



Agreement on the Conservation
of Albatrosses and Petrels

Eighth Meeting of the Advisory Committee

Punta del Este, Uruguay, 15 -19 September 2014

2014 Implementation Report - Australia

Australia

Report for the Meeting of Parties - MOP-5 (2015)**Submitted by - Australia****Coverage of report - Australia****Highlights 2004-2014 and challenges remaining**

1. Please provide a summary of the Party's key achievements in improving the conservation status of albatrosses and petrels over the last decade (or the period since joining the Agreement).

Australia continues to take a leadership role in seabird conservation. With responsibility for breeding populations of eight of the 30 ACAP-listed seabird species, including the endemic shy albatross species, Australia is highly engaged in protecting seabirds at sea and on land. Our actions focus on pursuing the following parallel conservation initiatives: implementing threat abatement plans, particularly for the incidental catch (or bycatch) of seabirds during oceanic longline fishing operations; implementing recovery actions for all albatross and giant-petrel species occurring in Australia; and developing and implementing priority actions under the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) including by undertaking research and innovation in seabird bycatch mitigation, and promoting best and improving practices for international conservation and management measures concerning seabird bycatch mitigation at international organisations and bodies. The impact of longline fishing activities is widely regarded as the most pervasive threat to seabird conservation, causing population declines across the world. Australia's successive threat abatement plans for the incidental catch (or bycatch) of seabirds during oceanic longline fishing operations have been addressing this key threatening process since 1998. Implementation of these plans has been highly successful in significantly reducing the bycatch of seabirds, with no, or very low levels of bycatch now being observed in affected fisheries. The plans are complemented by a Threat Abatement Plan for the impacts of marine debris on vertebrate marine life that addresses a related key threatening process. Recovery plans have been in place since 2001 for the 19 species of albatross and two giant-petrel species breeding or foraging in Australia. The plans set out research and management actions necessary to halt the decline and support the recovery of these threatened species so that their chances of long-term survival in nature are maximised. Actions include

protecting critical breeding habitats; continuing long-term population-monitoring programs—both direct monitoring and remotely operated camera monitoring; conducting research into the foraging ecology of affected seabirds; eradicating feral species—highlighted by the recent success in eradicating mice, rabbits and rats from Macquarie Island—a key sub-Antarctic breeding site; and implementing threat abatement plans. Australia strongly supports the work of ACAP. This includes hosting the ACAP Secretariat in Hobart, Tasmania; acting as the Depositary; and significant ongoing contributions by government agencies, scientists and industry to research and innovation in seabird bycatch mitigation—contributions that have improved our understanding of ways to reduce seabird bycatch through better and safer fishing methods, without adversely affecting catch rates. Australia continues to advocate the adoption of new and improved mitigation methods within regional fisheries management organisations and conservation bodies that it is a contracting Party to. Australia also supports work by ACAP on developing a comprehensive understanding of the status, susceptibility and threats to albatrosses and petrels, including by facilitating the collecting and analysing of data, and establishing standards and methodologies for making data on these seabirds available globally.

- 1) TAP - incidental catch (or bycatch) of seabirds during oceanic longline fishing operations.pdf (size 1146825 bytes)☒
- 2) TAP - impacts of marine debris on vertebrate marine life.pdf (size 1639135 bytes)☒
- 3) NRP - threatened albatrosses and petrels.pdf (size 467105 bytes)☒

2. Please provide a brief summary of key challenges remaining for the Party in achieving and maintaining a favourable conservation status for albatrosses and petrels in the coming years.

There are ongoing challenges to the conservation of albatrosses and petrels in Australia. These include extending seabird bycatch mitigating from longline fishing to other fishing methods, particularly net fisheries; maintaining Macquarie Island's feral pest-free status; achieving and maintaining a favourable conservation status for endemic shy albatross; and improving our understanding of the risks specific to each species throughout its range, as well as securing the commitment and resources necessary to ameliorate these risks on land and at sea in a timely manner. The transboundary range of these

species presents special challenges and so Australia remains committed to supporting ACAP in addressing the ongoing global challenges to the conservation of albatrosses and petrels.

1. Overview of implementation of Agreement and Action Plan

1.1 Has action been taken to implement the decisions of previous MoPs?	Yes	Decisions and actions arising from previous MOPs have been fully implemented, including domestic treaty ratification actions for amendments to Annex 1, and to give effect to the provisions of the Headquarters Agreement. 1) JSCOT report 21 June 2012.pdf (size 65481 bytes) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1.2 Is action for national implementation planned to occur in the next three years?	Yes	A range of actions continues to be taken or is planned to implement the key provisions of the Action Plan. These include: implementing threat abatement plans, particularly for the incidental catch (or bycatch) of seabirds during oceanic longline fishing operations; implementing recovery actions for all albatross and giant-petrel species occurring in Australia; monitoring the status of breeding populations; reducing fisheries bycatch of ACAP-listed species through mandating use of mitigation measures and conducting further mitigation research and innovation.

2. Species conservation

2.1 Has the Party provided any exemptions to prohibitions on the taking or harmful interference with albatrosses and petrels?	No
2.2 Has any use or trade in albatrosses or petrels occurred?	No

2.3 Has the Party implemented any new single or multi-species conservation strategies / Action Plans?	Yes	Australia adopted the first national recovery plan for albatrosses and giant petrels in 2001. The plan aimed to minimise (or eliminate) threats due to human activity to albatrosses and giant-petrels to ensure their recovery in the wild. Recovery plans are subject to review at intervals of not longer than five years. Following a review, Australia adopted a revised second national recovery plan for albatrosses and giant petrels in 2011. The plan covers 19 species of albatross and two giant petrel species and applies to the period 2011-2016. It sets out the key conservation actions necessary to monitor the status of Australia's breeding populations, to reduce at-sea and on-land threats within Australia's jurisdiction, to educate fishers and others and to encourage increased international conservation efforts. 1) NRP - threatened albatrosses and petrels.pdf (size 467105 bytes)☒
2.4 Has the Party taken any emergency measures involving albatrosses or petrels?	No	
2.5 Has the Party conducted any re-establishment schemes?	No	
2.6 Has the Party introduced any new legal or policy instruments for species protection of albatrosses and petrels?	Yes	See comments under Q 2.3 about the national recovery plan for albatrosses and giant petrels.
2.7 Has the Party implemented any legal or policy instruments for environmental impact assessments?	Yes	Although there are no new legal or policy instruments for environmental impact assessments, an environmental impact statement was prepared prior to commencing the Macquarie Island Pest Eradication Project (MIPEP). MIPEP aimed to eradicate rabbits, rats

and mice from Macquarie Island in the Southern Ocean—a major sub-Antarctic breeding site for ACAP-listed species. The project was reviewed in 2012 to address unexpectedly high mortalities of non-target species—including ACAP-listed species. Documentation is available at www.parks.tas.gov.au on the assessments undertaken as part of MIPEP. Eradication of the feral species at this location was completed in early 2014.

2.8 Does the Party have any species it would like to submit for addition to Annex 1?

No

2.9 Are there any other conservation projects for ACAP species not already mentioned?

Yes
See comments under Q 2.7.

3. Habitat conservation

3.1 Has the Party introduced any legal or policy instruments or actions to implement protection and management of breeding sites, including habitat restoration?

Yes
Refer to Q 2.7 above on the Macquarie Island Pest Eradication Project. Tasmania has also prescribed landings at Albatross Island—a major breeding site for the endemic shy albatross.

3.2 Has the Party implemented any sustainable management measures for marine living resources which provide food for albatrosses and petrels?

Yes
Although no specific provision is made in fishery management arrangements for food for albatrosses and petrels, Australia's fisheries are managed according to ecosystem-based management principles. These principles seek to ensure that maximum sustainable yields for target species are not exceeded and that there is adequate escapement of target species to maintain ecosystem relationships including with associated and dependent species,

	such as seabirds.
3.3 Has the Party implemented any management or protection of important marine areas for albatrosses and petrels?	Yes
	The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Heard Island and McDonald Islands) Proclamation 2014 amended the boundary of the Heard Island and McDonald Islands Marine Reserve. The Reserve was declared in 2002 for the purpose of protecting the conservation values of Heard Island and McDonald Islands and the adjacent unique and vulnerable marine ecosystems. It covers an approximate area of 65 000 km ² . At the same time the Reserve was declared, four areas that had been proposed for inclusion in the Reserve were declared an interim Conservation Zone to facilitate further scientific assessments to determine whether these areas possessed values that warranted conservation and protection in the Reserve. Following review of the assessments The Minister agreed to add about 6200 km ² of the Conservation Zone to the Reserve on the basis of its high conservation value and that the remaining area of Conservation Zone (about 5800 km ²) should be released into the surrounding Exclusive Economic Zone on the basis that values in this area were likely to be adequately represented elsewhere in the Reserve.

4. Management of human activities

4.1 Has the Party completed any new environmental impact assessments related to albatrosses and petrels?	Yes	Refer to Q 2.7 above on the Macquarie Island Pest Eradication Project.
4.2 Has the Party implemented any new measures to minimise discharge of pollutants and marine debris (MARPOL)?	No	

4.3 Has the Party introduced any new measures to minimise the disturbance to albatrosses and petrels in marine and terrestrial habitats?	Yes	Refer to Q 3.1 on introduction of a prescription on landings at Albatross Island, Tasmania.
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5. Research programmes

5.1 Does the Party have any ongoing research programmes relating to the conservation of albatrosses and petrels not already reported on?	Yes	Australia undertakes long-term population monitoring and research programs for ACAP-listed species at Macquarie Island—a major sub-Antarctic breeding site for ACAP-listed species, and at the three breeding sites adjacent to mainland Tasmania for the endemic shy albatross. Research projects focus on improving the mitigation of seabird bycatch in pelagic longline fisheries and trawl fisheries. This work includes developing a device to set hooks underwater, evaluating line weighting options to improve sink rates (consistent with safe fishing practices), evaluating different trawl warp mitigation methods, examining the potential of electronic monitoring systems to independently monitor fishing operations, and using automated cameras to monitor population status and trends at remote southern giant breeding sites at Hawker Island in the east Antarctic.
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5.2 Does the Party have any additional national institutions (authorities or research centres), or NGOs involved in albatross and petrel conservation?	Yes	The Australian Maritime College is a national tertiary institution that provides a wide range of maritime training courses, specialist assistance (in the fields of hydro-dynamics and fisheries technology) complementing research by the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) and Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) on developing and improving mitigation measures for longline and trawl fisheries. Several institutions including the AAD; Tasmanian Department of Primary Industry, Parks, Water and the Environment; CSIRO and University of Tasmania continue their involvement in a range of research programs covering bycatch mitigation; population
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monitoring and demography; fisheries bycatch and effort; and postgraduate (PhD) research into the population status, demography and foraging ecology of albatross species in Australia.

6. Education and public awareness

6.1 Has the Party conducted training or provided information for user audiences (eg scientists, fishers, etc)?	Yes	Information sessions are provided to fishers in affected fisheries about the effectiveness of present mandatory mitigation measures and how these might be improved to further reduce seabird bycatch. Information training sessions are given to at-sea observers prior to their deployment. These training sessions explain how to undertake at-sea observer tasks, including observation techniques, data collection and recording.
6.2 Has the Party conducted training or provided information to the general public?	Yes	A range of seabird conservation information is made available to the public. For example, the threat abatement plan and national recovery plan are made available on the Department of the Environment's website: www.environment.gov.au , and the Seabird ID guide is available on AFMA's website: www.afma.gov.au .

7. Other

Does the Party have any new information to report on research into observed impacts, or mitigation of, climate change on albatrosses and petrels?	No
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8. Additional Comments

No.

Final submission details

Report is closed for editing.

Status - Submitted to ACAP - 28-May-2014

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