

## A Win For Seismic With New Whale Guidelines

The federal government has issued new, revised guidelines for minimising the risks to whales from sounds generated by seismic survey operations.

Environment and Water Resources Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, said new scientific information and years of industry experience have led to improved guidelines for the protection of whales in exploration areas.

“Developed with the involvement of the oil and gas industry, conservation groups and Australia’s best whale research scientists, the comprehensive policy reflects new scientific knowledge as well as expanded operational experience since the first edition was released in 2001”, Turnbull said.

While previous guidelines stipulated that seismic survey activity could not occur if whales were within 3 km of the area, the new rules support smaller safety zones of 2 km around seismic survey vessels.

Other changes to the guidelines include alterations to the night-time operating provisions to manage whales in times of poor visibility, clearer advice on where and when significant impacts on whales could occur, the need to plan seismic operations around important habitats and times when whales may be present and improved advice



on adaptive measures should whales be encountered.

The procedures will be implemented by the Australian seismic exploration industry with a view to refining the policy, based on operational experience.

Public comment on the revised guidelines will also be taken into account.

“Years of experience with and research on whales have demonstrated how well the oil and gas industry has managed the risks of seismic activity on whales”, Turnbull said.

“I hope that these revised guidelines, which have been developed in the spirit of rigorous scientific debate, will encourage further community, industry and expert involvement through the public comment process.” ■