



26 September 2020

Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment

Macquarie Harbour whale stranding update

Marine conservation experts and trained volunteers have released 108 long-finned pilot whales outside the heads at Macquarie Harbour following the mass stranding on Tasmania's west coast.

Marine Conservation Program wildlife biologist Dr Kris Carlyon said this fantastic outcome was achieved through the hard work of the rescue team over the past five days.

"We only had one whale restrand overnight, which is a good result given 20 whales were released yesterday," Dr Carlyon said.

It is believed there are no live whales remaining in the Harbour.

Incident Controller and Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) manager Rob Buck said today the team is concentrating on preparing the deceased whales closest to the Strahan township for disposal during Sunday's predicted better weather.

"Yesterday, 15 whales were buried at sea in a trial to determine the success of this disposal method," Mr Buck said.

"Collection and disposal is being undertaken with the assistance of aquaculture companies whose equipment and expertise on the harbour is essential for a timely and effective outcome."

Removal of all the whale carcasses will take a number of days and is dependent on wind, tide and current conditions.

Mr Buck said as activities start to shift towards recovering carcasses, members of the public are asked to keep the immediate area free so the response team members can move around safely.

"We know it's hard for people to watch from afar and thank the community for allowing our teams to focus on the critical work required for the response," Mr Buck said.

With today marking the start of the school holidays, those wanting to take their boat on the harbour are asked to use the boat ramp in Strahan while the Macquarie Heads boat ramp is closed as the operation is undertaken.

“Our aim is to re-open the Macquarie Heads boat ramp as soon as practically possible,” Mr Buck said.

It is possible whales will be found in other areas around Macquarie Harbour in coming days. Please report any sightings to the Whale Hotline on 0427 WHALES.

For more information about the whale stranding visit the DPIPWE Marine Conservation Program Facebook page and the DPIPWE website: <https://dpiuwe.tas.gov.au/whale-stranding>

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