
Country Report on Ship Strikes : Australia

**Submitted by the Government of Australia
to the Conservation Committee
59th Annual Meeting of the International Whaling Commission
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Background

In 2005, the Australian Government submitted a report to the Ship Strike Working Group (SSWG) that included information on relevant legislation, recorded ship strikes and mitigation technology. IWC.CCG.594 has requested further information relating to Recommendations 4 and 5 of the SSWG Report.

Legislation – update

Under Australia's national legislation, *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, ship strikes on cetaceans in Commonwealth waters¹, whether resulting in injury or death, must be reported. Recent amendments to the EPBC Act have simplified the reporting mechanism for the fishing industry.

Reported incidents – calendar year 2006

| State/Territory | Ship strike numbers for 2006 (small and large cetaceans) |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| New South Wales | 1 common dolphin – carcass showing damage from a propeller 1 bottlenose dolphin – stranded showing damage from a propeller, then died |
| Queensland | 1 humpback whale – struck by yacht hull, fate unknown 1 humpback whale – struck by trimaran hull, dorsal injuries observed |
| Western Australia | 1 small whale (sp unconfirmed) – propeller strike – NW Shelf 1 pygmy blue whale – struck and washed up dead some days later – Fremantle shipping lanes |

Mitigation measures

The level of ship strikes in Australian waters remains low however activities that affect small populations, such as the pygmy blue whales off Western Australia, is cause for concern. The species is listed as endangered and therefore any measures to reduce anthropogenic mortality need to be enacted quickly. Fremantle is a busy shipping port and the waters around the port are utilised by shipping, fishing and other maritime industries as well as being a Naval exercise area. The area is also identified as a feeding ground for pygmy blue whales in summer months.

The Australian Government will host a meeting this year with representatives from Defence, the Western Australian government, as well as other maritime users of the Fremantle shipping and harbour areas, to discuss strategies to lessen the possibility of further strikes on the blue whales that frequent these waters. The Australian Navy has training and procedures set up to mitigate impacts on cetaceans and these are reviewed annually.

¹ Commonwealth waters extend from 3nm to 200nm. Coastal waters are mostly covered by state and/or territory legislation.