



# MEDIA RELEASE

**The Hon Peter Garrett MP**

*Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts*

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PG/32

1 March 2008

## **AUSTRALIA CHARTS NEW COURSE ON INTERNATIONAL WHALE CONSERVATION**

As part of the Government's unprecedented actions to stop commercial whaling, Australia will present a proposal to modernise the International Whaling Commission at this week's meeting in London.

Whales migrate thousands of kilometres each year, and their conservation is a global responsibility. The IWC is the primary body which sets international rules on whaling.

The Australian Government is resolutely opposed to commercial whaling by any country in whatever guise. We are committed to exploring every avenue to bring commercial whaling to an end, including through the IWC.

We believe it is time to bring the IWC into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, equipping the Commission to tackle contemporary challenges in whale conservation and management.

We propose three key changes:

- First, the IWC should put in place conservation plans that protect whales from the full range of contemporary threats – not only whaling, but also climate change, fisheries activities, marine pollution, habitat disturbance, and collisions with shipping.
- Second, the IWC should take a more coordinated and strategic approach to research and introduce new collaborative non-lethal research programs, beginning in the Southern Ocean.
- Third, the conduct of science through the IWC should be brought under the direct scrutiny and authority of the Commission, with agreed priorities and criteria for research and an end to individual countries unilaterally granting themselves permission to kill whales for science.

Australia's future proposal for the IWC recognises that the modern world sees whale-watching rather than whale hunting as the most sustainable, valuable and ethical 'use' of whales.

These reforms would build on the IWC's crucial global moratorium on commercial whaling and whale sanctuaries in the Indian and Southern Oceans – now breached by the 'scientific' loophole and objections.

No one country can achieve these reforms alone, and success will not be achieved overnight, but the Rudd Government will work hard to persuade all countries that the IWC should take these steps.

Australia puts forward these proposals in a spirit of common agreement, despite the acknowledged differences amongst IWC members.

The Rudd Government is committed to stopping commercial and so-called 'scientific' whaling permanently.

I plan to attend the annual meeting of the IWC in Chile in early June, where we will keep working on these issues, together with other anti-whaling countries

We will also continue to explore a range of avenues to bring commercial whaling to an end.