



MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Peter Garrett MP

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts

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MINISTER DEPARTS FOR MILESTONE IWC MEETING

The 60th meeting of the International Whaling Commission represented an historic opportunity to reform the organisation but progress towards Australia's objectives may take many years, Environment Minister, Peter Garrett said today.

Speaking at Sydney Airport as he prepared to fly to Chile to lead the Australian delegation, Mr Garrett said he expected tense debate but hoped that Australia's positive proposal for reforming the organisation would be given a fair hearing.

"This meeting of the IWC is an opportunity for the international community to embrace a conservation-focused agenda for our world's depleted whale populations," Mr Garrett said.

"What I will be emphasising is Australia's clear views on opposing the killing of whales in the Southern Ocean in the name of science and advocating a well researched proposal to modernise the IWC by introducing conservation management plans for whales, developing collaborative research partnerships and bringing about an end to so-called 'scientific' whaling.

"Australia is a prominent member of the IWC, but we are one of more than 70 countries represented at the meetings and each has an equal say. I am encouraged by early responses to our initiatives and we go to Chile fully committed to seeing our proposals form part of the IWC agenda in the future.

"The IWC can be a difficult forum and history tells us that achieving our goals should not be taken for granted, with countries split into pro- and anti-whaling camps and a ¾ majority vote required to effect a binding decision.

"I am optimistic that we will make genuine progress, which is underpinned by real science and evidence, such as that contained in the *Global Cetacean Snapshot*, which I launched last weekend."

Mr Garrett said he was pleased that the Government was delivering its policy commitments on whale conservation, including:

- executing the first international air and sea monitoring of the 'scientific' whaling fleet in the remote Southern Ocean;
- exploring avenues for international legal action against scientific whaling;
- focused diplomatic engagement with governments involved in whaling, including Japan and Iceland; and
- proposing reform measures to move the IWC towards a conservation-focused future.

"The Government is committed to meeting its policy commitments on whales and reform in the IWC is a vital component," Mr Garrett said.

The *Global Cetacean Snapshot* can be downloaded at:

www.environment.gov.au/coasts/publications/cetacean-snapshot.html

The full Australian Government reform proposal *Whale Conservation and Management: A Future for the IWC* can be downloaded at:

www.environment.gov.au/coasts/publications/iwc-future-paper.html

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