

MEDIA RELEASE

JUNE 18, 2010

Kimberley Humpback Whales threatened by oil and gas and no marine protection

Call for action from Australia in Morocco

While pregnant Humpback Whales arrive off the Kimberley coast Australian Environment Minister Peter Garrett arrives in Morocco ready for a fight with Japanese whalers.

The Kimberley Humpbacks, one of the largest populations in the world, are arriving on Australia's Kimberley coast on their annual migration from Antarctica to give birth to their calves and mate.

Meanwhile the State and Federal Government are investigating an industrial port for up to 1,500 supertankers per year and associated shipping and a gas processing facility for oil and gas company Woodside petroleum in the same place the first Humpbacks arrived on May 24th north of Broome.

The industrial port on the Kimberley coast would threaten the Humpback's migration as well as cut through the southern calving ground. Environment groups and locals are calling on the State and Federal Government to move the project south to an already industrialised area.

"The impacts of this industrialisation on an undeveloped coast would be catastrophic." said Louise Middleton, an environmentalist from Broome, Western Australia.

"This Humpback population is twice the size of the East Coast population and calves and mates in seas off a coast that has not been developed. It's one of the few populations that can be observed from land that is undisturbed." said Ms Middleton.

"As a sign of things to come, seismic testing is happening in the migration pathway as whales are coming through." Ms Middleton said.

"We were promised marine sanctuaries by the Federal Government at the last election but unfortunately they seemed to have disappeared off the radar." said Ms. Middleton.

"We have an international obligation to protect Humpback whales and the Federal Government are at the International Whaling Commission in Morocco now, 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 Ms Middleton.

Media Contact:

Louise Middleton in Morocco Ph.