



Australian Government

**Department of the Environment,
Water, Heritage and the Arts**

THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT MARINE MAMMAL CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

In December 2008, Minister Garrett announced funding of more than \$32 million over six-years for a comprehensive package of non-lethal whale research and other marine mammal conservation initiatives. This package is called the International Whaling and the Marine Mammal Conservation Initiatives Program and includes the following key elements:

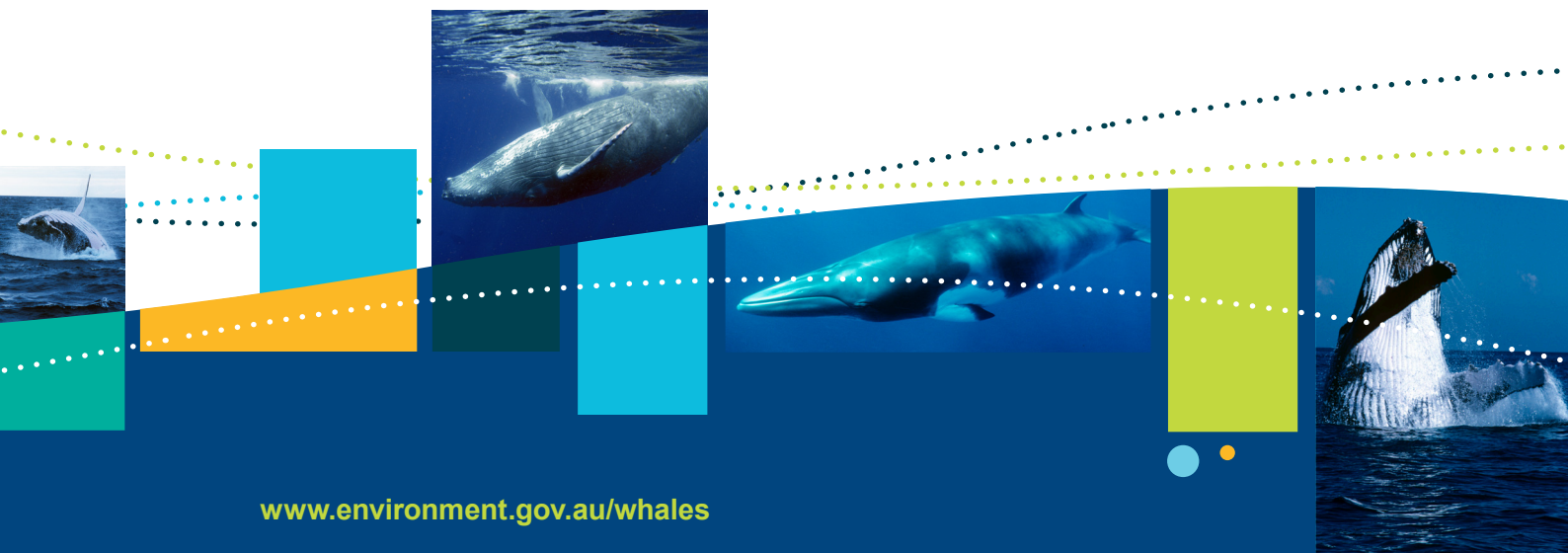
- \$14 million for the Southern Ocean Research Partnership
- \$14.6 million for the Hobart-based Australian Marine Mammal Centre (AMMC), and
- \$3 million for policy support for Australia's international whale conservation agenda.

Together, initiatives funded under the Southern Ocean Research Partnership and the AMMC will deliver valuable, non-lethal whale research on an international scale, demonstrating that whales do not need to be killed in the name of science. Some key aspects of the funding package are outlined below.

Southern Ocean Research Partnership

The Southern Ocean Research Partnership is the first truly international, circumpolar, multi-disciplinary research collaboration in the Southern Ocean with a primary focus on improving conservation outcomes for whales through non-lethal science.

Research projects under the Partnership have been developed to address the most pressing conservation science issues for whales in the Southern Ocean. The Partnership will provide high quality science that has been identified as a priority by the International Whaling Commission (IWC). Research under the Partnership will include research on blue, humpback, minke, fin and killer whales and how these species are utilising the Southern Ocean and recovering from whaling. Partnership projects will also address key issues associated with climate change, such as how whales utilise sea-ice habitats that are changing rapidly in some areas of Antarctica.



On 29 January 2010, the first Antarctic research expedition under the Southern Ocean Research Partnership was launched. A six-week, non-lethal whale research voyage to the Ross Sea was completed on 15 March 2010. The expedition used state-of-the-art, non-lethal research techniques such as biopsy sampling, satellite tracking, and acoustic and hydrographic surveys. Preliminary results will be presented to the Annual meeting of the IWC in June 2010.

Australian Marine Mammal Centre Grants Scheme

The AMMC provides grants to Australian researchers to improve the understanding, conservation and management of marine mammals in Australia.

To accommodate Australia's national and international obligations, and in recognition of the large-scale movements of many marine mammal species, the priorities of the grants focus on the whales, dolphins, seals, sea lions and dugongs of the Australasian region, including the waters of the Indian, Southern and South Pacific oceans.

The grants are provided to Australian researchers to improve the understanding, conservation and management of marine mammals in Australia. A major focus of the research is to identify and contribute to the effective management of cetacean-human interactions that may impact on cetaceans. To undertake this management, the Australian Government requires the most up-to-date information on:

- the status of the marine mammal species (e.g. population structure, distribution, abundance and trend)
- the nature and extent of the interaction, and
- options for, and likely effectiveness of, mitigation strategies.

Indo-Pacific Conservation Fund

The AMMC administers the Indo-Pacific Cetacean Research and Conservation Fund. The Fund aims to attract high-quality, innovative and relevant research projects that address priority research and conservation challenges of interest to the Australian Government, developing countries in the Indo-Pacific Region, and the cetacean research and conservation community more generally.

Conservation Management Plans

At the June 2009 annual meeting of the IWC, Australia submitted a proposal outlining the framework for the strategic use of Conservation Management Plans. The Plans have now been incorporated into the ongoing work plan of the Conservation Committee and the Commission of the IWC.

IWC Conservation Management Plans aim to protect whale populations from modern and emerging threats including: climate change, fisheries bycatch, pollution and ship strikes. They also aim to lead to improved conservation status for threatened whale populations through effective management recommendations. Australia will also support and encourage other nations to develop plans for critically endangered species such as the Western Pacific gray whale.

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