DR KATE ROBB:  
Victoria has such an incredible diversity of marine mammals. Many people are surprised to learn that there's an estimated 35 different species of marine mammals that inhabit Victoria's coastlines including dolphins, whales and seals. Here at the Marine Mammal Foundation, we undertake world leading applied research on Victoria's marine mammals. Excitingly, in 2011, I discovered a brand-new dolphin species right here in Victorian waters. The Burrunan Dolphin is only found in Southern and South Eastern Australia. Being here in Victoria, along the East Coast of Tasmania, South Australia and recent genetic confirmation of the species in Esperance in Western Australia. The Burrunan Dolphin has a stubby or short little nose or rostrum, are about 2.5 metres in length. Have a curved dorsal fin and are darker grey on top, mid-grey in the middle of their body and the white underside that extends over the eye. Our research here at the Marine Mammal Foundation is the only one of its kind, assessing the population status, the distribution and the threatening processes that are impacting on this very small population. Here in Victoria, we know of two resident populations, Port Phillip Bay and the Gippsland Lakes. Our dedicated team of researchers undertake seasonal surveys across all these locations. We use the dolphin's dorsal fin to identify each and every dolphin within our populations. Using the unique series of nicks and notches and secondary markings on the fin and the body, we can identify who is who, who our mums are, who is hanging out where and with whom. We do have other amazing marine mammal species to keep a lookout for across our entire coastline, zippy little Common Dolphins usually an Oceanic species, can be found all across Victoria. With some Common Dolphins who even call Port Phillip Bay home. The Common Dolphins are round about 2 metres in length, have a long, slender rostrum and a tri-colouration pattern with the distinct cream patch on the side. The very charismatic and playful Australian Fur Seal can often be seen across Victoria, chasing fish or hauled out on rocks, sandy beaches or man-made structures. Fur seals have little external ears and can walk on land using their fore flippers, and males can grow up to 360 kilos. Whales can also be seen seasonally, so watch out for whale blows from about June to October, on their annual migration northward past Victoria's coastline.

MATT MONTEMURRO:  
Unfortunately, many species of these species are under threat and classified as endangered, while in the case of the Burrunan Dolphin, critically endangered. Litter, marine debris, pollution and negligent behaviours can unfortunately negatively the health of marine environments and the marine mammals who call it home. While out in the field, MMF researchers often remove litter and marine debris directly from our marine environments and unfortunately, see animals such as seals and sea birds suffering entanglements from plastics or discarded fishing line. When out boating, there are important regulations which need to be followed. Powered and unpowered vessels such as recreational boats, stand-up paddleboards and kayaks are not allowed to approach dolphins within 100 metres, and whales within 200 metres. And jet-skis must remain 300 metres from both dolphins and whales. There are also many other positive actions we can undertake to help protect and conserve our amazing marine environment. Simple sustainable choices, such as using alternative to single-use plastic and disposing of our waste correctly, can ensure we minimise the impact of litter. The Coastcare Summer by the Sea program is a fantastic initiative to provide opportunities for community members to get out and about and enjoy the wonders of Victoria's marine environments. And getting involved in a whole range of activities to help protect, conserve and rehabilitate our marine and coastal environments. If you're interested in volunteering, either with the Marine Mammal Foundation or your local environmental group, please contact your local Coastcare facilitator.

DR KATE ROBB:  
We are so incredibly lucky to have such diversity in our marine environments. We can all do simple and important things to make sure we're caring for our Burrunan Dolphins and the other marine mammals each and every day. If you would like to support the Marine Mammal Foundation and the work we do, please visit marinemammal.org.au Together, we can ensure what we do today, creates a better tomorrow.