

# SEA LIFE Trust

## Annual Report 2015

Prepared by: Claudette Rechterik



## SLT Management Committee 2015

**President** – Claudette  
Rechtorik, SLT ANZ  
Manager

**Vice President** – Craig  
Thorburn, Head of  
Department, Merlin  
Animal Welfare and  
Development

**Treasurer** – Craig  
Leversha, Accounts  
Manager, SEA LIFE  
Melbourne Aquarium

**Secretary** – Alicia Lloyd,  
Aquarist Manly SEA LIFE  
Sanctuary

### Ordinary Members:

Anissa Lawrence,  
Director Tierramar  
Consulting

Ben Chinnock,  
Fundraising Manager,  
Down Syndrome NSW

Aaron Sprowl –  
Curatorial Manager, SEA  
LIFE Underwater World,  
Mooloolaba

Cheryl Laks – Education  
Supervisor, SEA LIFE  
Melbourne Aquarium

Sebastien Maupas,  
Symplicit

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Wow, how time flies; another year, another annual report full of amazing projects, research, campaigns and activities driven by inspirational change makers.

2015 marked the pilot year of our new and very exciting program – Ocean Youth. The program aims to build the capacity, confidence and voices of passionate young ocean lovers to influence positive change to help protect our oceans. It's been a winner since day one with an immense amount of support from staff, partner organisations and parents. And the Ocean Youth Ambassadors themselves have been nothing short of inspiring. You can read more about what the kids have been up to and a brief intro to the program below and be sure to follow OY's progress at [www.oceanyouth.org](http://www.oceanyouth.org).

We've also made significant progress in aligning more closely with SEA LIFE Trust Global. It can take time working through strategic priorities and objectives across the globe but we are well on our way to being the regional representative of a global marine conservation organisation. Exciting times!

You'll also find an array of projects we've been privileged to be a part of as we get more profile and build our networks. Being invited to be the education partner with SBS on its award winning 3 part television series 'What's the Catch?' is a perfect example of how far we've come.

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank our members, donors and volunteers who make what we do at SEA LIFE Trust ANZ possible as we grow year on year.

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

### *What's the Catch? Development and distribution of teacher resources - \$11,000*



Our focus on raising awareness of the importance of **sustainable seafood** led to a partnership with SBS on the 3 part TV series 'What's the Catch?' featuring Matthew Evans (pic left).

SEA LIFE Trust ANZ was chosen as the preferred conservation partner to develop and promote the educational resources to compliment the program. Teacher resources were developed and made available online. Posters to promote the program and the online resources were printed and distributed to all high schools in Australia.

SBS analytics showed that there was good uptake of the resources with 7,000 site visits in the first month. And we're pleased to say that when we were asked to present to a school 2 hours from Sydney (on a different subject), they were displaying the posters!

### *Label My Fish – an alliance of ENGOs advocating for better seafood labelling*



As a result of our involvement with 'What's the Catch', SEA LIFE Trust ANZ was invited to join the alliance to push for stronger seafood labelling laws in restaurants and take aways. Currently when ordering fish and chips you could be anything from sharks to imported farmed basa, each having their own relative environmental impacts. Other collaborators included Greenpeace, WWF, AMCS and Save Our Marine Life. Although there has still been no improvement in labelling laws the issue still remains on the political agenda.

### *Ocean Youth – SEA LIFE Trust ANZ - \$8,000*

2015 formed the pilot year for our new Ocean Youth (OY) program. Building the capacity of young ocean lovers to find their voice, build their confidence so as to influence change is the predominant mission of OY.

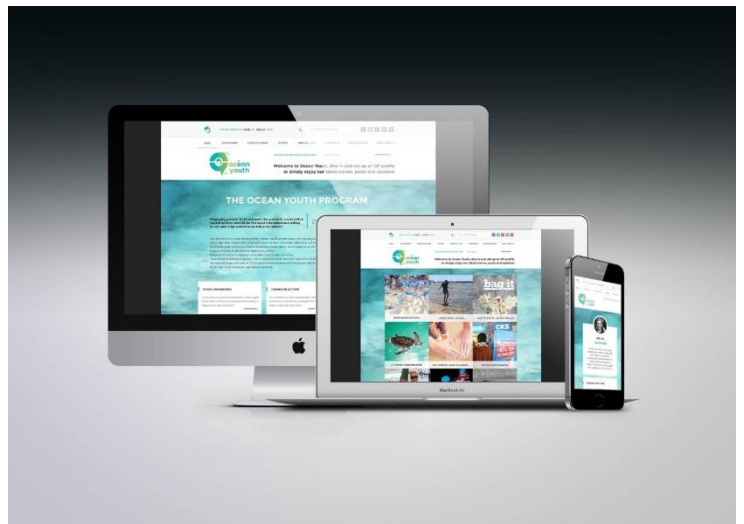


There are 2 streams to the program – face to face based where SEA LIFE sites are, incorporating nature based activities and skills based workshops, and the online platform. The face to face program began with 5 young ladies in Sydney before Melbourne jumped on with the full suite of 20 in June.

For the nature based activities the kids have snorkelled with sea dragons and dolphins, kayaked, bushwalked, carried out beach cleans and nurdle (plastic) surveys (pic left), whale watched, gone on a sustainable seafood treasure hunt, to

name a few activities.

The first phase of the online platform has now been launched where young people from all over the world can create a profile, find other like-minded young ocean lovers and start earning points for doing good stuff to help protect our oceans. **Already we've had young people from Fiji, Malaysia, Spain, Indonesia, US, Canada and all over Oz** approach ask us what they can do to make a difference for our oceans.



There is so much potential for this exciting program. Already we've got some awesome stuff lined up for 2016. We'll already be expanding to include Mooloolaba in the face to face program thanks to Vicki Brown. We can't wait to see what happens next!

## OUR RESEARCH

### MARINE MAMMALS

#### *Monitoring the health of wild dugongs – Dr. Janet Lanyon, UQ - \$5,500*

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 Andrew Barnes, an aquarist with SEA LIFE Sydney Aquarium went along on the trip which managed to catch and assess the health of 13 dugongs in the Moreton Bay population.

***Assessing the population status of Humpback dolphins - Dolphin Research Australia Inc. & QLD Dept. of Environment Protection & Heritage - \$6,600***

Local populations of dolphins in Queensland, similar to other areas of Australia, 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. Moreton Bay, adjacent to the major capital city of Brisbane, has the most southerly resident population of Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins (*Sousa chinensis*) in Australia, a species of critical conservation priority. Here, the local population was first quantitatively surveyed in the mid-1980s, yielding an estimate of 119 individuals. No further population assessments have been conducted in over 27 years, and the status of the Moreton Bay population is at the present time unknown. Recent anecdotal reports suggest that the population may be in decline in the northern section of the Bay.

The mortality rate of humpback dolphins in the Moreton Bay region has been elevated since 2011: with five deaths recorded in 2011, four recorded in 2012 and three recorded to date in 2013, compared to an annual average of two between 1996 and 2010. Of these 12 cases, only two were necropsied: one of which died of encephalitis, and the other of net entanglement (by-caught in the Queensland Shark Control Program, QSCP). It is uncertain if the population is large enough to sustain this level of mortality, especially if the population is at (or below) the lower range of the estimates from 1987, and/or if the annual population growth rate is less than 5%.



Assessing risks to humpback dolphin populations depends on a detailed understanding of habitat usage and site fidelity. Humpback dolphins prefer shallow, inshore areas and estuaries, where they may be exposed to human threats such as loss of habitat, contaminants, unpermitted food provisioning, interactions with gillnets and/or drumlines in the QSCP, vessel traffic and noise pollution. Little is known of habitat usage of humpback dolphins in Moreton Bay or to what extent they overlap with human activities. Opportunistic data suggest that they are more abundant on the western side, where most human activity is centred. It is

also where the highest concentrations of persistent bioaccumulative contaminants occur, both in the environment and in marine fauna.

This project aims to:

1. Assess the abundance and trends of humpback dolphins in southern Queensland using a mark-recapture approach and by examining historical datasets.
2. Examine habitat usage of humpback dolphins using species distribution modelling approaches.
3. Establish an ongoing program that will identify and monitor risks to the population by biopsies of free ranging

dolphins, necropsies and histopathology of stranded dolphins and historical data.

4. Perform a spatial risk assessment to identify areas of concern and provide a tool for managers to aid in the conservation of the species in the Moreton Bay region.

This information will provide an important baseline for future conservation initiatives for this species both in Moreton Bay and across the range of the species, in line with recent recommendations:

More generally, the project will aim to result in:

- An increased public awareness of the conservation issues facing humpback dolphins. This will be achieved through coordinated media releases, public education and engagement programs and materials.
- Advice to resource managers on whether conservation action is required for this population and how this might be best delivered.
- Publications in the peer-reviewed scientific literature and an increased level of understanding of this putative new Australian species.

***Food for thought: NSW fur seal dietary patterns and the role of vulnerable predators in ecosystem dynamics - Australian Marine Science Association - \$5,000***



The winner of this year's AMSA student awards is Natasha Hardy, of Macquarie University.

*Project summary:* Understanding the role of predators in shaping the dynamics of biological communities is paramount to improved conservation planning. This is particularly important on the south coast of NSW where

populations of two vulnerable and protected predators, Australian and New Zealand fur seals are recovering from historic over-exploitation and near-extinction, and also coming into conflict with Australia's most densely populated and exploited coastline.

Key information on the foraging ecology of Australian and New Zealand fur seals is lacking such as individual-based foraging strategies and patterns in NSW, as well as target prey species information. This project will investigate the dietary patterns of newly established NSW populations of Australian and NZ fur seals.

Results will provide unique information on complex trophic interactions in temperate ecosystems and on the spatial and temporal plane in which these interactions take place. Outcomes of the research will improve conservation of marine temperate ecosystems of southern Australia by accurately accounting for large predators and through improved ecological modelling. This information will also be highly applicable to ecosystem-level management strategies of predator-mediated ecosystems worldwide, both terrestrial and marine.

### **TURTLES** *A tag for Shelly – SEA LIFE Trust - \$5,000*

Yet another sick turtle was rescued from Cabbage Tree Bay near Manly in January 2015. She was taken back to Manly SEA LIFE Sanctuary for rehabilitation. Rescuers affectionately nicknamed the turtle who was very lethargic, slow and covered in barnacles 'Shelly'.



join us for Shelly's release. They were absolutely blown away at being part of such a rare and awesome event.

And in the end it didn't really matter that Shelly had a tag, she's still, almost a year later, seen regularly at seemingly her favourite spot and has become a bit of an icon in Shelly Beach!

As Shelly was rid of her barnacles, she became more active and well on her way to recovery. X-ray and tests results showed she received a hip fracture but there were no signs of ingestion of foreign objects.

SEA LIFE Trust ANZ and Manly SEA LIFE Sanctuary ran a community fundraising campaign to get Shelly a satellite tag so we could continue to track Shelly's movements post release. Satellite tags cost \$3,500 plus \$100 per month for satellite time which typically lasts about 12 – 18 months.

The beauty of this particular release is that kids from our Ocean Youth pilot program (Zoe, Arya and Annabelle pic left) were able to



## PENGUINS *Penguin Cam under Manly Wharf – Manly Council - \$4,400*



As a result of recurring vandalism of Little penguin nesting sites under Manly Wharf, a known favourite spot of several resident penguins of Manly's critically endangered population, the Penguin Wardens approached the SEA LIFE Trust to try and find a solution. Such was the damage that 2 nearly hatched eggs were destroyed in the nests. Wardens themselves have been physically harassed by drunk partygoers.

As a result, the Wardens, Manly Council, SEA LIFE Trust and Manly SEA LIFE Sanctuary banded together to come up with Penguin Cam. Latest surveillance technology complete with heat sensors, provided by SurfIT, was installed under the wharf to detect the arrivals of the cute critters the minute they landed.

Papi Chulo at Manly Wharf is donating \$1 from each child meal to assist with Little Penguin conservation.

## OUR CAMPAIGNS

**SHARKS – *supporting non-lethal shark management policies in NSW*** A spate of shark incidents in NSW (mostly in Northern NSW) over the last 12 months has seen the focus on shark/human interactions ramp up significantly. SEA LIFE Trust has been working in the non-lethal shark mitigation space since its inception in 2006. Shark nets are fatal to a whole range of species including turtles, rays, dolphins, whales and non-target sharks. They are also an ineffective method to keep beachgoers safe from sharks; sharks are able to swim over, under and around the shark nets and often do, indicating that each time we go into the water sharks are about but there are very few interactions.

As a result of a meeting between NSW Premier Mike Baird and an alliance of organisations working in this space including SEA LIFE Trust, No Shark Cull, Sea Shepherd, Humane Society International and Australian Marine Conservation Society, \$100,000 was set aside to begin identifying which non-lethal shark mitigation strategies could be trialled in the very near future. Subsequently a Shark Summit was arranged by NSW DPI along with an independent review to identify what non-lethal solutions are being used around the world. Shark Spotters, a voluntary program formed in South Africa was deemed the most appropriate opportunity for immediate implementation along NSW's coasts.



“ I’m very supportive of looking at new technologies to keep our beaches safe. I will ask the Minister for Primary Industries to meet with Ms Connell (noNSWsharkcull) to look at options including the possibility of trialling new technologies on Sydney Beaches. ”

**Mike Baird** (7 November 2014)



Since September though, government talk has turned to Smart Drum lines; baited hooks that are attached to a GPS and signalling technology to let fisheries know that something has been caught. The idea is that once an animal has been caught, staff responds as soon as possible to let the animal off the hook and tow it out to sea, alive. This technology has been used in Reunion Islands with mixed results. More than 50% of the animals that have been caught have died, either on the lines, post-release or have been killed by staff having been deemed a threat to humans. In addition the majority of animals caught were not the target sharks. Drum lines are indiscriminate; in WA the majority of sharks killed were Tigers whereas it was Great whites implicated in each attack.

The alliance continues to work closely with the Premier to support the best outcomes for both beachgoers and marine life.

## EVENTS

### *Ocean Fundraising Gala – SEA LIFE Trust Melbourne*

In March 2015 the SEA LIFE Trust Melbourne team pulled off the event of the year. A black tie cocktail event was held in the stunning SEA LIFE Melbourne Aquarium with over 100 guests in attendance. Over \$16,000 was raised for Great white shark tagging research with CSIRO. A brilliant effort by the amazing SEA LIFE Trust Melbourne team!

### *Mission Ocean – SEA LIFE Trust Melbourne*

A screening of MSC’s Mission Ocean was held again in the stunning SEA LIFE Melbourne Aquarium. The short documentary tells the story of a tuna fisherman’s journey to sustainability and the importance of eco-labelling such as the Marine Stewardship Council.



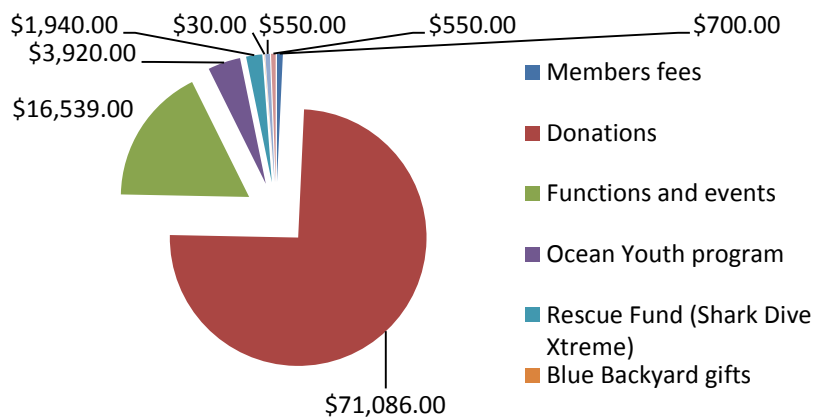
## FINANCIALS

### Auditor's Report

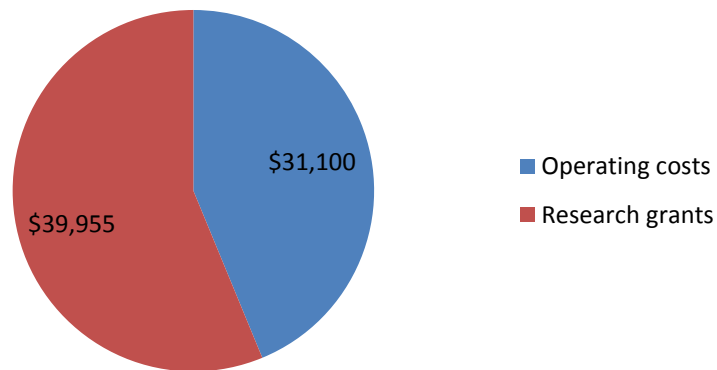
I have audited the Income Statement and Balance Sheet together with the Notes to the Financial Statements and confirm that in my opinion they give a true and fair view of the financial position and performance of SEA LIFE Trust Inc. for the year ended 30 June 2015.

Steve Dafnakis

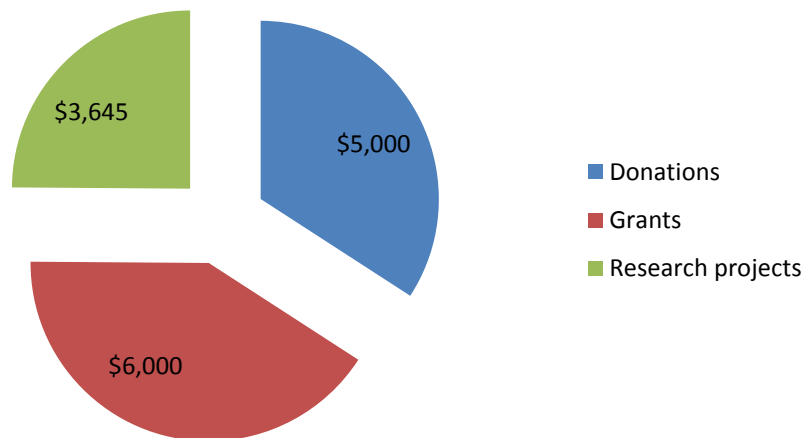
### General Fund Income



## General Fund Expenditure



## Public Fund Income & Expenditure



Public Fund expenditure was allocated to 2 projects:

1. Humpback dolphins in Moreton Bay
2. Grey Nurse sharks

## THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS



Once again, a **huge thank you** to all our animal adopters, SEA LIFE visitors who donate to our spinners, members & sponsors for enabling us to fund the work we do.

## Special thanks to:

**SEA LIFE Sydney Aquarium (Merlin Entertainments)** who cover the salary for one PTE employee which we would not be able to do much without.

**SEA LIFE Trust Executive Committee** for donating their precious time and energy to keep the organisation on track with budget and strategy.

**Catfish Creative** for waving her magic design wand over Ocean Youth and creating a stunning online marvel.

**Cheryl Laks and the SEA LIFE Trust Melbourne Team** for their awesome effort with the Ocean Fundraising Gala amongst many other things. Absolute legends.

**Alicia Lloyd, Sharnie Connell and Harriet Spark** for their time and effort driving events and campaigns in Manly.

**Paige Coleman, Peta Howard, Kasey Turner, Marty Garwood, Laura Wells, Cheryl Laks and Vicki Brown** for their incredible support and enthusiasm in taking on Ocean Youth and running a million miles with it.

**Steve Dafnakis** (auditor extraordinaire) for consistently making himself available to put our end of year accounts together.

And all our other volleys who drop in and out but provide a huge array of value to our organisation; whether it's attending a beach clean, posting for our social media, IT, governance, or design, it's all very valuable work that we as a one part-time equivalent operation can't always get to.

## How you can help

**Become a member** for just \$20 per year (the equivalent of 5 coffees or 2 beers brewed by bearded brewers). **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.sealifetrust.org.au](http://www.sealifetrust.org.au).

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

Claudette Rechterik



SLT ANZ Manager & President of SLT Executive Committee

