

DUGONG DEATH PROMPTS 'GO SLOW' MESSAGE IN MORETON BAY

Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism
The Honourable Lindy Nelson-Carr
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The death of a large, healthy male dugong due to boat strike near Moreton Bay's Macleay Island recently has prompted a reminder from Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) for boat skippers to "go slow for those below".

Environment Minister Lindy Nelson-Carr said that on Friday 16 February a member of the public reported a boat strike on a dugong after they felt the impact while travelling on a water-taxi and saw blood in the water.

A dugong that washed up two days later on Macleay Island with boat strike injuries was most likely the same animal.

Ms Nelson-Carr said since the beginning of 2000, at least 13 dugong had been killed in Moreton Bay after being hit by a boat, and most had been in the southern part of the bay.

"It is important for skippers to slow down in the shallower areas of the bay where the dugong feed on seagrass," she said.

"In 1997, QPWS introduced five 'go slow' areas in critical turtle and dugong habitat within Moreton Bay Marine Park.

"Rangers have been working with ferry operators to reduce boat strike impacts on dugong outside those 'go slow' areas."

QPWS District Manager Miles Yeates said the dugong had been tagged by a University of Queensland researcher in 2003 on Moreton Banks in the northern part of the bay, and had not been recorded again until it washed up dead on Macleay Island in the bay's south.

"Ironically, the carcass with its tag has provided us the first confirmed movement of a dugong from one part of the bay to another", Mr Yeates said.

"The dugong was healthy and eating seagrass at time of impact - we found fresh seagrass in its mouth."

Ms Nelson-Carr said the Moreton Bay Marine Park Zoning Plan review had begun and would examine the strategies currently in place to help conserve significant species such as dugong.

"Dugong are classed as vulnerable to extinction. The large herbivores can grow to 500kg and 3m long."

Members of the public can report marine wildlife injuries and deaths to the EPA hotline, 1300 130 372.

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