

**Virtual Special Meeting of the International Whaling Commission**

8 – 10 September 2021

Opening statement by Australia

Australia thanks the Chair, Vice-Chair, Bureau and Secretariat for facilitating this important, Special Meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC).

The global COVID-19 pandemic has made the circumstances of this meeting particularly challenging as IWC member countries focus on the devastating social, health, and financial consequences of the virus. The Chair has been wise to focus this Special Meeting on matters of essential procedural business, particularly the parlous budgetary situation, and to explicitly avoid more complex matters of policy that will benefit from in-person discussions at IWC68 in October 2022.

Regarding the bridge budget for 2022 (session 2, items 2.2.2/2.3), Australia highlights the following:

- The proposal to roll over the existing budget for a further year seeks to balance the need for prudent financial management with safeguarding the excellence of the support of the Secretariat and the core functions of the Commission's subsidiary bodies – particularly the Scientific Committee.
- Supporting this modest proposal will enable the important debate on longer term structural, budgetary reform to proceed at IWC68.
- The budget agreed at IWC67 – of which the proposed 2022 budget is a continuation - was achieved through broad and constructive consultation and has already required major savings to be found – particularly in the Secretariat and Scientific Committee.
- No further short-term savings can be found without major consequences to the ability of the Secretariat and the Scientific Committee to support the important work of the Commission.

Australia strongly encourages all IWC member countries to support the Chair in joining a consensus to approve the core budget needs of the Commission and the associated items of business agreed for this Special Meeting. Such an outcome will ensure that broader discussions on reform and the key responsibilities and work of the Commission can be appropriately addressed at IWC68

September 2021