Japan harpooning useless data, say scientists

By ALISON REES

THE scientific data Japan says it is collecting from harpooned whales is useless, News Limited has heard.

An email to News Limited from Japan's whaling research institute says Japan must slaughter whales to obtain certain types of data, which it hopes will underpin a resumption of commercial whaling.

Daisy Goodman of the Institute of Cetacean Research in Tokyo also said Australia and other anti-whaling nations should "strongly support" the research.

DEAD IN THE WATER Nick Gales says approach wrong, Japan's commitment to scientific research. But whale expert Nick Gales, of the Australian Antarctic Division in Hobart, said the information Japan was collecting from dead whales was useless.

"We don't need that type of data to manage whale stocks," Dr Gales said.

Japan announced last year its resumption of the international whaling commission it would double its slaughter of minke whales this season to 600 and target 10 endangered fin whales.

In 2007-08, Japan intended to take 905 minke, 50 fin whales and 50 humpback.

Mr Goodman said Japan had to kill the whales because certain kinds of data including how old populations were, how old whales were when they reached sexual maturity, how long whales lived and what they ate could not be obtained using non-lethal methods.

But Dr Gales, who is also head of Australia's delegation to the IWC scientific committee, said years of research should have taught the Japanese scientists what they needed.

"They're asking for support on the basis of their scientific research... but it's purely disposed in all parts of the world," Dr Gales said. "They're asking for support for science that has no support."

Southern Cross University Whaling Research Centre director Peter Harrison said Japan should have enough data to last a lifetime.

Prof Harrison said Japan's previous research had either been a "massive failure" or an attempt to find excuses to kill whales for meat, which was becoming more urgent because the world's tuna fisheries were under exhaustion.

"We know they are doing commercial-scale whaling as part of a bigger political and economic scheme and they... are going to continue to find excuses to kill whales," he said.
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The attack on the Antarctic

Greenpeace’s action

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Whaling archive sheet

The Mercury Jan 2006

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