Marine conservation experts from the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE) have confirmed that about 25 pilot whales have been rescued so far in relation to the mass stranding on Tasmania’s west coast.

An estimated 270 pilot whales are believed to have stranded at Strahan, with over 200 stranded on a sandbar off the Macquarie Heads boat ramp and around 30 stranded at Ocean Beach.

Originally there were a total of three sites that the whales were stranded at, however overnight due to a high tide, the group near the Macquarie Heads boat ramp and another several hundred metres away on a separate sandbar formed into one group.

Incident Controller and PWS regional manager Nic Deka said the numbers of animals rescued is hoped to increase by the end of the day.

“We have escorted about 25 pilot whales out the channel and out to sea,” Mr Deka said.

“These whales from the main site at Macquarie Heads boat ramp have been escorted out the channel with the use of a boat and a sling, where they were released near Pilot Bay which is outside the heads in the southern ocean.

“Outside the heads on Ocean Beach about 23 whales have died at the site, and two were found alive. Those two whales have been triaged and released.”

“The whales we have been rescuing have been closest to the deeper water of the channel and that’s where most of the efforts has been focussed,” Mr Deka said.

“As an estimate, we think about a third of the whales have perished. However, we will be trying to do a more detailed assessment tomorrow using infrared camera imagery from the air.”
Marine and Conservation Program wildlife biologist Dr Kris Carlyon said their focus today has been on tallying the survivors, rather those animals that have perished.

“There’s an element of reality too. This is such a complex event that any whale we save we are considering a real win. We are focussing on having as many survivors as we can,” Dr Carlyon said.

“Inevitably the longer the event goes on the higher the likelihood that the animals will perish if they can’t be released,” Mr Deka said.

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

**Contact:** Kirsty Reid (in Strahan) M: 0436 922 636

Or

Michelle Nichols (in Hobart) M: 0427 410 403 (in Hobart)