

DOWN UNDER WITH THE B.R.U.D.G

February – March 2026



CONTENTS

PG. 2-4

Committee Members information

PG. 5-8

Reports

PG. 9-17

Dive Reports

PG. 18-20

Equipment reports/Gear Maintenance/Safety Reports



EDITORS BLURB

I hope everyone has enjoyed the Christmas and New Years break, and continue to get some dives in during February and March.

As we kick off the new year, it's great to reconnect and share what's happening in our diving group.

This is my first edition as editor and is admittedly a test edition to see what is wanted and can be left out. Please excuse my clumsy formatting. Im no MS Word doc expert!!

With the uptake of WhatsApp dive reports, sent out on the day of the dive I will try focus on longer articles. (But try include these too)

It will have Committee News & Membership Updates – Updates from the team steering the club and learn about our plans for safer diving and general diving updates.

Diving Trips & Travel – Don't miss the incredible "Whale of a Time" story, a firsthand account of an unforgettable encounter with a Southern Right Whale.

Gear & Safety – Essential tips on equipment maintenance and safety practices.

Let's make 2026 one of safe, exciting, and memorable dives. Enjoy the read, and as always, we welcome your stories, photos, and feedback for future editions!

Safe and Happy Diving,

Peter Altis. (Your New) Magazine Editor

COMMITTEE MEMBERS & ROLES



President

Darren Bell

President – Darren Bell

Leads the committee, oversees club operations, and represents the group in official matters.

Vice President – Craig Norrish

Supports the President, steps in when needed, and assists with strategic planning.

Secretary – Leanne Gradey

Manages meeting minutes, correspondence, and maintains club records.

Treasurer & Public Officer – Mike McCarthy

Handles finances, budgeting, and ensures compliance with legal requirements.

Dive Coordinator – Cameron Grant

Organizes weekly dives and advises on the conditions. Single point of contact for dives.

Magazine Editor – Peter Altis

Produces the club newsletter.

New Membership Liaison and SDFV Rep – Julian Tagell

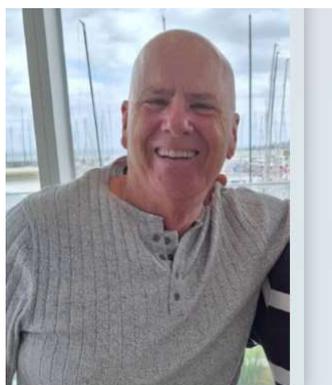
Acts as liaison with the Scuba Divers Federation of Victoria and speaks to potential new members.

Equipment Officer – Alan Conley

Maintains club equipment, oversees repairs, and manages gear inventory.

Safety Officer – Tom Dryer

Promotes safety standards, conducts briefings, and ensures compliance with safety protocols.



Vice President

Craig Norrish



Treasurer

Mike McCarthy



Club Liaison / New Member Officer

Julian Tagell



MEMBERSHIP

New Members Management

The committee continues to prioritize the effective management and integration of new members. Recent discussions and actions include:

- **Enquiry Handling:** Allan and Julian, are managing new member enquiries and conducting phone briefings.
- **Documentation:** All new members receive a comprehensive pack, including waiver, code of conduct, code of practice, and application forms.
- **Digital Engagement:** Website and social media channels are actively used for new member outreach.
- **Check-out Dives:** Arrangements are made to ensure new members complete a check-out dive.
- **Club Growth:** Strategies are being developed to manage club size and increase female participation.
- **Resource Updates:** The new member pack is under review for updates and will be circulated soon.
- **Inclusivity:** Skippers are encouraged to leave space for new members on dives to foster integration.



President
Darren Bell

PRESIDENTS REPORT

Welcome to 2026.

Firstly, it is with great sadness that we acknowledge the passing of long-standing member Neil Mackenzie, who suffered a stroke following a prolonged illness. On behalf of the Club, we extend our sincere condolences to Neil's family and friends.

I would like to formally congratulate and thank Leanne for stepping into the role of Secretary. Your contribution is greatly appreciated.

We also welcome Peter Altis as our new Magazine Editor—thank you, Peter, for taking on this important responsibility.

My thanks go to the entire committee for the significant work currently underway. The team has been diligently progressing updates to our compressor filling procedures, filling logbooks, and Nitrox filling processes. A new regulator has been installed on the Nitrox compressor to enhance safety during fills—thank you to Tom and Allan for your efforts.

In addition, the Club has purchased a second air analyser to support remote Nitrox testing. A special acknowledgement goes to Cameron, who is doing an excellent job as our Dive Coordinator for both weekday and weekend diving. From time to time, Cameron may request assistance from other members to support this role.

To assist with planning and safety, I encourage all boat owners and divers to communicate their diving intentions directly to Cameron or the nominated coordinator.

We look forward to improved weather conditions in the coming months so that we can all enjoy more time in the water doing what we love.

Wishing everyone happy and safe diving!

BRUDG President Darren Bell

TREASURERS REPORT – FEB 26

Bank Account:

Opening Balance: \$8,263.29

Deposits :

Membership Subscriptions 20.00

Wine Raffles 125.00

Interest Received 0.47

Total Deposits: \$145.47

Payments :

SDFV Annual Subscription 75.00

SDFV Insurance 1,384.11

Supagas Oxygen 27.00

Overdrawn Fee 15.00

Interest Paid 0.02

Total Payments: \$1,501.13

Closing Bank Balance : \$6,907.63

Prepayments & Accounts Payable:

Raja Ampat Deposits \$591.00

Monies owed to BRUDG:

\$ nil

Net Balance after prepayments/debts/debtors: \$6,316.63



Treasurer
Mike McCarthy

SAFETY REPORT

BRUDG Safety Officer Report January 2026 from Tom Dreyer

Risk Management

Roger J and Tom D have prepared a guidance document for “Medical Risk Minimization for BRUDG Divers”.

This document has been approved by the committee and was presented to the February club meeting: Medical Risk Minimization for BRUDG Divers Scenario Description Rev3

Risk 1 BRUDG diver suffers serious medical episode while diving and dies. There were at least two serious near miss incidents in 2025 Comments H Preliminary Risk Assessment by committee.

As a diver ages (From 45 years old and specifically after the mid sixty’s), specific addition health related risk factors may come into play which must be identified and managed. The BRUDG committee takes the clear view that the decision to dive and under what conditions, is the responsibility of each individual diver.

This note provides guidance to our divers on medically related risk mitigation measures, generally applicable to all divers but specific to older divers, to make their diving safer.

If this guidance (Medical issues and controls and diving controls) is comprehensively implemented, the BRUDG committee believes that the risk associated with this scenario is satisfactorily managed.

Medical Issues and Controls

1. Medical advice and pre-existing conditions
2. Calcium score and cardiac assessment
3. Diving medical
4. Exercise and physical fitness
5. Weight Control
6. Red flags

Diving Controls Diving risk mitigation measures for consideration – specifically for the older diver or diver with diving related health issues.

7. Dive with a trusted buddy rather than solo dive

8. Do one dive rather than two, on day out on the water
9. Dive in warmer rather than cold water. Consider an upgraded wet suit.
10. Dive shallow rather than deep
11. Do shorter dives with longer safety stops, rather than staying down as long as your air supply allows. Avoid dives that require deco stops
12. Consider diving on Nitrox, using a conservative or air dive setting on your computer
13. Use a conservative dive setting on your computer when diving on air
14. Communicate any relevant health related issues to your dive partners
15. Do not dive if you do not feel 100% well

Basic Oxygen Therapy Update

General. We will no longer use the term “Oxy Viva” for the first aid equipment that the club supplies. “Basic Oxygen Therapy Equipment” is the preferred term.

Training

BRUDG has developed a “Basic Oxygen Therapy Awareness Training” package which all BRUDG members are encouraged to attend. This Awareness training will be rolled out the February meeting. A suitable PADI course has also been identified which will provide appropriate formal skills to provide a range of oxygen therapies

Visit to Alfred Hyperbaric Unit

A visit to the Alfred Hyperbaric Unit was organized on 17 February. There has been a good response from club members, with about 15 -20 members attending.

Incident management

The incident reporting system is slowly getting into gear. There was only one incident registered last month – precautionary provision of oxygen therapy.

Some club members are reluctant to submit full incident reports. We may get a better uptake if the reports are anonymized by default, before being distributed to club members.

Also, we should consider reporting on WhatsApp



DIVERS REPORTS

From Craig Norrish. **A whale of a Story:**

I have a whale of a story that I recently experienced and thought you may get a kick from hearing the tale. It occurred in early October when I was out with Peter Beaumont on his boat. We were doing two dives that day, the first was a dive on the Hurricane, just off Rye and the second was a scallop dive in approximately the same location.

To start with, the day was a glorious day, bright sunshine, clear blue skies albeit a bit cold still at that time of year. The difference though was that on the day there was so much wildlife activity – Seals basking in the sun, dolphins and several large surface bait balls with birds' dive bombing them like darts.

On the second dive which was the scallop dive, Peter and I descended to about 13-15 mt and went our separate ways collecting scallops, while Peter's friend manned the boat. As soon as we descended, we both could hear whales singing but with none in sight, Peter and I were separated and doing our own thing. After about 20mins of collecting scallops, the real adventure started to unravel. Again, hearing whale sounds, I happened to look to my left and right there about 5 mt from me was a whale with the biggest eye ball I had ever seen just having a good old gawk at me. I would guess the whale was maybe 20-25 mt in length. My instant reaction was to be startled but then I felt in awe seeing this beautiful huge animal in my midst. Then to my surprise it started circling me at a walking speed, no anger or aggression felt

but a pure curiosity. It then swam off, I thought OK that's it, it's gone, and so I went back to collecting scallops.

Then after about 5 minutes, I happened to look straight ahead, and I could see a dark shadow that was getting bigger and bigger – I think the whale has returned. As it got closer it became clear that it was coming straight at me, again only at a slowish walking speed. Then I thought to myself "My god, it's going to run into me head on"! I put my arm out straight in front of me as it homed in on me and then it happened, my hand hit and placed itself on the whale's forehead. Its forehead had some barnacles on it, but I more remember the lichen type growth that was covering it. I of course was then being pushed backwards underwater, which was fun in itself but not something I could keep doing. I turned my body to the left which caused me to slowly slide down the entire length of the whale's body from head to tail, all the while the front of my body and arms and hands were pressed up against him or her. As I came off the end of the tail, I was quite concerned in case he decided to swat me but that did not happen. He swam off and I made a quick retreat to the surface and join the boat.

While Peter did not have a close experience, he nevertheless had an experience. His hand reel started to jerk then with a whirr started to feed out and then stopped. He assumes that the whale may have tripped the line.

So that's my (our) whale story, one that I will never ever forget as the day I had a unique experience in getting up close and personal with a beautiful Southern Right Whale.

A Night Dive at Peppermint Grove on the Swan River Perth Feb 6th 2026

From Len Joyce:

I was fortunate enough to meet with Stephen Day from The Underwater Explorers Club of Western Australia (UECWA) at Peppermint Grove on the Swan River at 8:00pm for a shore dive.

I thought the viz was about zero when looking from shore but was actually about 1.5 meters at best when entering the water. Heaps of silt made any photography difficult as you can see the flash back is all the photos but nevertheless it was a great dive.

Conditions:

Viz: 1 to 1.5 meters

Water Temp: 24 deg C

Max Depth: 8 meters

Dive Time: 1 hour – used 70 bars

The purpose for the dive was to catch blue swimmer crabs and prawns. For me just to take some pics. Steve caught his quota easily but no prawns.

Crabs seen about 30 in number to 160 MM in size across the shell. Legal size is 127mm and 5 per person from the swan river and Coburn sound 10 per person elsewhere.

Flathead, many squire (juvenile snapper), small king george whiting and bream were about and one fantail leatherjacket. All in all, an interesting dive. Stay tuned for Lens Fish Facts



Steve's Sorrento Back Beach Dive report

16 February 2026. Boat SS Conley

Crew: Skipper Allan Conley, Gary Pahoff Coxswain

Graeme Little (Non-Diving Guest), Stephen Snow (reporter)

Met at Alan's place 6.45. Graeme is a keen bootee and fisherman and a friend of Alan's. Came along for the experience of a dive trip. Gary was there to skipper the boat to the best spots

Traffic down was easy. No roadworks of any consequence on the way. One stop for fuel.

Arrived Sorrento.8.05 am Met up with SS Balmer at the top carpark.

A quick launch and then out to the heads. Donned life jackets and left turn around the heads to first dive spot.

Dive 1 Sorrento back beach. Viz was poor. Maybe 2 meters. Swell about 1 meter. Very pleasant no surface. Waves Not so pleasant in the water. Allan was the master hunter and was successful. Depth touched 25 meters.

Dive 2. Sorrento Back beach. After a close to 2-hour surface interval, Gary sounded some excellent country and once again the master hunter (Allan) was successful Visibility maybe 2-meter, 15-meter depth. No surge to speak of. Beautiful day on the surface.



A quick motor over to SS Balmer to make sure all was in order, then back for a quick retrieve. Len Joyce was at the ramp, having spent the day out on his boat looking to spear tuna.

Back to Allan's place to sort out gear. Graeme Little no doubt had a good day- I certainly did!!!

Dive Report SS Balmer 17 Feb

After disappointing vis on Monday at Sorrento, Rohan Cleary, Yanni Tong and Julian Tagell launched at 7.30 from Flinders. The jetty rebuild equipment has consumed the whole beach other than a strip in front of the boat ramp, so no turning around or parking on the beach.

We were the only boat out.

The northerly was howling, but we rounded west head and dived in the relative shelter of the blow holes. Vis was reasonable at 10+ meters. Country was nice, and we picked up a swag of crays.



We did keep an eye out for sweep, but saw none of size.

There was some concern about Yanni due to un BRUDG like behavior, she follows instructions OMG. Julian and Rohan were just confused by the concept. We were back at the beach at 1pm, before the change hit. Perfect.

A good day all round.

Dive Report Sunday 1st March- Sorrento

By Peter Altis

The weather and swell looked good for Sunday so the boat diving was on with the Nepean Back beaches preferred by several boat owners. I went out with Steve Snow, Darren Bell, Alan Connelly (pictured near ??) and Gary Pahoff as skipper.

Dive 1: Off from Portsea Back Beach.

Depth: ~20m. Vis: About a foggy 8m with lots of weedy bommies and small ledges. Bottom Time: About 30 to 35mins. Temp: 18 – 19 degrees.

Fish were plentiful and a few nice green lip abalone were taken but no sign of any crayfish. All divers had a nice dive but were a “little disappointed” in not even seeing any crays or larger fish.

Dive 2: Closer in to shore but generally the same location:

Depth: 13m. Bottom had more sand with less kelp and weed but fantastic small caves, ledges and overhangs. Once again everyone had a nice comfortable dive with Garry picking us up. Darren speared a bag of Sweep and saw one lonely undersized cray.

Give the seas were even flatter than when we first dived in the morning, we decided to take a look in the Cheviot Beach area/platforms, almost impossible to get in and out of unless the conditions are ideal. Steve and Alan went in for quick look given they had ½ a tank each and were keen to see what lay in the ledges and caves. Unfortunately, nothing to see so it was Alans turn to bag a few Sweep.



Alan after a quick dip near Cheviot Beach

Dive Report Sunday 1st March- Flinders

By Alan Balmer

Glen, Greg, Houman and AB arrived at Flinders for 8.30 launch.

The car park was packed with shore divers; Ocean Divers dive club were having their annual pier clean-up day.

Only 3 other boats, the jetty works may be keeping other boats away.

An easy launch at high tide and an easy run to the Schanck with low swell and wind on our back.

Conditions at bushrangers were perfect.

It was Hou's first dive since early last year, and like riding a bike, it was like he never had a break!

2 productive dives each and a trip home before the rain made for a great day.



January 2025 trip to Wilson's Prom and Deal Island on the Engarde yacht.

Written by Hilary Ingram. Duration 12 days Late January 2026 to early February 2026.

Captain Roger Johnson and 3 crew that included BRUDG members Craig Starrit and Hilary Ingram.

I was fortunate to receive an invitation to join Roger, Craig Starrit and Alistair for a sailing trip ideally to Deal Island in Bass Strait (also known as the Kent Group). We took 7 tanks, so planned to get some diving ideally at Deal Island. The first day was 45C and a stinker in Melbourne, but much cooler on the water whilst we travelled from Sandringham to Portsea, a few Banjo Sharks were caught and one pinkie snapper. The next day we sailed down to Cowes at Phillip Island, Craig landed 3 x 40cm whiting and a fighting Eagle Ray, that took some time to land. The next day we sailed down to Derby Bay at Wilson's Prom just passed Shellback Island, some challenging conditions with winds up to 30 knots were encountered. Day 4 we hooked up with 2 large tuna off Wilson's Prom, unfortunately the tuna took our skirts (lures) and broke the lines.

As we sailed further South the wind and the sea continued to build and Roger made the call to tactically withdraw and we returned for a day of rest in the magnificently impressive Oberon Bay.

Day 5 we planned to depart at first light and motored to Deal Island, against the wind and in fog shrouded comparatively poor conditions. When we arrived, the seas were glassy like a millpond and we climbed ashore and walked up the hill on Deal Island to admire the Deal Island museum and artifacts. It's a rich and fascinating story and worth the walk, the few houses are used by caretaker Deal Island volunteers, who are normally quite chatty but weren't evident on our trip. The surrounding paddock was full of virtually tame wallabies and Cape Barren Geese.

Day 6 was a high wind day and we just rested in Garden Cove and stayed mainly in our cabin. Day 7 was fishing and diving with a bountiful supply of Wrasse being under the boat (a few were saved for shark bait). Craig caught a very large Calamari squid which we ate that night. I dived near a magnificent small rock that protruded from the sea surrounded by deep water, my dive was to 28M with vis of 10 to 15M, I was followed by about five hundred Barber Perch and 50 sweep, many close to 2KG (big thumpers) a Port Jackson Shark also cruised past. For me it was a very memorable dive comparable and quite similar to the Pinnacle off Phillip Island "in my opinion". I didn't think you can spear fish on this side of Deal and I wouldn't have anyway (just my preference in such an isolated location). Of concern to me was the large levels of Sea Urchin Barrens, where all that was in the ledgers or caves were sea barrens, however some large Abalone were still evident and a few smallish crays.

Craig and Roger dived in shallower water, near where a shark had previously been sighted on a prior trip (source Roger) and noted similar Sea Urchin Barrens in shallower water, key observations from that dive were from Craig an abundance of sea urchin Barren's and Roger included a thorough inspection of his boats hull, chain and anchor to ensure all was in order. That afternoon we sailed to the lighthouse to get phone reception for Roger to get fresh marine weather reports to plan our return trip to the mainland. We then sailed to Winter Cove on Deal Island as the wind direction was changing. That night we put out our lines for Gummy Shark and were poorly rewarded with a couple of Australian Swell sharks, which were safely returned to the water.

The wind picked up against forecast at Deal Island, so we cancelled our planned early morning dive and headed back to Wilson's Prom. Sailing conditions were perfect, with Roger achieved 10 knots under sail. It was a clear day and initially there were rolling waves of Shearwaters skimming just above the waves and at times large pods of Common Dolphins. Visibility was excellent and we could easily see Hogans Island Group and other assorted islands. We sailed down to Refuge Cove as neither Craig nor myself had been there.

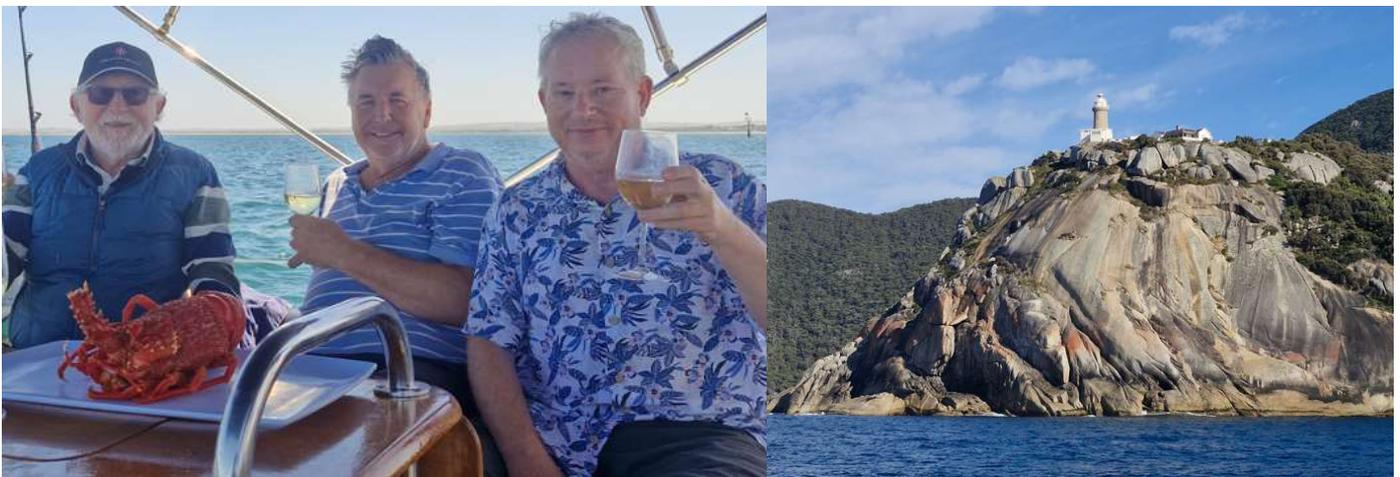
Refuge Cove was a fisherman and luxury boat retreat with all the fisherman actively fishing all around us. Craig reported the local boats fishing for squid all through the night under blue lights.

Once we were somewhere we could fish Craig and I hooked into Port Jackson sharks (not gummies once again). We then motored and sailed from Refuge Cove and up past Tidal River, vainly hoping to hook into the tuna we missed a week before. We stopped to fish in Walkerville and caught Pinkies, flathead and more Port Jackson sharks. Our final stop for the day was South Walkerville, where Roger had an almighty battle on his 8lb line with a large Ray. The battle ran for an hour and three quarters, the beast circumnavigated the boat once and tried numerous times to again circumnavigate the boat, with Roger running up and down the yacht, with his support crew carrying his beers for him (to prevent dehydration). Roger has nearly spooled a number of times, but fought back to regain his line each time. After an hour of fighting, Roger had to have his ablutions break, but was back in an instant to continue the battle. Our dinner had to be delayed as the battle continued, just before dinner was served the mighty beast again pushed to the limits of Roger's line and aided by a partial snag, broke free. We could not believe the strength and endurance of the ray during the battle, although we only sighted once a neighboring surfer mentioned there were 4-foot-wide rays close to the boat, which we suspect was a possible suspect.

The next morning involved a deep discussion in the morning on Safety issues that Tom had raised with Rodger and the crew all provided their opinion to assist. Thereafter we sailed and motored to Arched Rock, with tanks drawn out from storage to allow diving if conditions were suitable, conditions sadly weren't suitable. Our keenest diver completed a dive in deeper water 21 meters at Cape Shank, the diver had a line with a buoy to ensure he wasn't lost in the bumpy conditions, conditions below the surface were poor with 2–3-meter visibility and significant swell surge at 21 meters, but we were well rewarded with a cray and two sweep. Once the boat was in Port Phillip Bay in calmer sea conditions, we cooked and consumed the cray and also whiting and snapper we had recently caught.

It was a great initiation for a new sailor and the general feedback was it was a very pleasant, trip with good company, mild weather and very limited occasional higher winds.

H. Ingram



John, Craig and Hilary, Toasting a great day out.

EQUIPMENT & SAFETY INFORMATION

Tank identification

Registration by club members has continued to be slow – only 20 members have their tanks registered, out of about 40 active divers. Please get your tank registered.

Compressor filling procedures

The draft filling procedure for the Nitrox compressor has been issued for review.

Hardware

Six oxygen tanks have been successfully pressure tested and are now good for the next 5 years. These tanks will be issued to boat owners to free up the next O2 tanks for testing.

Basic oxygen therapy equipment that the club supplies will be standardized – O2 tank, flow regulator, two masks and laminated DCI symptoms check list and first aid recommendations.

Actions for next month Issue draft filling procedures and log sheets for all compressors Tom Dreyer 10/02/26. Done

PLEASE READ THIS BOAT SAFETY TIP

“On a recent dive, an incident occurred that warrants bringing to all our attention for awareness.

While divers were submerged, the boat had the Skipper aboard and one other diver, both having completed their first dive. The Skipper was slowly motoring at approx. 2 kts above the dive location, going in and out of gear following the divers’ bubbles.

After putting the boat into neutral, the Skipper looked around over their shoulder to speak to the other diver and to their surprise the diver was not aboard, but was found to be located in the water at the rear of the boat, at the ladder next to the engine.

They said they were taking off their wetsuit. It is not known if the passenger was in that location in the water when the boat was in gear.

The dangerous nature of this action was explained to the passenger and to **not enter the water ever unless approved by the Skipper.**

This could have been a catastrophic situation and something that we can all learn from and be self-aware in our own responsibilities for everyone’s safety whilst aboard a vessel”

OTHER INTERESTING STUFF

Prom Diving - from Darren.

Parks Victoria's booking system for next spring opens on the 2nd of March. Is anyone interested in heading down to the Prom for the Melbourne Cup Weekend?

If you're keen, let me know so we can organise campsites before everything books out.

Sea Food Festival

September 25th - 27th 2026 will see the return of the Wild Harvest Seafood Festival to Mallacoota once again. Now in its fourth round this much-loved event promises to be better than ever. So, get your calendars out and start planning!

We're talking delicious seafood, family fun, adventure and an all-round good time.

Crowd favourites like the Wild Harvest Market and family fishing clinics will once again feature in the 3-day program but be sure to keep your eyes peeled for new and exciting events making their first appearance.

Adreno has a "Summer Send Off Sale of 50% Sale

Lens Fish Facts - Dhu Fish (Native to Western Australia)



Facts: Dhu fish (demersal species) are a prized commercial and recreational Western Australia fish.

Life expectancy 40 years.

Grows to 20 Kg – greater than 85 cm.

Mature females release up to 8 million floating eggs that develop into floating larvae.

Spawning in winter to early spring at depths around 40- 50 meters.

Large males tend towards shallower water and are easily over fished. Also being aggregate spawners makes them an easy commercial target species.

Being a demersal species along with pink snapper, red emperor, bald chin groper etc the following recent demersal fish regulation changes have been implemented.

Kalbarri to Augusta.

As of Jan 1 2026, recreational boat fishing for demersal species is closed until the spring of 2027. Land based fishing is still allowed but no spearfishing.

Commercial fishing in this region is permanently closed.

Pilbara and Kimberly Regions.

In other regions there is a 50 percent reduction in catch.

The End