



# MEDIA RELEASE

**The Hon Peter Garrett MP**

*Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts*

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## GLOBAL CETACEAN SUMMARY REPORT

Environment Minister Peter Garrett today released the *Global Cetacean Summary Report* ahead of the 61<sup>st</sup> International Whaling Commission meeting in Portugal next week at which Australia's will continue its strong leadership in the push to bring an end to so-called 'scientific' whaling.

Mr Garrett said the report found that cetaceans – whales, dolphins and porpoises – are increasingly threatened by human activities including hunting, habitat degradation and climate change impacts.

“What this report shows is that while some species and populations have started to recover, many continue to be threatened, with the risk some could be driven to extinction in the near future,” Mr Garrett said.

The report brings together all available global data to identify 'hot spot' areas that provide habitats for threatened species. These 'hot spots' are found in the oceans around each of the world's continents.

The report also highlights the need for more scientific information on cetacean species. There is inadequate information on distribution and abundance to assess the risk of extinction for half of all cetacean species.

“The release of this report further strengthens Australia's drive to end so-called 'scientific' whaling. Future research should use non-lethal methods and be based on rigorous science,” Mr Garrett said.

“We are demonstrating to the world just how this can be achieved through the Southern Ocean Research Partnership, which is the first truly international, multidisciplinary non-lethal research collaboration focusing on improving the conservation of whales.

“Just yesterday, Australia and New Zealand announced that as part of that partnership, New Zealand will send the R/V Tangaroa to Antarctic waters for six weeks of non-lethal research in early 2010.

“The world has changed dramatically in the 60 years since the original signing of the Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, and it is time for the IWC to catch up. This will only be achieved through modernisation of the IWC and Australia is leading the charge for this reform.

“The IWC has had decades of difficulty in resolving these issues. We won't see a completed reform process at this meeting of the Commission, but I am determined to advance Australia's conservation goals, and most urgently, achieving progress towards addressing 'scientific' whaling.

“Australia welcomes the recent comments by the Obama Administration about reforming the Commission and the identification of so-called 'scientific' whaling as the critical issue in

need of attention. And we welcome the very strong positions taken by our friends in the European Union and throughout Latin America.

“I will go to the IWC committed to working with like-minded nations in what I am sure will be a continuing tough negotiation, but one that Australia believes is critical to transform the Commission into a modern, conservation-focused organisation, securing long-term protection for the world’s whales.”

The report can be found here:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/species/cetaceans/index.html>