



***THE HON STEPHEN SMITH MP, MINISTER FOR  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
THE HON PETER GARRETT MP, MINISTER FOR THE  
ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE AND THE ARTS***

15 April 2008

**RETURN OF JAPANESE WHALING FLEET TO PORT**

The Australian Government is disappointed that 551 minke whales were killed during the 2007/08 summer, but both pleased and relieved that Japan did not proceed with the hunt of humpback or fin whales.

It remains Australia's firm view that there is no scientific justification for Japan's whale hunt in the Southern Ocean.

The Government's objective continues to be the cessation of whaling by Japan in the Southern Ocean.

The Government will continue to work to bring an end to whaling in the Southern Ocean, including through bilateral discussions with Japan and at the annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission in June this year.

As part of the Government's initiatives against whaling, the Oceanic Viking monitored the whaling fleet for several weeks in January and February.

The Oceanic Viking operated in a safe and non-confrontational manner while performing its monitoring and evidence gathering mission. It was in regular communication with the whaling fleet throughout.

Over the course of the whaling season, the Australian Government called repeatedly for all vessels in the Southern Ocean to exercise restraint and condemned all violent or illegal activities that could endanger safety or lives at sea.

Despite these calls, several incidents occurred which clearly could have led to injuries or fatalities.

The Australian Federal Police is continuing its enquiries into incidents involving the Sea Shepherd during this period. The Australian Government welcomes the continuing close cooperation between Japanese and Australian law enforcement authorities on these matters.