



# THE HON PETER GARRETT AM MP

MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE AND THE ARTS

## TRANSCRIPT

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DOORSTOP, INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION

SANTIAGO, CHILE

MONDAY 23 JUNE 2008

**Issues:** IWC

**REPORTER:** The concern of some environment groups are that with the Chair discouraging voting, what this means for some countries by discouraging any constructive debate.

**MINISTER GARRETT:** Look, we expect to have constructive debate in the Commission because we have brought forward really positive proposals for change. We want this conservation of whales agenda to be seriously considered.

Past Commissions have been pretty acrimonious and if the Chair is proposing methods which might have less argument and more debate that happens in committees and don't necessarily go to the vote, then we would work cooperatively with that.

**REPORTER:** But with no votes, some suggest to a certain extent it is gagging debate.

**MINISTER:** In the past, votes have been taken and they have had no real effect. And I think what we want to see is really fair dinkum, constructive discussion about the issues that are right at the front of the agenda here – conservation of whales, looking at collaborative research with other countries, shutting down the loopholes on so called scientific whaling. Now if the chair wants to let the Commission have those discussions in a way which doesn't see resolutions coming onto the floor, well let's see how that operates for the next day or two and we'll work constructively and cooperatively with him.

**REPORTER:** So, you're not too concerned about no votes?

**MINISTER:** Well, not at this stage because I think that we're in the early part of the Commission and what we want to see is how the emerging debate actually operates through the Commission processes – the committees and so on. At the end of the day it is not about taking votes onto the floor which, frankly, don't bind any countries to do anything. It is about charting a new course for conservation, having a cooperative approach to the Commission, and in Australia's case, because we've brought forward major proposals for reform, ensuring that there is good discussion about those proposals amongst all countries.

**ENDS**