



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

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Shark Bait Kids hit the water

Twelve-year-old Jade Elliott, a MontroseAccess client, is making history as the first girl to participate in the Shark Bait Kids program. She is also one of only a handful of females in Australia who has Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD) – a muscle wastage condition usually found in males.

MontroseAccess physiotherapist Sue Nicklin devised the Shark Bait Kids program in 2008. The 10-week hydrotherapy program gives young MontroseAccess clients with DMD the unique opportunity to freely experience the wonders of the underwater world in a safe and therapeutic environment despite the progressive impairment of their mobility on the surface.

“In October, seven Shark Bait Kids will begin a hydrotherapy course at Brisbane Dive Academy, where they will learn the basics of swimming and breathing underwater,” Ms Nicklin said. “The program then culminates in a weekend camp where the kids experience a once in a lifetime opportunity – fully supervised dives in an artificial reef with marine life, swimming in front of their family and friends.”

Jade’s mum, Kate Elliott, said her daughter can’t wait to get in the water. “Jade has always enjoyed swimming, but she has never done anything like this before.

“Being part of the Shark Bait Kids means that Jade can do the exercises that help with her condition while still having fun with her friends,” said Mrs Elliott.

Ms Nicklin explained that the innovative program goes a long way to giving children with DMD confidence in and out of the water, and it increases their emotional and social wellbeing.

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“Children who are usually apprehensive about getting into the pool at the start of the program end up swimming alongside Leopard sharks and stingrays ten weeks later! It’s a life-changing experience for everyone involved,” she said.

The program is also designed to help with literacy and computer skills. The children write blogs about their adventures and share their tales with their friends through MontroseAccess’ website.

The funding for MontroseAccess’ Shark Bait Kids program (which is \$10,000) is reliant entirely on community and corporate generosity.

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PHOTO / INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITY:

Kate and Jade Elliot

MontroseAccess physiotherapist and project convenor, Sue Nicklin, with the Shark Bait Kids

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