



Australian Government

Department of the Environment,
Water, Heritage and the Arts

THE ROLE OF SCIENCE IN THE INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION

The role of science

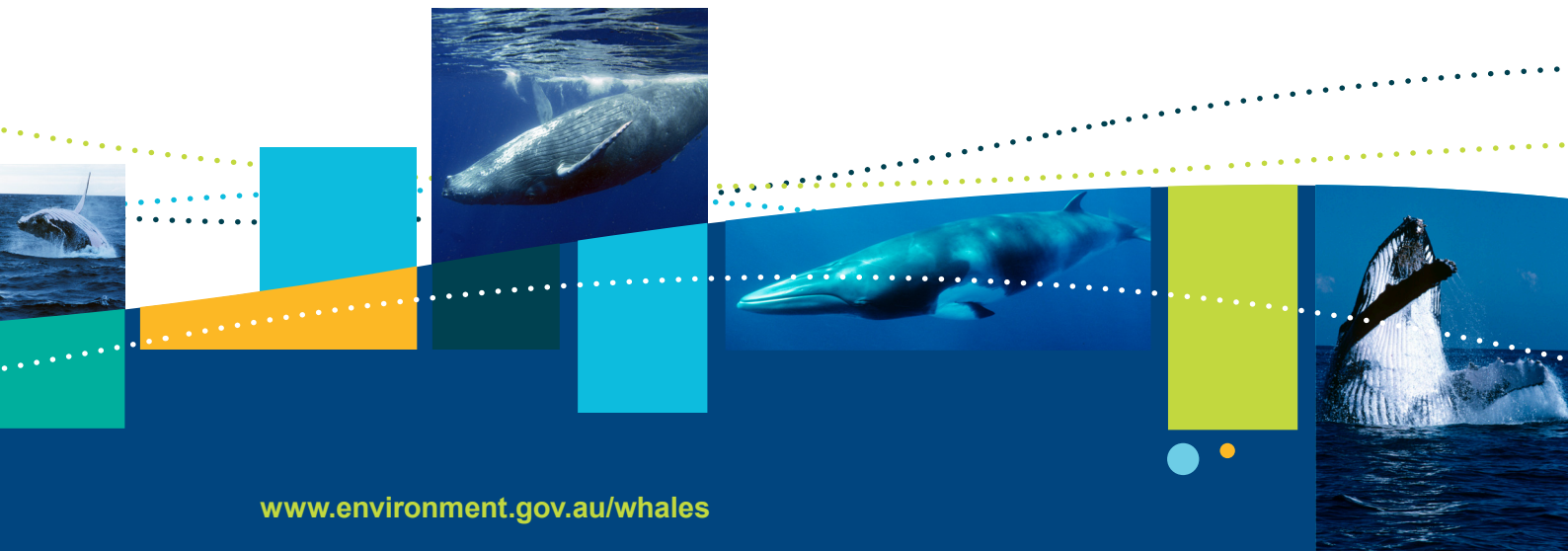
Australia's policy position in the International Whaling Commission (IWC) is underpinned by sound scientific research on cetacean biology and ecology. Australia supports the IWC as the body with primary responsibility for the conservation and management of cetaceans globally, and believes that sound conservation and management decisions can only be achieved if they are based on rigorous scientific advice, following IWC-approved scientific procedures.

Scientific processes in the IWC should provide a context and a mechanism by which overall scientific needs can be determined, prioritised and addressed, with progress monitored and outcomes evaluated.

At the Annual meeting of the IWC in 2009, Australia proposed a new approach to science. This would see the Commission reach agreement on a number of key principles that would provide a modern and transparent process, following international best practice, for how IWC science should be undertaken. The principles of the new approach are outlined below.

Principles for a new approach to science in the IWC

- The key scientific priorities of the IWC that require resolution should be agreed collaboratively by the Commission.
- These priorities should be focused towards outcomes that deliver effective conservation and management of whales.
- Scientific activities should respond to these agreed priorities.
- Scientific activities should be based upon a precautionary approach.



- In all cases, the potential impact on whale populations should be assessed and minimised, and where invasive techniques are proposed, research should follow internationally recognised humane animal experimentation techniques (e.g. reduction, replacement and refinement).
- The proposed methods, scope and objectives of a research program should require the approval of the Commission.
- Research programs should be transparent, inclusive and collaborative, and encourage and enhance engagement from scientists from developing countries.
- Research results should be public and the data made available to promote additional research and analysis.
- Effective processes to ensure the communication of complicated technical issues to a non-science audience should be developed and maintained.
- Scientific activities should be subject to a formalised, transparent and agreed process of periodic review and performance appraisal, including a requirement for research proponents to respond to review recommendations.
- Approval and review of research should not be conducted by the proponents of the research.

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MAR36.0510