

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE DRAFT PUBLIC FACING STRATEGY 2016 – 2026

SUPPORTING RATIONALE AND REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK

At its 2015 planning meeting, the Conservation Committee agreed to develop an outward facing strategic plan. A draft Strategic Plan has been developed as a simple and visual description of the Committee's purpose, work, priorities, and its relationship to other committees and bodies. It has been designed as a public and forward focused document, which can act as an overarching guide for more detailed internal thematic strategic plans and work plans being developed under the Committee and its working groups.

Australia thanks Committee members for initial feedback on the draft Strategic Plan in June and July 2016. After the current circulation for comments, Australia will incorporate feedback on behalf of the Chair in September 2016. The final draft Plan will be considered at the Conservation Committee meeting scheduled for 21 October 2016.

A brief rationale behind each component of the draft Plan follows (including supporting web text at the end). Suggested feedback questions have been included where relevant (in *italics*).

PAGE ONE

The first page of the draft Plan provides the vision, objectives, priorities and measures of success for the Committee.

Vision

This component has been drafted based on our understanding of the Committee's overarching role. We have followed best-practice in keeping the vision statement as short as possible.

- *Is this suitable as a long term vision for the Committee?*

Objectives

These are intended to encompass the high level and long term objectives of the Committee over the next ten years and beyond.

Priorities

This component includes priority management actions and priority threats, which have emerged based on analysis of the Committee's draft internal work plan, information on the Commission's website and feedback from the 2016 planning meeting.

There is a need to balance inclusion of all possible priorities with the practicalities relating to the Committee's scope of influence and resourcing. A footnote has been added to this effect, including a mention of other possible threats.

In trying to meet this balance, Australia, UK and Mexico have noted that some of the threats can be directly addressed by the Committee, but that it has limited ability to influence others, for example, chemical pollution and climate change. Our initial view is that it is still useful to understand the implications of these other threats, particularly if this assists in framing more comprehensive conservation advice.

- *Should the less tangible priorities be included?*
 - *If not included as specific priorities, how can these matters still be considered as part of the Plan?*
- *Are any key priorities missing? In particular:*

- Cetacean strandings are not included in this document or the draft internal work plan, but are one of seven priorities listed under the Committee's Voluntary Conservation Fund. *Would it be worth adding to all documents to ensure consistency?*
- Bycatch is prioritised in this document and under the Voluntary Fund's priorities, but has not been listed separately in the work plan. *Would it be worth adding to the work plan to ensure consistency?*
- Entanglements have not been separately included in this document or the internal work plan, but are mentioned along with bycatch under the Voluntary Fund's priorities. Australia's view is that entanglements are already prioritised under the themes of both marine debris (for non-active gear) and bycatch (active gear), but we welcome Committee members' views on whether it should be mentioned under one or both.
- Some feedback questioned whether intentional killing should be considered as a threat. Australia's view is that intentional killing is more appropriately addressed through the moratorium on commercial whaling and scrutiny of other types of whaling through the Commission and Scientific Committee. Including this as a priority threat would pose sensitivities within the Commission and would not be constructive given the conservation focus of the Committee. Australia has therefore suggested this be mentioned in the footnote as an example of another threat not currently prioritised within the Committee.
- The conservation and management – environmental concerns section of the Commission's website also has pages on cetacean diseases and marine renewable energy developments as potential threats. These have been included as examples in the footnote.

Measures of success

These include near and long term measures, with the near term measures intended to be more tangible and the long term measures more aspirational.

Near term measures

'Near-term' has been used because some measures have an annual focus, while others at minimum could be reviewed at the five year mid-term review for this Plan. The near term measures have been synthesised from the aims and deliverables/action columns of the draft internal work plan previously presented by the UK.

- *Is the overall detail in the near term measures suitable for a public facing Strategic Plan?*
- *Are there any key deliverables from within working groups that are not captured by the near term measures?*

Robust measures of success should ideally be specific, measureable, achievable, relevant and timely (S.M.A.R.T.). At the same time, any efforts to tighten these measures so they are S.M.A.R.T. should not come at the expense of flexibility in ensuring successful delivery of the Plan. Some language therefore remains in square brackets and/or options for wording are included for discussion.

- *Please provide any suggestions on how the near term measures could be made more S.M.A.R.T.*
- *Please indicate your preferences for wording on each of the square brackets.*

Long term aspirations

The long term measures are intended to be aspirational for the Plan's ten year period and beyond, providing a bridge between the more tangible near term measures and the Committee's vision. Initial feedback has noted that it will be challenging to measure progress against these indicators.

- *Do the long term measures of success align with the vision and objectives of the Committee?*
- *Do Committee members have any suggestions as to how performance evaluation of the near term measures could be specifically undertaken in a way that leads to an accurate assessment of longer-term success?*

PAGE TWO

The second page provides detail on how the Committee intends to implement the Plan outlined on page one.

Structure

This component reflects the current structure of the Committee, to be updated as required (for example, it might be preferable in future to establish groups which more directly align with the priorities listed on page one). The Committee's place within the broader structure of the Commission has been included with greyed boxes. Suggested text on each working group is based on the original terms of reference for each group where possible.

Partnerships

This component outlines relationships between the Conservation Committee, the wider Commission and external stakeholders. This provides a tangible link back to the third proposed objective on conservation agenda collaboration, which has been recognised as a goal since the establishment of the Committee.

Resourcing

This outlines the current sources of funding available for conservation initiatives through the Commission, to be updated as required. Initial feedback indicated some confusion as to how these funds are structured. The Secretariat has confirmed that this section is broadly correct, and has indicated that the Secretariat's new head of finance commencing in October will be working to further clarify the voluntary funds structure. As the Plan is intended as a live document, Australia suggests the current wording be endorsed, but noting that the Committee will contact the Secretariat again once this work has been undertaken to check on any updates (for example, to check whether the name and objectives of the 'other work fund' have been clarified).

OVERALL BRANDING AND WEBSITE TEXT

Australia received useful initial feedback on the overall structure, colour scheme and branding of this Plan, and would like to ensure that it is effectively promoted online consistent with the Commission's website and other publications. To provide better context around the publication of the Plan and the Committee's commitments to implement the Plan, we propose to include the below text on the IWC website.

- It is anticipated that the finalised Plan and web text will be published with in-house graphics/design assistance from the Secretariat. *Please provide any general suggestions for formatting or presentation of the Plan and associated website text.*
- *Is there any further context that should be provided for the Plan once it is up on the Committee's web page?*
- *Australia seeks members' agreement that the Committee will regularly review key threats.* We envisage this could be in the form of the annual meeting documents, and/or biennial reporting to the Commission.
- *Australia seeks members' agreement that the Committee will meet annually.* This aspect of the commitment has been placed in square brackets pending further discussion of the exact form of meeting in the lead up to IWC66.

[Before link to plan] “Why do we need a Strategic Plan?”

The *International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling* provides that the Commission may adopt measures with respect to the conservation of whale resources (Article V(1)(a)). The Conservation Committee was established in 2003 as a way to meet this objective under the Convention.

This Strategic Plan sets out a renewed vision for the Committee, and specifies a program of work and the outcomes to be delivered, over the next decade, to support healthy, well managed, and fully recovered cetacean populations worldwide. The Strategic Plan will also guide and inform the detailed internal thematic strategic plans and work plans of the Committee and its various working groups.

The Strategic Plan can be found here [\[LINK/thumbnail to PDF\]](#).

[After link to plan] The Conservation Committee’s commitments in delivering this Plan

1. The Committee will provide advice on, and implement as required, conservation initiatives to support the Commission in safeguarding for future generations the great natural resource represented by cetaceans.
2. The Committee will [regularly] review the key threats facing cetaceans, with a view to prioritising management advice and promoting effective mitigation within its scope of influence over the next 10 years.
3. The Committee will meet [annually] to review the work of its subsidiary bodies delivering its programs against the Committee’s priorities, and to facilitate collaboration with key partners.
4. This Plan will be a ‘live’ updatable document that evolves with the Committee’s priorities. It will be subject to a mid-term review in 2021.
5. The products and guidance developed by the Committee, including this Plan, will be made available on the Commission’s website for use by Contracting Governments and other interested parties.”