



'RESEARCH': Ships from the Japanese whaling fleet transfer animals to their factory ship after a hunt in the Southern Ocean.

Whalers dragged to court

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AUSTRALIA will take Japan to court to stop whaling in Antarctic waters as the Rudd Government moves to make good on a three-year-old election promise.

A formal application will be lodged in the International Court of Justice in The Hague early next week ahead of an International Whaling Commission (IWC) meeting in Morocco in June.

"We want to see an end to whales being killed in the name of science in the Southern Ocean," Environment Minister Peter Garrett said yesterday.

This will be the first time that any nation has used an international

court to try to ban whaling.

Mr Garrett said the action demonstrated the Government's commitment to "do what it takes" to permanently end whaling globally, and it came on the back of significant diplomatic activity.

Foreign Affairs Minister Stephen Smith said the court action would not disturb Australia's relationship with one of its main trading partners.

"The agreement between Australia and Japan is that we will treat this matter in a calm, responsible and mature way," he said.

The Government said it was taking the action because recent statements by whaling countries in the IWC indicated there was "little cause for hope" that conserving the world's

whales would be reflected in any global compromise agreement.

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd promised before the 2007 federal election to take Japan to court over whaling. The court action comes after Mr Rudd has faced recent attacks for failing to meet a string of pledges.

The whaling decision could also help woo back green votes after Labor dumped its climate-change emissions-trading scheme.

Greens leader Bob Brown was cynical about the court action, saying it was timed to coincide with the upcoming federal election and would not stop the harpoons.

Japan's Fisheries Minister Hirotaka Akamatsu told the ABC the legal action was disappointing.

Keep dad in jail: daughter

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