

# Australians For Animals

**Newsletter**

**January 2010**



## **TRADE – WHY RUDD WON'T ACT AGAINST JAPAN**

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### **Dear Friend, MASSIVE BETRAYAL BY RUDD GOVERNMENT**

AFA is outraged, truly outraged over the sinking of the Ady Gil in Australia's claimed territorial waters in Antarctica. Even worse, we're hearing that Japan is chartering planes in Australia, planes which are flying to the area to specifically locate Sea Shepherd and its two vessels so they can be harassed and prevented from disrupting Japanese slaughter of whales.

The Prime Minister promised, prior to his party's election, that his government would take Japan to the international courts. In fact, Rudd has done nothing but talk. The same can be said for Environment Minister

Peter Garrett, a Minister who AFA regards as the worst, least effective politician to grace this portfolio.

We're tired of hearing the same old rhetoric, how the Rudd government prefers diplomatic solutions blah blah. AFA wonders how many Australians voted for the ALP on the strength of Rudd's promise to take Japan to the international courts.

Japan is riding roughshod over international conventions and world opinion. At the same time, Australia has lost any credibility it ever had as an anti-whaling nation by completely failing to take any substantive action. AFA urges its supporters to sit down and write to the Prime Minister at Parliament House, Canberra, ACT 2600 and

express their disgust at the pussy footing anti-whaling policy of the Rudd government.

Tell Mr Rudd you won't be voting for his government at the next election because he's betrayed the Australian public with false promises to take legal action against Japan. Breaking promises like this makes for a pretty serious loss of trust.

### **THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM**

Unfortunately, the lack of action boils down to one issue – TRADE. AFA has sung the same song for the past seven years as Japan's exponentially growing slaughter continues and anti-whaling governments remain legally mute.

Up until the Bush Administration came to

power, the threat of trade sanctions by the US government was enough to halt Japan's excesses. Pres. Bush, one of the world's great free trade devotees, refused to take any action against Japan, thus opening the gates of hell as the slaughter of whales became a holocaust in the Antarctic.

It is tragic to realise that Pres. Obama is not an environmental President. His interest in whaling is very low on his agenda and this lack of interest is reflected in the continuation of wishy washy whale policies which allow Japan to do what it likes. There's zero possibility that Obama will threaten, much less carry out, trade sanctions against Japan and even less possibility of legal action in the international courts.

If Australia had an Opposition which opposed free trade, putting pressure on the Obama administration to impose trade sanctions would be a legitimate and purposeful step to take. But both the ALP and Coalition are free trade devotees and it would be against policy to request US action which would impede trade.

AFA has seriously examined taking legal action to force Pres. Obama to impose what is known as the Pelly amendment against Japan. The charity has engaged in extensive dialogue with legal experts in the US and with US public interest law firms with a view to mounting a legal challenge. But, although promises were made by one major DC foundation to fund such a challenge, the money did

not come through because of the global economic collapse.

Then there's the almost complete lack of action by major US whale conservation groups who have the funds, the lawyers and the resources to mount a legal challenge against the Obama administration over trade sanctions. But you won't hear a peep from any of them as they go round and round in the same old circles, covering the same old ground, making the same old noises because trade issues are just too difficult.

AFA is often asked why we play such a major role internationally in the whaling issues. It's a direct result of the lack of action by major groups. As always, a great deal of responsibility more often than not falls on grass roots groups.

AFA has commissioned legal opinions from some of the world's leading experts over the last few years. Whilst legal action is difficult, there are steps which can be taken under various conventions. Steps which must be undertaken before any international legal challenge can be started. None of these steps have been taken by the Rudd government. Then let's not forget that at meetings of the Antarctic Treaty System, Japanese whaling is never discussed by gentlemen's agreement. The issue is neither raised by member governments or by NGOs. Yet there are clear actions available to Australia under these treaties.

Mediation processes are also available yet no attempt has been made

to under-take any of the possibilities. Our Co-ordinator well remembers the year she attended a meeting of CCAMLR in Hobart ( Convention on Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources) and was asked to leave by NGOs who were concerned about AFA's intention to hold a press conference during the Convention meeting to disseminate the legal opinions which the charity had commissioned. These legal opinions made clear that anti-whaling governments who were members of the Antarctic Treaty System could take steps to stop Japan's whaling.

There's a lot of unanswered questions out there, not only in the political arena but also major questions arise about the environmental organizations who lobby the Antarctic Treaty meetings.

Politicians of both major parties in Australia must thank their lucky stars every night that the media never asks questions about the relationship of trade to Japanese whaling. Unfortunately, the only party which could put both the ALP and the Coalition on the spot is the Greens but so far, trade has been left in the too hard basket.

The issues raised are very complex. But bottom line, unless some anti-whaling government steps up to the plate, Japan will keep on with its bloody murder and the Sea Shepherd volunteers will be at terrible risk of harm because of government inaction.

## **GET ANGRY – ACT NOW AND WRITE TO KEVIN RUDD**

It is a national disgrace! Please get angry. AFA keeps hearing that 50 Humpbacks are on Japan's kill list for 2010. The reality is no-one will know unless the Australian or NZ government decides to send ships to the area to monitor the slaughter.

AFA has been operating for nearly 30 years. The IWC fiasco has gone on for too long. Every year its like watching the movie Ground Hog Day. The situation has to change. We have a unique opportunity in Australia to drive the government nuts over this issue.

Meantime, AFA is in touch with the Shadow Minister for the Environment and Sen. Bob Brown, Leader of the Greens providing the legal opinions we have commissioned and current legal information. AFA is constantly in touch with the legal experts who help the charity in all whale matters, we're in a unique position to assist at the political level. What needs to happen is for PM Rudd to immediately host a summit of international legal experts who can use their expertise to find a solution to Japanese whaling. AFA was hopeful of getting funding to hold a summit at the University of Hawaii this year but the economic downturn in the US killed off any funding.

## **REQUEST**

AFA would like to commission another national poll on the failure of the Rudd government to take

decisive steps to end whaling and to establish how Australians feel about Rudd's broken electoral promise.

The cost of one question is around \$2000 but well worth the effort in terms of publicity and the resulting pressure.

If you can help fund a national poll on this issue, please indicate on the donation slip.

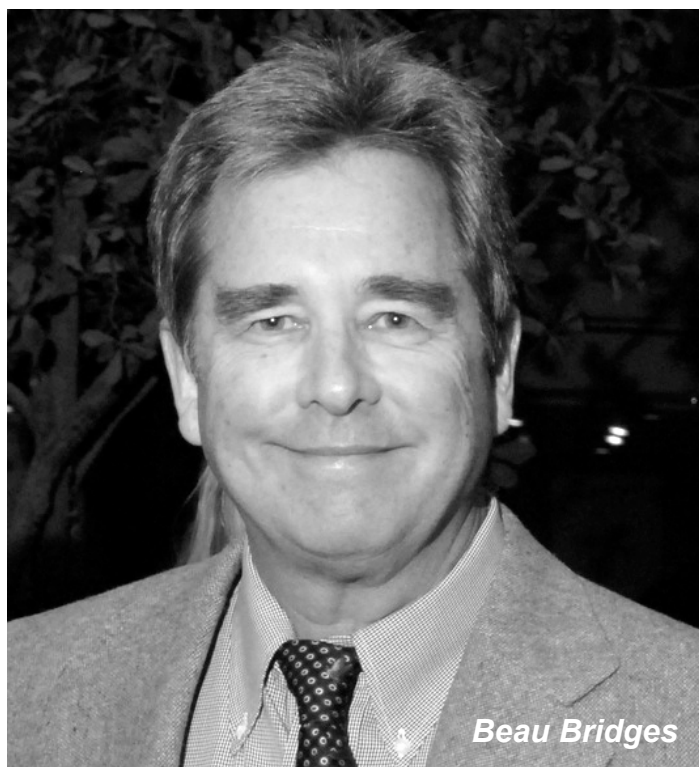
### **ANIMAL RIGHTS AND RESCUE, LISMORE**

AFA is happy to report that we were able to donate almost \$1,000 to this hard working shelter. Everyone at the shelter was very happy to receive this funding boost and AFA thanks everyone who was willing to donate to this special group.

### **SOME BIG STEPS FORWARD IN 2010**

The movie Avatar is timely. Millions of people around the world have flocked to cinemas to see the most expensive film ever made. It's a fantastic experience watching this marathon in 2D or 3D. A great way to remind people everywhere that Planet Earth is in jeopardy and we all need to live in more sustainable and compassionate ways. Our Co-ordinator is not long back from the US where she and our California Director, Robin Mankey, completed a hectic two week road trip on behalf of the California Gray Whale Coalition. The Coalition, founded by AFA, is now one of the biggest, if not the biggest whale coalition in the US.

As the oil and gas industry expands at an astonishing



rate off the west coast of Australia, it's become very clear that we need to link up with all the groups fighting offshore drilling in the US. We have exactly the same problems and in many cases, the same companies.

AFA was able to get the news of the appalling Montara platform spill off the coast of WA to the US via CBS, one of the biggest TV channels in the States. It was touch and go as there had been zero information in the US on the spill, no doubt as a result of some heavy censoring by the oil and gas industry. Together with a colleague in San Francisco, we managed to get a 3 minute stint on CBS major news hour just 24 hours before the Hood massacre which would have ended any chance of publicity.

As a result of the footage being shown on CBS, the oil spill was brought before Congress and the Senate and its good to know the charity has again, been extremely

effective in bringing a massive issue to the people who can make a difference.

One of the most important aspects of the recent trip to the US was to set up a massive coalition of West Coast US groups together with organizations in Australia who are fighting the oil and gas industry. Discussions are going on now with a broad range of groups including the Pacific Fishermen's Co-operative. Commercial fishing has been wiped out by the Montara oil spill and is not likely to recover for many years.

### **SOME GOOD NEWS**

Hollywood film star Beau Bridges has agreed to support the California Gray Whale Coalition. He's a member of the famous Bridges family, his dad Lloyd and brother Jeff are very well known for countless movies.

The Mayor of San Francisco has proclaimed a California Gray Whale Day as a result of our

lobbying efforts.

The California tourist industry and the San Francisco Visitors and Convention Center have agreed to support the Coalition.

And we met with senior scientists from the US National Marine & Fisheries Agency (NMFS) to discuss the Gray Whale. It was an historic meeting as in the past, under the Bush Administration, NMFS had zero meetings with NGOs.

The Coalition has succeeded in persuading NMFS to finally, after 8 years, undertake a population assessment this year (2010) and next year. This is good news. Unfortunately, we will not know the results for 'years', according to NMFS who say they have to analyse the data and it could take a very long time.

AFA doesn't buy this. We're in contact with Southern Cross University to see how long it takes to assess the Humpback whale populations as we're pretty sure it takes weeks, not years. We had a good meeting at the Monterey Bay Aquarium with the promise of future support on specific Gray whale issues.

A major treat of this visit was seeing the seahorse exhibit. Wow! These are amazing creatures. The Aquarium had an enormous variety of the species, some looked just like leaves, others like sticks.

One small seahorse did a small dance for our Co-ordinator which was enchanting.

## THE AGING ANIMAL

AFA has been dealing with a number of elderly dogs and cats. There's no doubt that the old animal has as many problems as the elderly human, if not more. Deafness, arthritis, cataracts, eating difficulties, and general discomfort. One current case is a 14 year old kelpie who has the worst skin infection we've seen in years. She's also suffering from geriatric vertigo, dizziness which makes it very difficult to eat, walk or toilet.

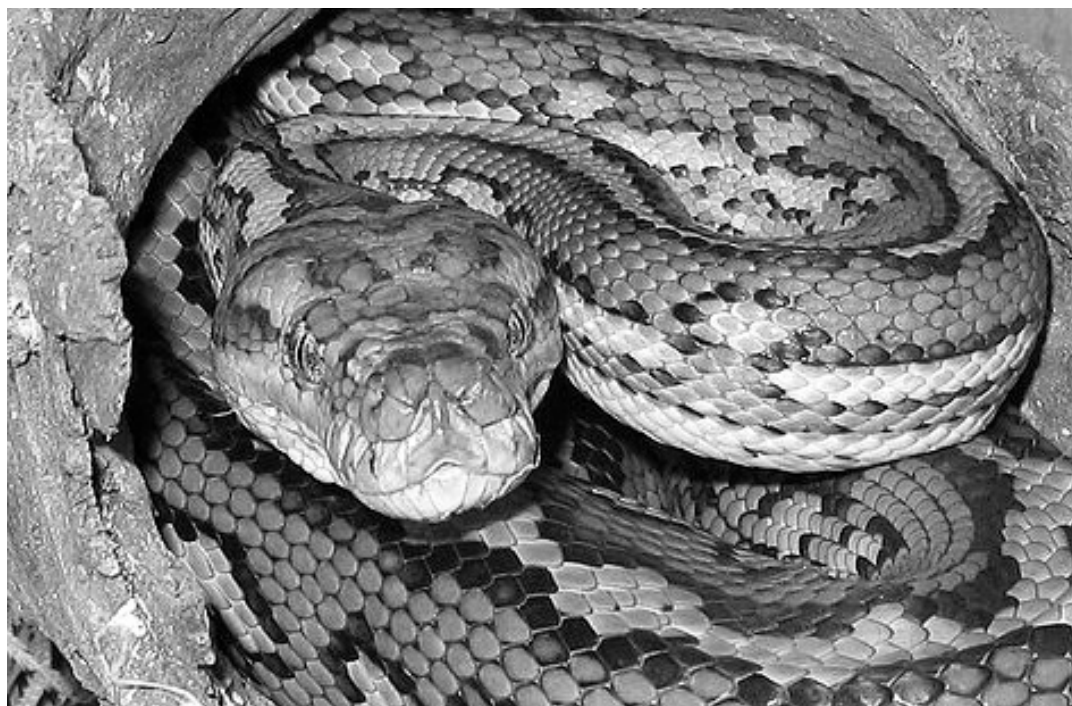
It's also very hard for many pet owners to find the strength and courage to put their animals down. Dogs will hang on for years unlike cats who seem to go down pretty quickly.

AFA believes the kindest thing to do in many cases is euthanasia. The charity had to help out with an elderly Kelpie over Christmas. She'd had a bacterial skin infection now for almost 3 weeks in spite of antibiotics.

In our experience, homeopathic treatments seem to do a better job in many many cases than antibiotics. Unfortunately, many vets are opposed to these remedies and it can be difficult to find a vet or homeopath who can prescribe.

## SNAKES

Yes, this has been one of those years. A very large python crawled out of Sue's veggie garden a few weeks ago. It was about 3 metres in length and quite beautiful. However, pythons eat pussy cats and a dear friend lost a 7 month old kitten to a python not very long ago.



It was a horrible way to go and we know pythons will take chooks, rabbits, cats, small dogs and even more ghastly, another friend told us about a python which had successfully swallowed a wallaby!

So the grassy play pen where the pussy cats and rescue dog love to roam is now covered in fine mesh as this seems to be the only way to adequately protect animals. Almost everyone in the Byron Shire has a snake story – there's been a veritable plague of snakes this year. Browns, red belly blacks and pythons.

AFA urges everyone who has a small animal to make really certain the yard is safe and it won't be safe unless its meshed. A few days after the backyard was meshed here, Sue went away with husband Norm, leaving a housesitter.

When she returned, the next door neighbours told her that one day after the meshing had been done, they saw a huge python on one side of the fence looking at the two pussy

cats who were similarly engrossed on the other side. Without the meshing, there's no doubt that two Burmese would now be python fodder.

## COPENHAGEN DISASTER

As you will all know by now, the climate change conference in Copenhagen was a disaster. AFA doesn't believe that the emissions trading scheme is going to slow climate change. We believe the solution lies in investing funds in wind, solar, geothermal energy and phasing out the coal industry.

Giving tax breaks rather than trading in emissions is far more likely to result in diminishing emissions.

Unfortunately, the debate is snarled up with sceptics who don't believe in climate change; politicians who are acting for the huge corporations; scandals in the UK; lack of political will in the US ; the list goes on and on whilst Planet Earth keeps heating up.

AFA's involvement with the Gray Whale is focused on the Arctic where massive collapses of species are becoming obvious. The speed of change is awesome and its highly unlikely that any scientist can predict the outcome as we really don't have an understanding of marine ecosystems.

But in our own lives, we can make a difference. AFA urges all supporters to turn off lights; have shorter showers; grow some of your own vegies; live lightly on the earth by walking where you can, not supporting the polluting industries. You might write letters to your local Council asking what Councillors and doing to diminish emissions in your shire!

It's going to be another busy year with lots of AFA's plate. Please give generously. AFA produces results and we're proud of our achievements and grateful for the ongoing support!

*For the Animals,*

**Sue Arnold & Friends.**