



Australian Government
Department of the Environment

Whale and dolphin watching in Australia



Whale and dolphin watching in Australia

- 45 species of whales, dolphins and porpoises
 - Key species:
 - Humpback whale
 - Southern right whale
 - Blue whale
 - Dwarf minke whale
 - Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin
 - Common bottlenose dolphin
 - Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin
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Whale and dolphin watching in Australia

- Cetacean conservation is a priority
 - 'Mature' whale and dolphin watching industry
 - Member of the IWC Standing Working Group on Whale Watching
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Blue Economy Sector

- Over 1.6 million people
 - AUD \$47 million – ticket expenditure
 - AUD \$264 million – total expenditure
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Who manages whale and dolphin watching in Australia?



- The Australian Government
- Six state governments and the Northern Territory

Whale and dolphin watching in Commonwealth waters

- Legislation and regulation – *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act)

EPBC Act:
Offence to
interfere with
a cetacean



Regulations:
How to avoid
interference

Whale and dolphin watching in Commonwealth waters

Example:

- Approach distance: 100m
- Caution distance: 300m
- No touching or feeding

Regulations apply to all people interacting with whales and dolphins – commercial operators and recreational

Whale and dolphin watching in Commonwealth waters

- *Australian National Guidelines for Whale and Dolphin Watching 2005* (currently under review)

- User-friendly explanation of regulations
- Guidance to managers on alternative management



<http://www.environment.gov.au/marine/publications/australian-national-guidelines-whale-and-dolphin-watching-2005>

Whale and dolphin watching in Commonwealth waters

- *Australian National Guidelines for Whale and Dolphin Watching 2005* (currently under review)
 - Close consultation
 - Review:
 - Best available science
 - Community and industry needs
 - Best practice



Whale and dolphin watching in state and territory waters

- Five States: Largely adopted the National standards in their own regulatory regimes and guidance material.
- Tasmania: no legislation but provides guidance that is based on the National standards.
- The Northern Territory: no active management - very small and emerging industry focussed on inshore dolphins



Making it work

- Flexibility to account for regional differences
 - Example – dolphin watching in busy waterways:
 - Limits on:
 - Number of boats
 - Length of time
 - Exclusion areas
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Making it work

- Flexibility to account for regional differences
- Regular and close contact among jurisdictions
- Consultation with industry and NGOs
- Science input
- Public education and compliance



Emerging Issues

- Expansion of the swim-with whales sector
- Interest in less common species such as the Southern Right Whale and the Blue Whale.
- The increasing use of drones



Thank you

