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Japan's humpback hunt plan a 'disgrace'

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AUSTRALIA has condemned Japan's efforts to extend its "scientific whaling program" to include endangered humpbacks.

Delegates at an International Whaling Commission meeting in St Kitts and Nevis in the Caribbean will be told the blood of the humpback will be on their hands if they vote to support Japan's pro-whaling stance.

Environment Minister Ian Campbell said countries that supported Japan would be outed and shamed. He said the public wrongly focused its anger solely on countries that exploited a scientific loophole in the 1986 commercial whaling moratorium. Japan, Norway and Iceland could not kill whales without the support of at least 30 other countries, he said.

"During the next year we have to raise the political stakes for all of those 30 countries and make sure the people in those countries know that their governments are supporting the slaughter of whales," he said.

Senator Campbell has also warned Pacific Island nations their support for whaling could lead to a tourist boycott. He left yesterday for the Caribbean meeting at which the 60-odd member countries of the IWC could effectively unravel 20 years of whale conservation.

Japan's plan to expand its scientific program to include humpbacks was a "disgraceful tactic" that could backfire, Senator Campbell said before he left.

"I think a lot of the countries that do support so-called sustainable whaling in principle will recognise that Japan might be going a bridge too far in relation to taking humpbacks," he said.

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