

And how it all began...

In the 1800's it was documented by explorers that the aborigines on Stradbroke and Moreton Island were being assisted in hunting for schooling fish by wild dolphins in Moreton Bay. More than 30 years ago lights were installed on the jetty and baitfish started to gather under these lights. During the 80's some guests fishing from the jetty reported that dolphins were eating fish thrown to them from the jetty. The frequent dolphin visitor was soon named Beauty. Fairly soon the resort staff and guests were regularly throwing her their discarded fish from the jetty and in April 1992 she took her first fish from a person's hand in the water. Her two calves (Bobo and Tinkerbell) and another female (Bess, most likely a dolphin from the same pod) and her calf (Rani) also began to hand feed in late 1992.

During the early years the resort managers became concerned that the poor quality fish being fed to the dolphins may cause harm and so they began to purchase fresh fish for the guests to use. As the managers didn't know enough about what the dolphins should eat and whether people could cause harm, a grant to the University of Queensland was provided by the resort to find out exactly what was required. Thus, in 1992, the Tangalooma Wild Dolphin Feeding Program was implemented.

Most of the dolphins that now visit the program have descended from the original Beauty and Bess. Unfortunately Beauty had developed a "Distal end rostrum infection" making her noticeably weaker. Students from the University of Queensland and SeaWorld veterinarians carried out observation on her worsening condition. However, on the 22nd December 1995 Beauty visited us along with her new calf Shadow for what was to be her last time. Four days later Shadow, only 14 months old, arrived to the Tangalooma program unaccompanied by her mother for her first time.

Each evening after sunset we are visibly reminded of what Beauty has given us. Both Tinkerbell and Shadow have since matured and are now mothers themselves. Tinkerbell gave birth to her first calf, Tangles, on the 20th September 2000, and more recently gave birth to her second calf on the 27th August 2004. Only ten days later Shadow gave birth for the first time, and we are very fortunate that both calves regularly join us alongside their mothers. All the dolphins that now attend the program are all in a healthy and active state, and observations are made on the attendees every night.

