



THE HON STEPHEN SMITH MP

MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
PARLIAMENT HOUSE
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Ms Julia Irwin MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
PO Box 6021
PARLIAMENT HOUSE ACT 2600

16 MAR 2010

Dear Ms Irwin

Thank you for your letter of 10 February 2010 about a petition recently considered by the Standing Committee on Petitions regarding Japanese whaling.

The Australian Government is resolutely opposed to commercial whaling, including so-called 'scientific' whaling, and strongly supports the global moratorium on commercial whaling.

Over the last two years, the Government has focused on substantial diplomatic efforts and has brought forward proposals to reform the International Whaling Commission (IWC) into a modern, conservation focused organisation. Ahead of the next Annual Meeting of the IWC in June this year, the Government has developed a strong Australian proposal for the future of the IWC. This proposal was released by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, the Hon Peter Garrett AM MP, on 25 February 2010. Australia's proposal seeks robust conservation measures and the complete phasing out of whaling in the Southern Ocean. Australia will continue to take a constructive approach to IWC discussions in the period ahead, but if we are unable to make progress diplomatically, we reserve the right to take legal action.

It is important to consider our differences with Japan on whaling in the context of the broader Australia-Japan relationship which is strong and close and which delivers enormous benefits to Australia. Australia and Japan enjoy a comprehensive economic, security and strategic partnership.

I note the request of the petition that economic sanctions be placed on Japan until such time as they permanently desist from any form of whaling in Antarctica. The Government considers that such a response would be disproportionate and harm Australia's economic interests.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Smith