



MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Peter Garrett MP

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts

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RESEARCH PROPOSAL RECEIVES WIDE SUPPORT AT IWC

Australia's major reform proposals for modernising the International Whaling Commission have achieved overwhelming support at today's International Whaling Commission meeting in Santiago, Chile.

Speaking at the Commission, Environment Minister, Peter Garrett said Australia had brought forward the most significant reform proposal for the Commission in its sixty year history, including the first proposal for a non-lethal regional whale research program in the Southern Ocean.

"This new Australian-led research partnership will provide the world with a non-lethal approach to gathering scientific information on whale populations in the Southern Ocean, helping improve our understanding of whales and cetaceans and enhancing our approach to their conservation and management.

"This pioneering research partnership proposal received strong support in the Commission, which was particularly pleasing. With no voices raised against the proposal the United States, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Argentina, Panama, Mexico, Brazil, France, Spain, Panama and South Africa and the host nation Chile all spoke in support, which augurs well for the program's success."

The Australian Government has committed approximately \$3.3 million to whale research over the next 12 months, including the recently announced \$1 million funding boost to the Hobart based Australian Marine Mammal Centre which is the only national research centre dedicated to the understanding and conservation of whales, dolphins, seals and dugongs.

"Australia has remained staunch in opposing lethal 'scientific' whaling in the Southern Ocean. This new collaborative approach offers a new way to conduct whale research based on rigorous scientific methodology, and I would urge nations, including Japan, to participate."

Mr Garrett said in addition to support for the new research partnership Australia's further proposal for fundamental reform of the Commission is to be discussed at a newly established working group agreed at the Santiago meeting.

"Australia will also put forward a further proposal for the establishment of internationally agreed whale conservation management plans at the Commission tomorrow.

"Today, Australia made significant progress in setting a new path for the IWC and I look forward to continuing to vigorously pursuing that case over the coming days," Mr Garrett said.

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