



25 years of whale protection in Australia

# 25 Years of Whale Protection

Twenty five years ago on 4 April 1979 Australia decided to end whaling in Australian waters and to pursue an end to commercial whaling throughout the world. After 25 years of protection, whales are now considered far more valuable alive than dead.

Since the Fraser Government repealed the *Whaling Act 1960*, whale protection has been a bipartisan feature of Australian politics. Successive Australian Governments have protected whales at home and argued for increased protection throughout the world for all cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises).

## Whaling And Whales

Today, most countries do not permit any form of whaling. Whaling continues, but at a lower rate than when Australia changed its policy. Global interest in whaling debates may be inferred from the growing membership of the International Whaling Commission (IWC).

Whale protection is designed to allow depleted whale populations to recover. Since 1996, Australia's Natural Heritage Trust has invested over \$2.7 million in research and other activities to promote whale conservation.

For some species in Australia, protection appears to be working.

*The Government is ... to protect the whale so that present and future generations of Australians can have the opportunity of seeing these wonderful mammals in their natural habitat rather than seeing them merely as exhibits of an extinct species in a museum.*

*Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser*

*Ministerial Statement: Whales and Whaling, 4 April 1979*

	1978/79	2003/04
Great whales killed	28,240	1,866
Whaling nations	13	7
% commercial/scientific	99%	78%
% indigenous hunts	1%	22%
IWC members	17	49 (at 2003 meeting)

*The Australian Whale Sanctuary is established in order to give formal recognition of the high level of protection and management afforded to cetaceans in Commonwealth marine areas and prescribed waters.*

*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, S. 225(1)*

## The Value Of Whales

Whale protection makes economic sense. In today's terms, Australia's last whaling business — the Cheynes Beach Whaling Company — produced an estimated direct revenue of \$9.6 million in its final year. Today, Australia's whale watching industry produces an estimated direct revenue of \$42.5 million (up from \$5.3 million in 1991). Tourist expenditure associated with the whale industry generates additional revenue, mostly in regional areas. The estimated flow-on effect of expenditure is \$149 million to \$325 million.

Economists also recognise a value that society intrinsically places on the existence of live free-swimming whales. A monetary value of \$300,000 has been estimated for each humpback whale.



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## Inquiry Into Whales and Whaling

Recommendations, 1 December, 1978

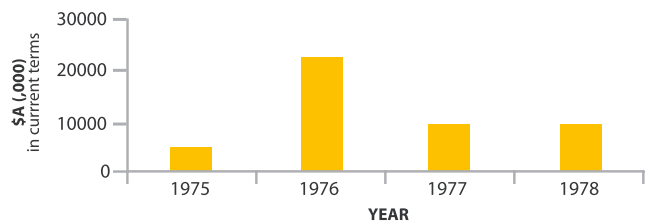
1. Australia should oppose the continuance of whaling...
2. Whaling by other nations should be prohibited within the Australian 200-mile fishing zone...
3. At the International Whaling Commission meeting to be held in December 1978, Australia should seek to classify both male and female sperm whales in Division 5 as Protection Stocks and to amend the catch limits presently set for this Division to zero...
4. Consideration should be given to the repeal of the *Whaling Act 1960* and its replacement by new legislation directed to the protection of cetacean, and if thought desirable other marine mammals, along the lines of the marine mammal protection legislation of the United States and New Zealand.
5. The import of whale products or goods containing whale products should be banned in Australia from 1 January 1981.
6. Australia should continue to be a member of and support the International Whaling Commission as the most appropriate body to be responsible for conservation of whales internationally. Australia should support efforts to revise the International Convention... In particular... to extend the Commission's charter to the conservation of all cetacea.
7. Australia should seek to achieve a worldwide ban on whaling... Australia should take into account any adjustment required by the special needs of

*By 1960, only 500 or fewer of the humpback whales migrating along Australia's east coast remained. Today their numbers have rebounded to well over 4,000. Southern right whales are estimated to have increased from less than 100 in 1985 to around 1,400 today.*

particular countries, such as the requirements of some nations of whale meat for protein, and subsistence catches by some local communities.

8. Both in its own planning and in international discussions on the management of marine resources Australia should ensure that any implications for whales are given consideration...
9. The Commonwealth Government should promote research on whales by Australian scientists and institutions...
10. The continued Australian involvement in the International Whaling Commission should emphasise particularly participation in the Scientific Committee so that results of Australian research are promptly incorporated in that Committee's deliberations...

Australian Whaling Revenue



Australian Whale Watching Revenue

