



# MEDIA RELEASE

**The Hon Peter Garrett MP**

*Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts*

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## **NEW REPORT BOLSTERS AUSTRALIA'S WHALE CONSERVATION PLAN**

Environment Minister, Peter Garrett marked National Whales Day today by releasing a report confirming the value of whale conservation and highlighting threats to the world's whales.

Speaking at the International Fund for Animal Welfare's launch in Sydney, Mr Garrett said the progress report of the *Global Cetaceans Snapshot* provided important data to support the case for whale conservation that he would put to the International Whaling Commission meeting in Chile later this month.

"The Australian pro-conservation case that I will take to the IWC in just over a week's time needs to be based on the latest available evidence.

"The data in this report bolsters our argument that maintaining a moratorium on commercial whaling is only the first step towards ensuring the recovery of threatened whale species. We also need greater international cooperation on whale research, and this is one of the proposals we intend to prosecute at the IWC," Mr Garrett said.

"It also reminds us that there are still 14 threatened species of whales, and 44 species for which too little is known to assess their status.

"Thanks to conservation efforts, some species are recovering from industrial whaling – such as the humpback whales that grace Australia's coastlines – but the gains will be lost if we are complacent about the many threats that remain, including so-called 'scientific' whaling."

Mr Garrett welcomed the report's findings of the socio-economic benefits of live whales, particularly whale watching, which has grown hugely over recent years.

"The report has found that whale watching in high income countries alone has attracted 100 million participants to date and forecasts this to increase by 10 million people a year.

"Whale-watching is a sustainable and growing industry, providing a sound economic argument for preserving whales and dolphins in their natural environments."

Mr Garrett said he would present the preliminary findings from the report to the IWC meeting starting in Santiago, Chile on 23 June.

"As well as our strong anti-whaling campaign, we will also lead the pro-conservation movement by giving the IWC a central role in improving the conservation status of whales across the world," Mr Garrett said.

"The evidence is in our favour. We now need to convince those who are trapped in the past to embrace a new, modern future for the IWC."

The *Global Cetacean Snapshot* progress report is available at <http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/publications/cetacean-snapshot.html>