



## Conservation groups call on Australian Government not to compromise over whales

Sydney, 19<sup>th</sup> February 2010

Ahead of further talks on the future of the International Whaling Commission (IWC), conservation groups are warning the Australian Government not to compromise its strong anti-whaling position.

In early March, a meeting will be held amongst some IWC member countries in Florida to try to broker a compromise between pro and anti whaling countries which would then be put forward for adoption at this year's IWC meeting in Morocco in June. Conservation groups are alarmed by the compromises believed to be under discussion.

This meeting follows closed-door negotiations that have been held between a smaller group of countries including Australia. A report on the negotiations is expected on Tuesday.

Rumours abound of a compromise being drawn up that would legitimise the loophole for scientific whaling and allow new commercial whaling operations to open up in the coastal waters of pro-whaling nations, something that is currently prohibited under the global moratorium on commercial whaling.

For the past 30 years, Australians have been able to rely on our Government to be a strong defender of the global moratorium and a staunch opponent of ongoing commercial whaling operations by countries using provisions to opt out of IWC decisions. The groups have also strongly supported the Rudd Government's recent initiatives for non-lethal scientific research and to invest heavily in the conservation work of the IWC. This, the groups believe, is where the future of the IWC lies.

Greenpeace, Humane Society International, International Fund for Animal Welfare, Project Jonah Australia, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, World Society for Protection of Animals and the Australian Marine Conservation Society have written to Minister Garrett seeking clarification on Australia's position.

Amid concerns that Australia may be under increasing pressure to compromise, the groups are seeking reassurance from the Australian Government that it remains committed to realising an end to all forms of commercial whaling under any guise including "coastal" or "scientific", and will reject any compromises that would undermine the current global moratorium.

Statements from Prime Minister Rudd that the Government is prepared to come good on its election promise and take the Japanese Government to the international courts over its abuse of the so-called scientific whaling loophole if there is no progress at the IWC in June have been encouraging. The conservation groups have made it clear that if such a case has good prospects, only a complete cessation of all scientific whaling programs would warrant a decision against moving forward with it.

"Too many countries at the IWC seem prepared to cave in to Japan and other pro-whaling nations, rewarding them for years of commercial whaling in defiance of the global moratorium," said Erica Martin from the International Fund for Animal Welfare.

"Australians are depending on our Government to hold the line to ensure the ban against commercial whaling in all its guises remains firmly in place," said Nicola Beynon from Humane Society International.