



Save the Nature of the Kimberley

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Pregnant Kimberley Humpback Whales threatened by seismic testing

Environs Kimberley is extremely concerned that Woodside Petroleum began seismic testing near James Price Point on the same day that pregnant Humpback Whales arrived off the Kimberley coast. Seismic testing requires underwater blasting, which can be harmful to marine life.

The Kimberley Humpbacks, which are one of the largest populations in the world, are arriving on the Kimberley coast on their annual migration from Antarctica to give birth to their calves and mate. The first Humpbacks arrived on May 24th north of James Price Point.

"We cannot believe that Woodside is undertaking two surveys with seismic blasting at the most sensitive time of the year for the pregnant Humpbacks arriving off our coast," said Environs Kimberley director Martin Pritchard. "They could have done this at any other time of year."

"We have asked Woodside Petroleum to postpone further seismic testing until the whales have left with their calves for Antarctica and are no longer at risk."

One of the Woodside surveys is looking for new oil and gas fields 40km off the coast of Broome, in the middle of the Humpback whale migratory highway.

Another Woodside survey at James Price Point is mapping the seabed for the proposed industrial port. The WA Environmental Protection Authority has not assessed this project as it has not been referred to them by the Department of Mines and Petroleum (DMP).

"This is a serious failure by the DMP. It should be referring these proposals to the EPA," Mr Pritchard said. "We are calling on the EPA to assess this proposal and asking that the public be given an opportunity to comment."

"We have an international obligation to protect Humpback whales and the Federal Government will be at the International Whaling Commission in Morocco in two weeks' time, loudly advocating on their behalf. They cannot claim to be protecting whales by opposing harvesting, when at the same they are putting whales at risk in their calving grounds. If they don't want to be accused of hypocrisy, they must ensure that whales are protected at home as well as in other parts of the world," said Mr Pritchard.

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