the campaigns and projects that have filled our year. Other issues that have persisted include the amnesty on recreational fishing in sanctuary zones, proposed dredging of the Great Barrier Reef, repealing the price on carbon pollution (and increasing the impacts of climate change).

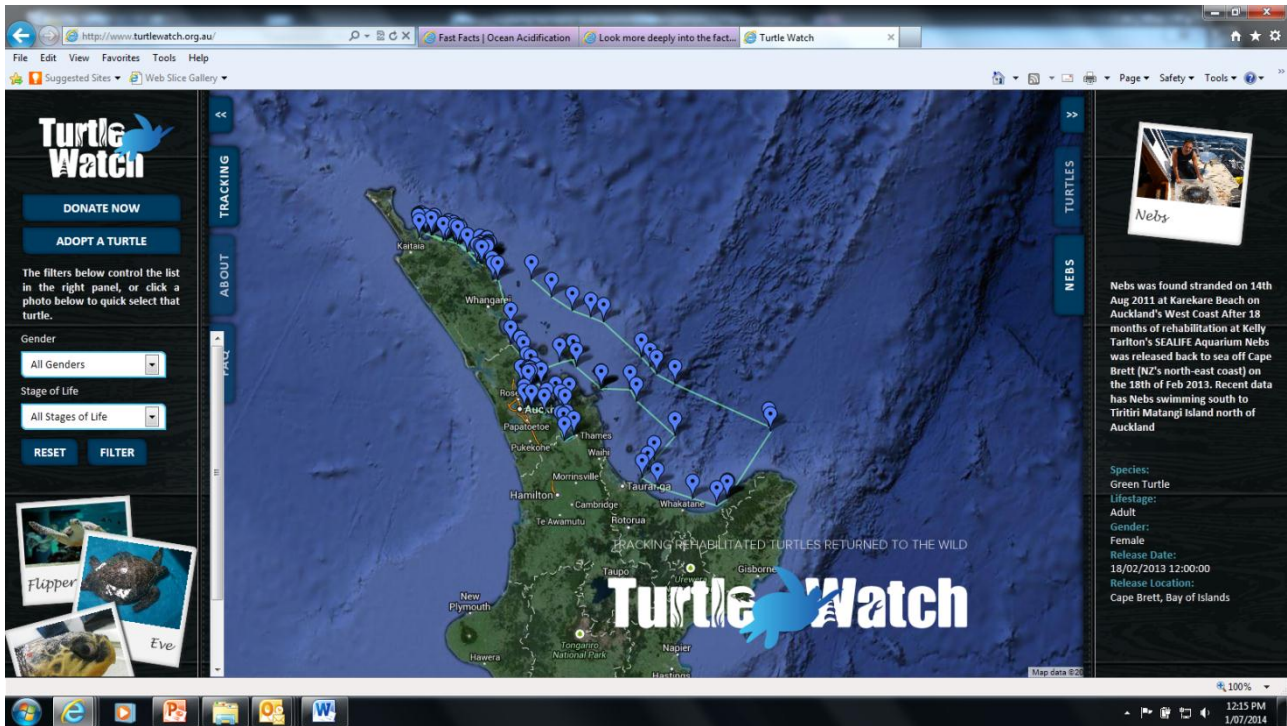
*"We're plundering the ocean and its vital resources, and just because we can't see the devastation from dry land doesn't mean it's any less dangerous. It needs to stop."* Leonardo Dicaprio, 2014

Our mission is to inspire stewardship of our aquatic environments. We continue to strive to inspire you through our work of protecting our oceans.

Claudette Rechtorik  
President SEA LIFE Trust

## OUR PROJECTS

### Turtle Watch



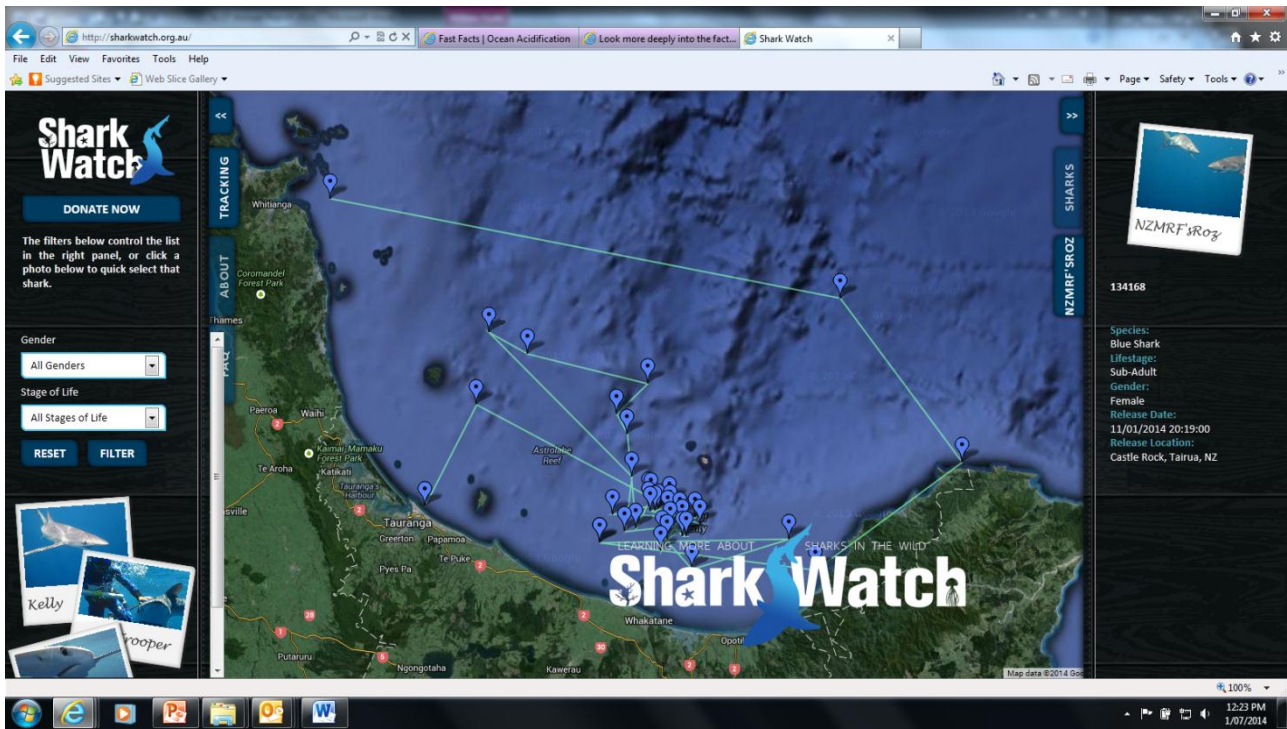
Four new turtles were added to the SEA LIFE Turtle Watch fold. Eve (Melbourne), Rosie (WA), Luke (Auckland) and Isla (Auckland) were all rescued, rehabbed and released by SEA LIFE teams in Australia and New Zealand. **With the help of our members and donors, SLT funds the satellite tags and satellite time** so we can learn more about their home ranges and potential hotspots of threats.

Rosie was a particularly interesting case, with her DNA showing a genetic match to a turtle population in Oman! As a result of these findings she was flown to WA where she was given the best possible chance of making her way across the Indian Ocean. Unfortunately we lost track of Rosie in January but it's not out of the question that she can pop up in the near future. You can follow her and the other turtles' travels on [www.turtlewatch.org.au](http://www.turtlewatch.org.au)

### Shark Watch

Riley Elliott, a PhD candidate with University of Auckland is carrying out a Blue Shark project to understand more about this elusive species. Blue sharks are heavily targeted for their fins or caught as bycatch in many commercial fishing operations. It's a surprise to learn that we know so very little about

their population status, habits or what they do in their spare time! You can see the sharks that Riley has tagged on [www.sharkwatch.org.au](http://www.sharkwatch.org.au). Thanks also to Mitch Thorburn for his time entering the data 😊



### Coast Guardians - 2193 Plastic Water Bottle Free



We celebrated the launch of this project on Schools Clean Up Australia Day 2014 where all public schools in the Canterbury postcode have reduced their plastic

footprint by going plastic water bottle free. SLT funded water refill stations and at least half of each of the installations.



Rotary Campsie contributed some funding for the installation at Canterbury South Public. Several of the schools held fundraisers for the project. The day was attended by the Mayor of the City of Canterbury, Brian Robson (pic above with Claudette Rechterik of the Trust and the students).

Students and teachers involved with the project have fully engaged on the issue of plastic pollution having witnessed the trashed state of the local Cooks River, one of the most polluted rivers in Australia.

The launch was followed with a clean-up of Cooks River with students from Canterbury Boys High who turned Cooks River....



This was an amazingly inspiring project starting with Canterbury Girls High and ending with all schools getting involved. We even got to meet David Suzuki along the way.

Huge thanks to all the teachers and students who participated in this project with a desire to take positive action for the environment. It's amazing to see our kids become **solutionaries** when you share a story and a picture (right).



## FISH HABITAT BOOSTED WITH NEW PARTNERSHIP



Based on its work in the '1,000km Habitat Challenge' the SEA LIFE Trust was one of the founding organisations to form a new independent initiative to improve fish habitat and increase productivity of important species.

The NSW Fish Habitat Partnership (FHP) is led by inaugural Chair, oyster grower Mark Bulley, and includes 11 peak representative organisations from key commercial and recreational fisheries, conservation and industry bodies.

"The partnership will focus on improving fish habitat to ultimately increase the productivity of commercially and recreationally important fish species across NSW and improve the health of aquatic ecosystems," Ms Hodgkinson, NSW Minister of Primary Industries, said at the recent launch of the initiative.

The partnership includes:

- NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers;
- Professional Fisherman's Association;
- Australian National Sportfishing Association;
- NSW Farmers;
- Nature Conservation Council;
- NSW Aboriginal Land Council;

"Fish habitat is essential for the survival of fish – it underpins the productivity of our State's fisheries resources. It gives me great pleasure to witness and support the formation of this partnership as a constructive way for our State's key fisheries stakeholders to work together on such an important issue" Katrina Hodgkinson, NSW Minister for Primary Industries

- Australian Fishing Trade Association;
- Recreational Fishermans Alliance;
- Sea Life Trust;
- Sydney Fish Markets; and
- OceanWatch.

Our coastal environments are under increasing pressure from the impacts of coastal development, land-based pollution and climate change; collaboration between key stakeholders will be key to work towards positive outcomes for our aquatic habitats.

## OUR CONSERVATION RESEARCH

### *Taking the bite out of Jaws – Dr. Chris Neff - \$25,000*

Findings from ground breaking new research funded by the SEA LIFE Trust has found little support for the Government on the hotly debated issue of WA’s drum lining policy in response to human shark interactions.



The survey of 583 aquarium visitors, carried out by Chris, asked participants how they thought the Government should respond to shark bites and found that despite the public’s fears, 87% favoured non-lethal responses with 18% responding that the shark should be “left alone” and 69% supporting public education as the best method for

preventing shark bites.

Only 4% of those surveyed supported the hunting of sharks, while 9% supported more shark nets as a preventative measure.

Another key finding was that the least amount of “blame” for shark bites was directed at the Government with just 2-4%. Respondents’ blame toward the shark also ranked low with only 6-8%. Those indicated as most responsible were either the swimmer (38-44%) or simply “no one” (33 – 40%).

Conducted by University of Sydney Lecturer Dr Christopher Neff and

**87% of aquarium visitors favoured non-lethal responses to sharks after an accident with 18% responding that the shark should be “left alone” and 69% supporting public education as the best method for preventing shark bites.**

funded by the SEA LIFE Trust, the survey is the first research of its kind. Dr Neff stated, “These responses show that there is little support for government measures that kill sharks **and that the public does not blame governments when these tragedies occur.**”

The new data also supports the analysis that the ‘aquarium experience’ is a critical piece of public education and conservation. The majority of those surveyed indicated that they came to the aquarium for ‘fun’ (79%) without a ‘green’ agenda and according to the survey, the impact of viewing the aquarium sharks significantly reduced their levels of fear towards sharks.

The findings from this data are consistent with what we hear every day. After 77 years of shark culling in NSW it is time to consider something else. The research is important for policymakers to consider given that it suggests that the Government should respond to shark bites with greater public education and non-lethal shark culling measures.



*Monitoring the health of wild dugongs – Dr. Janet Lanyon - \$10,000*

To date, SLT has contributed over \$30,000 to this long term monitoring project since 2009. Dr. Janet Lanyon of University of Queensland leads the research to monitor the long term health of the wild dugong population resident in Moreton Bay. It was Janet’s monitoring that identified the post-flood effects upon the population in 2011.

This year, the lucky Sam Hillman, an aquarist with SEA LIFE Sydney Aquarium went along on the trip which caught 16 dugongs and collected much needed data for the project.

*Satellite tracking of juvenile white sharks in support of a national program examining population status and trends - \$16,000*

Tag-for-Life continues to provide support to various CSIRO-led initiatives as part of this





overall research on white sharks in Australian waters.

The support of public extension, in particular, has been achieved by coordinating or co-hosting a series of public lectures by CSIRO staff involved in the project and providing a conduit between the CSIRO program and SEA LIFE Melbourne and Sydney Aquaria which has led to the development of a display on the species and CSIRO's research in the aquarium's public arena (Melbourne).

This project is due to take full flight in the latter part of 2014. You can follow the project on [www.sharkwatch.org.au](http://www.sharkwatch.org.au).

***Missing in Action The secret life of the grey nurse shark, *Carcharias taurus*: understanding breeding aggregations and locating gestation aggregations - \$19,950***



Locating the missing pieces of the Grey Nurse Shark (GNS) puzzle is one of the priorities in the Federal Government's Grey Nurse Shark Recovery Plan. This project, fully funded by the SLT, is due to commence in the latter part of the year but lead researcher Deb Bowden has been busy putting the infrastructure in place ensuring data loggers along the Qld/NSW coasts

are cleared and ready for action.

**The scientific aims of the project are to:**

1. identify potential additional aggregation sites for the GNS, specifically those critical for breeding and gestation;
2. improve knowledge and understanding of specific habitat requirements essential for GNS;
3. increase knowledge of GNS migration routes; and
4. increase community awareness and on-going knowledge of the GNS.

With an estimated 1500 sharks left on the east coast of Australia, every bit of research is needed to improve protection and increase the population.

***Australian Marine Science Association (AMSA)***

***Student Awards - \$5,000***

It was a tough contest but this year's winner of the SLT/AMSA Student Research Awards, Suzanna Evans (UNSW), is the researcher of an issue close to our



SLT's Manager Claudette Rechterik with award winner Suzy Evans

hearts.

Suzy's research entitled **'the role of genetic diversity in the conservation of threatened seagrass meadows'** endeavours to identify the threats to our local marine vegetation, information that is essential to protect our coastal systems effectively and sustainably. Without ecological foundations such as healthy habitats, entire systems collapse. Congratulations to Suzy Evans!

## OUR CAMPAIGNS - #noWA/NSW/QldSharkCull

Community outrage in response to the deployment of drumlines in WA in January 2014 resulted in a number of events over the summer. The Manly rally, organised by Manly SEA LIFE Sanctuary's Alice Forest and Sharnie Connell, drew a crowd of thousands (pic above right).



SLT contributed funding to a billboard in Colin Barnett's electorate along the Stirling Highway in WA.

This was followed by **'The Great Shark Debate'**, an information forum held at SEA LIFE Sydney Aquarium with a panel of experts including Dr. Bob Creese, Head of Fisheries Research at NSW DPI, Prof Dave Booth (Marine Ecologist at UTS), Dr. Chris Neff (Policy Expert, USyd), Alexia Wellbelove, Humane Society International, and shark bite survivor Lisa Mondy, who provided an extremely moving speech on why sharks should not be targeted and killed post an attack.



Over 100 people attended the event, with the majority either signing a petition for Colin Barnett or filling out a survey to gauge the current level of awareness around shark mitigation practices.

### Turtle unfriendly crab traps

Our online petition to phase out witches hat crab traps, which fatally catch turtles and other critters, have reached over 14,000! We are continuing to work with other NGOs, recreational fishers and local and State governments to phase out destructive crab traps and replace with alternatives.

The screenshot shows a Change.org petition page. At the top, it says 'change.org' with navigation links for 'Start a petition', 'Browse', and 'Search'. The user 'Claudette Rechterik' is logged in. The main heading is 'Save our turtles & phase out the use of witches hat crab traps in NSW', petitioned by 'SEA LIFE Conservation Fund'. A progress bar indicates '14,413 supporters' and '587 NEEDED'. A 'Sign' button is prominent. Below the button, there are checkboxes for 'Display my signature on Change.org' and 'Keep me updated on this campaign and others from SEA LIFE Conservation Fund'.

Recreational fishers have recently supported the phase out of witches hats in Port Stephens which is a great start. All of NSW next!

### Fin Free Cities

As part of SEA LIFE Sydney Aquarium’s ‘Shark Mission’, the SLT gathered more visitors names that were keen to see the end of shark finning and the use of shark fins for soup. Almost 6,000 names



were gathered to build up the database for the Fin Free Cities campaign, a collaborative project with the Australian Marine Conservation Society,



Humane Society International, Greenpeace Australia and Fin Free.

The petitions were supported with a social media campaign to 'Get Your Fin On' in support of shark conservation.

## EVENTS

### 'Trashed' screenings @ Manly and Sydney



Manly SEA LIFE Sanctuary and the SEA LIFE Trust were pleased to support the Talking Trash Tour 2014 with Australian environmentalist, Tim Silverwood (Take 3) and Canadian adventurer Adrian Midwood (Ocean Ambassadors). The pair sailed from Sydney to Brisbane in January to raise awareness of the impact of plastic pollution on our oceans and wildlife.

85% of Australians live within 50km of the coast; our rich culture revolves around our love and value for the ocean and our waterways. Yet, in **every square kilometre of Australia's fringing ocean there is over**

**4000 pieces of plastic rubbish.** Most of this rubbish comes from land and a lot of it is from single use items that were used once before becoming trash.

The Talking Trash tour was about visiting coastal communities and igniting conversations about waste and pollution and illustrating how we can all make a positive difference.

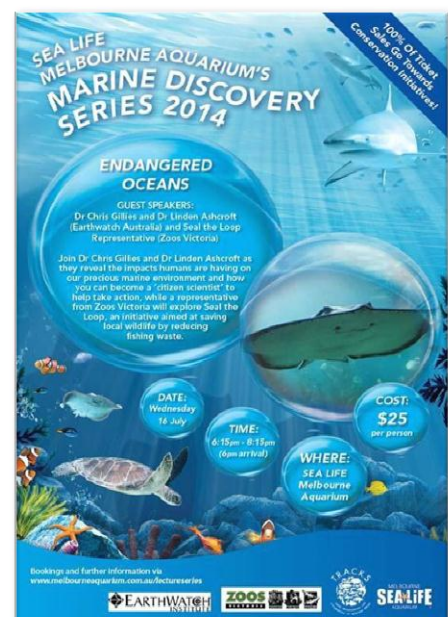
Manly and Sydney each hosted a screening of 'Trashed', the award winning documentary narrated by Jeremy Irons, that lifts the lid on our waste. Over 150 guests attended the events where we all learned **how to turn plastic into diesel fuel** as well as Leisure Activist Wear, **top notch clothing made from plastic found in our oceans.**

### Marine Discovery Series @ Melbourne

SEA LIFE Melbourne Aquarium fundraised over **\$4200** as part of their fantastic Marine Discovery Series. Experts from a range of aquatic and conservation science fields came along and



Adrian Midwood and Tim Silverwood



presented latest research findings. Proceeds from the series went to various projects including artificial insemination technology for sharks, Earthcare St Kilda to purchase microchips for Little penguins in Port Phillip Bay, and Reefwatch Victoria to provide marine education.

### Bunnings BBQ Fundraiser @ Ashfield (Sydney)



Huge thanks to Management Committee member Adam Clifford and his team of keen volunteers (left) who sweated it out over a hot BBQ to raise funds for conservation.

Despite being a week day **we still made over \$1,300**, but even better, we got to speak to loads of tradies about shark conservation. A fab day was had by all!

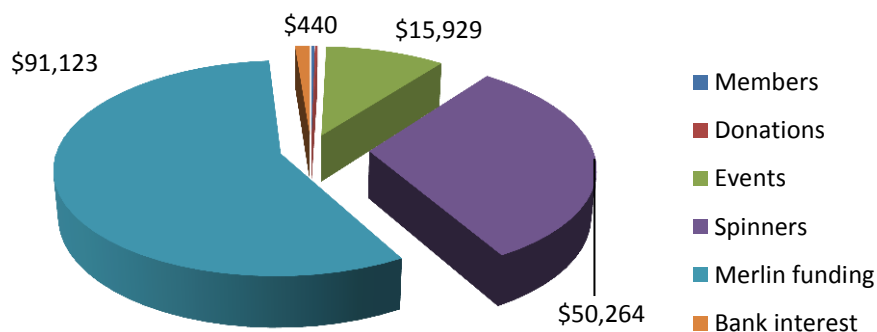
## FINANCIALS

### Auditor's Report

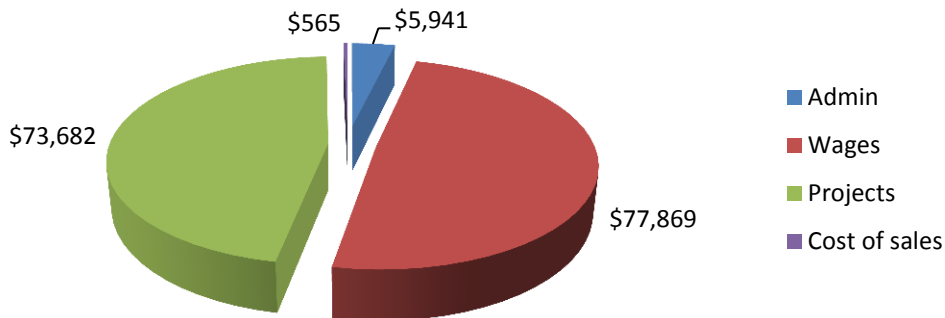
I have audited the Income Statement and Balance Sheet together with the Notes to the Financial Statements and confirm that in my opinion they give a true and fair view of the financial position and performance of SEA LIFE Trust Inc. for the year ended 30 June 2014.

Steve Dafnakis 17 July 2014

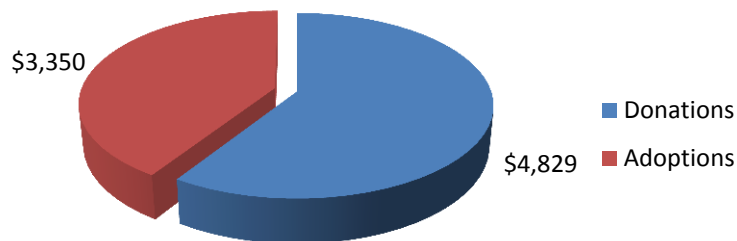
### General income - \$160,077



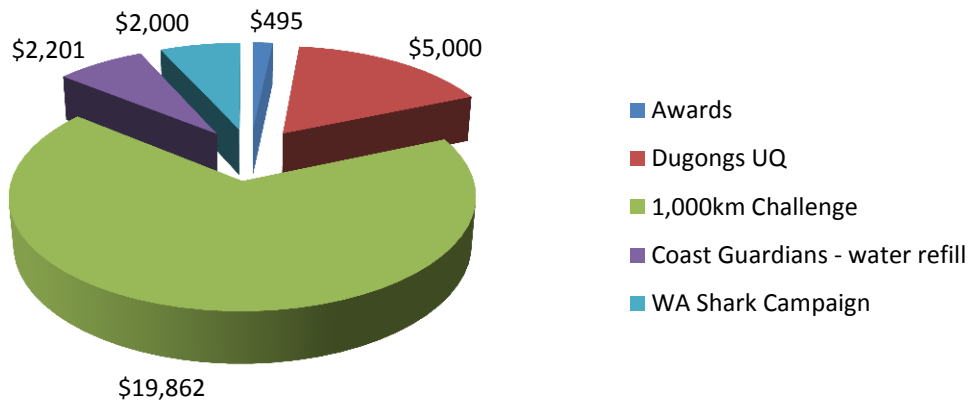
## General expenditure - \$158,058



## Public Fund Income - \$8,179



## Public Fund Expenditure - \$29,557



For the financial year 2013/14 the SLT Inc. Public Fund expended \$29,557 of funding for five projects:

1. 1,000km Habitat Challenge – restoring freshwater habitat - \$19,862
2. Monitoring the health of wild dugongs in Moreton Bay - \$5,000
3. Coast Guardians – water refill stations - \$2,200
4. University of Sunshine Coast Student Awards - \$495
5. WA Shark Cull campaign – contributing funding to a billboard with partner orgs \$2,000

## THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS



Once again, a **huge thank you** to all our animal adopters, visitors who donate to our spinners, members & sponsors for enabling us to fund the work we do. **Particular thanks go to SEA LIFE Sydney Aquarium (Merlin Entertainments)** who cover a large % of our operational costs which we would not be able to survive without.

Thanks also to our many volunteers who drop in and out but provide a huge array of value to our organisation; whether it's updating our website, IT, or design, it's all very valuable work that we as a one full-time equivalent operation can't always get to.

### Special thanks to:

The students from **Crestwood Public School**, who raised **\$1095.90** for turtle and dugong conservation. They did a number of activities and events including raffles and dressing in mufty for a gold coin donation.



**Mr Carlsson**, a Merlin Annual Pass holder who collects all his coins and brings them across to Manly SEA LIFE Sanctuary with his sons every few weeks to put them into the donation money spinner. The boys love watching the coins go round. Thanks Mr Carlsson and boys – all your coins help us fund much needed marine conservation research.

**Member in focus – Ruth Melville** Thanks to Ruth who has been a financial member of the SEA LIFE Trust (formerly SEA LIFE Conservation Fund and Sydney Aquarium Conservation Fund) for many years now. Ruth, a journalist, was inspired by our work after a media interview and has continued to support us ever since. Thanks so much for your continued support Ruth 😊

### How you can help

**Become a member** for just \$10 per year. **Every dollar raised goes directly to our projects** as our operational costs are covered by our main sponsor, Merlin Entertainments.

**Attend one of our events** – all proceeds raised from our events go straight back into our projects.

**Adopt an animal** or **Sponsor a turtle tag** to enable us to continue monitoring our rescued turtles once released back into the wild.

All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

You can do all of the above including making a general donation or learning more about SEA LIFE Conservation Fund via our website [www.SEALIFEconservation.org.au](http://www.SEALIFEconservation.org.au).

**We look forward to updating you on exciting upcoming events in 2015!**

Claudette Rechterik



SLT Manager & President of SLT Management Committee

