



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Innovative company setting out to save the world's dolphins

A new Innovation Centre Sunshine Coast based company is working with fishermen in Australia and around the world in an effort to save the more than 300,000 dolphins and porpoises killed in commercial gill nets around the world annually.

Fumunda Marine has developed a state-of-the-art, acoustic deterrent device – called a pinger - that when immersed in water emits a signal that alerts porpoises and dolphins to the presence of commercial fishing gear.

Fumunda Marine director James Turner said dolphin and porpoise gill net by-catch was a worldwide problem that is largely preventable by correctly deploying Pingers.

“There are over 300,000 dolphins and porpoises lost in gill nets around the world each year and yet studies in the US and Europe have shown that pingers attached to gill nets can reduce dolphin and porpoise by-catch by up to 95% because the mammals were alerted to the presence of nets using their echo-location systems,” he said.

Mr Turner said while in some areas of Europe and the US the use of pingers was compulsory for large fishing vessels, he believed more and more fishermen would choose to use them because the costs of non-targeted species by-catch were expensive.

“Dolphin and porpoise by-catch can cause significant damage to the nets resulting in expensive repairs and lost fishing time. Depredation – whereby dolphins eat the intended catch, can also be reduced significantly using Pingers,” he said.

“There are other pingers on the market overseas but ours is unique. It has been designed by fishermen based on their precise understanding of the often harsh on board working conditions experienced at sea. Fumunda pingers emit a 10khz frequency at 132db every 4 seconds which over the past decade has proven to be the most effective pinger characteristics in reducing dolphin and porpoise by catch.

“It is also more durable and significantly smaller than many pingers on the market and includes a water contact switch so the pingers do not need to be individually switched on each time the net is deployed, saving fishermen valuable time. They are powered by a replaceable battery, which makes our pingers more cost-efficient, compared to others that require the whole pinger to be replaced when battery life is over. It also makes our Pingers more environmentally friendly,” Mr Turner said, especially as the discarded Pingers are virtually impossible to recycle.

Fumunda Marine is just the latest green-tech company to choose the Innovation Centre as its

Australian headquarters.

“We didn’t even consider any other location. The Innovation Centre allows us to access the university network as well as the excellent business development advice through the Centre’s Business Incubator,” Mr Turner said.

“The Innovation Centre offers all the professional benefits that you can normally only access in capital cities, and given the fact that this, like many businesses today, can be run from virtually anywhere, who wouldn’t want to work from a central location on the Sunshine Coast?”

Innovation Centre chief executive Colin Graham said Fumunda Marine had developed a smart and innovative product with a worldwide market.

“Theirs is exactly the sort of business we are aiming to assist,” Mr Graham said.

“The Innovation Centre is a University of the Sunshine Coast company dedicated to the development of the region’s economy.

The Innovation Centre offers competitive, state-of-the-art offices, with a great location close to the university and to the business and technology precinct to be developed across the road,” he said.

“Not only can companies access students from the university, they can locate themselves at what is becoming the ICT, Green Tech, creative and knowledge based hub of the Sunshine Coast.

Fumunda Marine is already talking to peak fishing bodies in Australia and overseas about how they can roll out their product.

“We are a commercial business modelled on a “social enterprise” philosophy meaning that we believe for profit companies must take responsibility for important environmental issues where appropriate. Clearly we see the potential loss of numerous dolphin and porpoise species, many of them endangered, as an important issue” Mr Turner said.

We work with scientists, universities and international fishing bodies around the world researching and developing new products.

“Fishermen simply don’t like to catch dolphins or porpoises in their nets and with about 1000 gill net fishing vessels currently operating in Australian waters we believe we can make a significant contribution to helping them achieve this. We are approaching several Australian groups at the moment with the hope of bringing broader attention to the problem of dolphin and porpoise by catch in Australia.

“We are also researching new applications for the technology including to protect seals, whales and dugong.”

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