



MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Peter Garrett MP

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts

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ICELAND'S RESUMPTION OF WHALING - A RETROGRADE STEP

Reports on 20 May 2008 indicate that the Government of Iceland has gone back on its decision not to resume commercial whaling and has issued a unilateral quota for 40 minke whales to be killed in the North Atlantic this year.

Minister for the Environment, Peter Garrett condemned the decision.

"The Australian Government is extremely disappointed that Iceland will resume whaling, in defiance of the moratorium on commercial whaling and just one month before the countries of the world gather to discuss the future of whale conservation and management," Mr Garrett said.

"The practice of commercial whaling is out of step with the international community and out of touch with modern oceans management."

Iceland argues that it is entitled to hunt whales because when it resumed its membership of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) it lodged a reservation to the moratorium on commercial whaling. This reservation is not recognised by many countries.

"Whether it is under an objection or under the pretext of scientific research, commercial whaling only exists today by virtue of loopholes and opt-outs," said Mr Garrett.

"Australia opposes all forms of commercial whaling, and therefore I call upon Iceland to reverse its decision."

Iceland's whaling quota is not endorsed by the International Whaling Commission or its Scientific Committee. In August 2007, Iceland indicated it had decided not to issue further quotas for whaling, given the lack of demand for whale meat.

"I will be tabling constructive proposals at the June meeting of the IWC, and as I have stated in response to the whaling programs of Norway and Japan, the capacity for countries to 'opt-out' of the moratorium is a critical failure that needs to be addressed.

"The global moratorium is compromised so long as there are governments that award themselves unilateral whaling quotas," Mr Garrett said.

"In Australia we stopped whaling three decades ago. Now we have a whale watching industry which injects over \$300 million into the national economy through tourism every year."