



The best whale watching experience happens when the whale watches you.

Special management declarations: protecting whales such as Migaloo

Special management declarations give marine mammals additional protection and provide a flexible and streamlined management tool for responding quickly to situations where marine mammals are under threat.

A permanent declaration has already been put in place for the white whale known as Migaloo and any humpback whales that are greater than 90% white in colour. **For these whales, the no approach zone extends to 500 metres and aircraft must stay beyond a distance of 610 metres.**

Special management declarations can be made in different situations including when:

- an animal is at risk of stranding
- a calf becomes separated from a mother or group
- a female marine mammal is about to, or has recently, given birth
- dugongs move into an area when their usual seagrass feeding area has been destroyed by a natural disaster.

General boating regulations around marine mammals

A number of general rules are also in place to protect marine mammals. Please follow these rules:

- Never restrict the path of a marine mammal or cause it to change direction.
- Never drive a boat into a pod or herd of marine mammals causing it to divide into smaller groups.
- Do not deposit rubbish near a marine mammal.
- Do not make a sudden noise, or attempt to touch or feed a marine mammal.



Report any sick, injured or dead marine mammals or marine turtles by contacting the RSPCA on **1300 ANIMAL (1300 264 625)**.

Additional regulations protecting marine animals may apply in some areas within state and Commonwealth marine parks and other managed areas. Check local information when planning to go boating.

Share the water

#31165

All images within this brochure are courtesy of Tourism Queensland.

Each year thousands of boats take to Queensland's coastal waters creating opportunities to see whales, dolphins and dugongs. With more humpback whales migrating along the Queensland coast each year, and many boats travelling through the coastal habitats of dolphins and dugong, these viewing opportunities are becoming increasingly likely. Boat users need to follow a few simple rules that will allow them to share the water with these animals, and each other.

Give marine mammals space—share the water

Marine mammals are best protected by giving them space. This brochure explains how close you can come to whales, dolphins and dugongs; and, where necessary, how marine mammals and the areas they inhabit can be given extra protection.

While these rules are designed to give these animals the space and protection they need to live and behave naturally, they also help ensure that you get the most out of your experience of seeing these wild animals from a safe distance.

The best outcome for boat users and marine mammals will come from following these rules and 'sharing the water'—with boat users making room for whales, dolphins and dugongs, as well as other boats.

Approach distances for whales and dolphins

Approach distances reduce the risk of disturbing whales or dolphins. They apply to boats, prohibited vessels (e.g. jet skis and hovercraft), aircraft (including helicopters) and people in the water.

Approach distances for dugongs only apply where a special management declaration is made.

Approach distances are divided into 'caution zones' and 'no approach zones'.

Caution zones

The caution zone is an area surrounding a whale or dolphin in which boats cannot travel at speeds greater than 6 knots or must not create a wake. The caution zone extends out to 300 metres from a whale and for dolphins it extends 150 metres (see diagrams).

No approach zones

Within a caution zone there are areas designated as 'no approach' zones that boats cannot enter. These are the areas closest to an animal and directly in front of and behind an animal. For a whale, the no approach zone is 100 metres and extends 300 metres in front of and behind the animal. For dolphins the no approach zone is 50 metres and extends 150 metres in front of and behind the animal (see diagrams).

The '3-boat rule'

A boat cannot enter a caution zone if three boats are already present. If there are boats waiting to enter a caution zone, boats inside the zone should 'share the water' by moving away after they have had an opportunity to watch a whale or a dolphin.

When a marine mammal approaches a boat

If a dugong or a whale approaches a boat and the boat is within the caution zone, the boat must not operate at a speed more than 6 knots or at a speed that creates a wake. If a whale or a dugong approaches a boat and the boat is within the no approach zone, the boat must turn its engines off or disengage its gears, or withdraw from the no approach zone at a speed less than 6 knots and not create a wake.

If a dolphin enters a caution zone or a no approach zone, a moving boat can continue as long as any change to speed or direction is made gradually in a way that is unlikely to disturb the dolphin, particularly if it is bow riding. The boat may even slow down or stop to watch the dolphin providing it does not disturb it.

When a marine mammal shows signs of disturbance

If a marine mammal shows signs of disturbance (e.g. rapid diving, changing direction erratically) the boat must withdraw beyond the caution zone at a speed that is not more than 6 knots and not create a wake.

Other no approach zones

Other specific no approach zones exist for the following:

- prohibited vessels (e.g. jet skis and hovercraft): not within 300 metres of a whale or a dolphin
- a person in or entering the water: not within 100 metres of a whale or 50 metres of a dolphin
- aircraft: not within 300 metres of a whale or dolphin
- helicopter: not within 500 metres of a whale or dolphin; no hovering above a marine mammal.

Approach distances for whale and dolphin calves

In the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and other Commonwealth waters, boats must not come within 300 metres of a whale with a calf or within 150 metres of a dolphin with a calf. If a calf appears, causing a boat to be within a no approach zone, the boat should stop with the engines turned off or gears disengaged, or the boat should withdraw at a slow constant speed.

