

Dolphin lives for new day

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SIMON PENN

A RELAXING drive along Cable Beach for Spencer Lim Joon and Courtney Paige de Bruyn turned into a race against time to save a beached striped dolphin last week.

The pair were driving north along the beach around noon on November 23 when they came across the stranded dolphin.

"We were just driving up to Coconut Well when we saw what we thought was a fish at the edge of the water, about 5km north of the rocks, so we pulled up and saw this dolphin in great distress," Mr Lim Joon said.

He said the dolphin was out of the water and flapping its tail with the tide going out quickly.

They poured water over the dolphin and Mr Lim Joon was able to drag it back into the water.

He said once in the water the dolphin kept rolling onto its back so he had to hold it until it was able to stay upright by itself, talking to it the whole time in the hope of comforting it.

"I just had to hold it up so it could breathe ... I just wanted to save the poor thing," Mr Lim Joon said.

He then began swimming it through the water to revive it further but after releasing the dolphin it kept trying to swim back to shore so he had to keep guiding it to deeper water until it finally swam away.

They then waited on the beach to make sure it did not return, before driving up the beach in case it had come ashore somewhere else.

Mr Lim Joon said he and Ms de Bruyn felt privileged to have had the encounter with a wild dolphin.

"Hopefully the dolphin's

still alive to meet up with its pod," Mr Lim Joon said.

"I felt pretty good after that - it was an unbelievable feeling that didn't really sink in until later."

Department of Environment and Conservation senior wildlife officer and marine mammal incident specialist Doug Coughran said striped dolphins travelled the length of the WA coast, usually well offshore in pods of up to 1000 animals.

He said mass strandings had been recorded in the South West and single strandings elsewhere of sick animals.

Mr Coughran said from viewing photographs, the dolphin on Cable Beach may have been unwell as it showed blistering on parts of its body but did not appear to be suffering any loss of overall physical condition.

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