



MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Peter Garrett MP

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts

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\$6.15 M TO KICK-START NON-LETHAL WHALE RESEARCH

The Rudd Labor Government will invest more than \$6 million in 2008-09 in non-lethal whale research and other critical, conservation programs as part of its ongoing strategy to end so-called 'scientific' whaling, Environment Minister Peter Garrett announced today.

Mr Garrett said the new funding, including \$4 million for whale research and scientific partnerships with other countries, was an unprecedented commitment to the anti-whaling cause.

"This funding will ramp up the first phase of the Government's internationally endorsed reform program for the International Whaling Commission, directed at changing it to a conservation-focused organisation.

"Australia does not believe that we need to kill whales to understand them. Modern day research uses genetic and molecular techniques, as well as satellite tags, acoustic methods and aerial surveys, rather than grenade-tipped harpoons," Mr Garrett said.

"The Australian led Southern Ocean Research Partnership is a ground-breaking new model for coordinated regional non-lethal whale research. This will be the first truly international, multi-disciplinary research collaboration that will focus on improving the conservation of whales."

Mr Garrett said an invitation to join the partnership was extended to all IWC member nations at the June meeting and would be made again at the next meeting of the IWC Small Working Group in early December 2008.

"I would urge all the nations of the IWC to join with us in this exciting new venture and Australia would warmly welcome the participation of Japan."

Mr Garrett said the research partnerships were a key component of Australia's reform proposal for the IWC, which also included the establishment of internationally-agreed conservation management plans and reform of the management of science at the IWC.

Other elements of the anti-whaling funding package include:

- investments in the latest non-lethal research technology;
- the identification and development of whale-watching opportunities as an alternative to lethal uses of whales in regions such as the Pacific; and
- a comprehensive, independent assessment of the scientific credibility of Japan's so-called 'scientific' whaling program.

"Today's investment is about debunking once and for all the need to kill whales in the name of science and providing capacity to support non-lethal research partnerships, as well as promoting the economic value of whale-watching."

Mr Garrett said the funding commitment came on top of the most comprehensive approach adopted by any Australian government to end commercial and so-called 'scientific' whaling.

“Since coming to office we have consistently maintained diplomatic pressure on Japan to end its Southern Ocean hunt, most recently appointing Mr Sandy Hollway as our Special Envoy on Whale Conservation.

“Australia remains resolute in its opposition to commercial and co-called ‘scientific’ whaling, and we continue to step up our diplomatic efforts. All options remain on the table, including the possibility of taking international legal action.”