

[Home](#) » [Specials](#) » [Whale watch](#) » Article

Japan spat dummy over whales: Turnbull

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Australia says Japan had a "dummy-spit" when it didn't get its own way at last week's International Whaling Commission in Alaska.

"It was a very bad conference for Japan," federal Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull told ABC TV today.

"I think their huge dummy-spit at the end will not reflect well in Tokyo.

"I think the Japanese government really has to sit back and ask itself, looking at the debacle that was Japan's outcome at the whaling conference, and really say to themselves can we continue to fly in the face of world opinion on this issue."

The strong words from Mr Turnbull come after Japan failed to win a single vote at the commission in Anchorage.

But Tokyo is still likely to go ahead with the capture and killing of about 50 humpback whales during this year's hunting season.

Mr Turnbull said it was likely Australia would raise its concerns about the humpback kill with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at September's APEC leaders forum in Sydney.

"We raise this at every level with Japan," he said.

"Whaling is essentially a nationalistic issue in Japan, that's its support base so the engagement with Japan has to be as a friend, it has to be candid, it has to be constructive.

"If you threaten Japan ... the more they dig their heels in.

"Engaging with Japan is something that has to be done constructively."

But Mr Turnbull rejected the suggestion that accusing Japan of a "dummy-spit" was not constructive.

"It's not accusing them of a dummy-spit, their own mothers would recognise they done (sic) a dummy-spit.

"To stand up at the end of the conference and say: 'That's it, we're threatening to pull out,' that is a dummy-spit on any view."

AAP

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