



UNDERWATER NOISE-THE ELEPHANT IN THE OCEAN

Noise has a devastating impact on the marine environment. Acoustic signals can travel long distances depending on the state of the tides, wind, seabed and other parameters. Christopher Clark, Director of Bioacoustic Research Program, Cornell University says the cumulative impact of noise in the urbanised ocean environment seriously compromises whales.

Dr. Chris Clark says:-
"Imagine a space ship is over your village and it's sending explosions down to every 10 seconds, driving everybody crazy. The choice is you either leave or die.

"The acoustic world is 10% of what it should be. The whales social network is destroyed, their world seriously compromised, their immune and reproductive systems impacted by stress created by noise."

With revelations that more than 22,000 vessel traffic a month are criss-crossing Gladstone Harbour, and a second shipping channel in the works waiting for approval by the Federal Minister for the Environment, and massive increases in coal ship traffic projected in the next few years, NOISE in the marine environment is a huge issue.

But it is not registering in the political arena, it has no currency with Federal bureaucrats, most public servants in Queensland have been sacked under Newman – or will be soon – and the politicians of every variety ignore any lobbying on the issue.

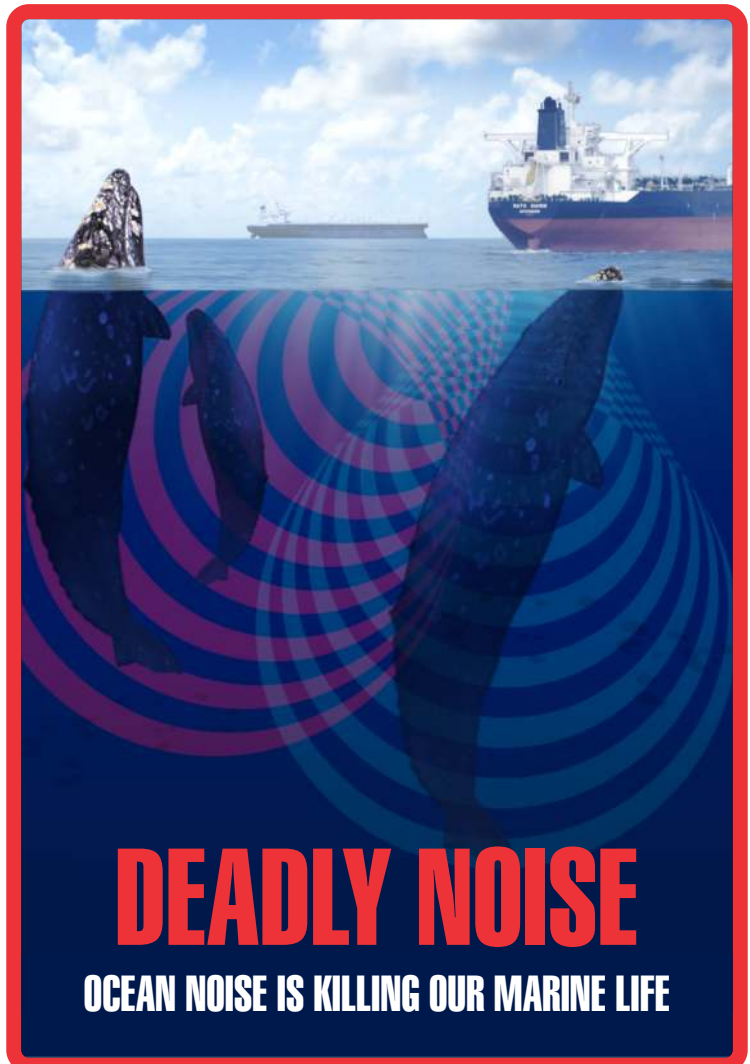
Yet underwater noise is a major issue in Europe and the USA as the resource industry moves into the

ocean environment in a big way. Seismic surveys are creating many problems for marine life and marine ecosystems. Then there's the US Navy which appears to be dedicated to the ultimate destruction of marine life.

In March, 2013, California Coastal Commission denied the Navy a permit in to harm marine mammals in the waters of Southern California and Hawaii on more than 31 million separate instances between 2014-2019 causing 5 million instances of temporary hearing loss; more than 13,000 instances of permanent hearing loss or other permanent injury and nearly 350 deaths;

Noise can travel for thousands of miles across oceans. AFA has fairly regular contact with Dr Chris Clark at Cornell University in the USA as he is one of the world's leading experts on the impacts of underwater noise.

Dr Clark told our Co-ordinator that in his bioacoustics laboratory on the east coast of the US, they can hear the seismic survey operations which Shell is conducting in Ireland. The lab can hear seismic testing in Brazil, in Iceland. Sound travels and so does the damage. Some of the impacts



DEADLY NOISE

OCEAN NOISE IS KILLING OUR MARINE LIFE

include:-

Stress, changes in vocalisation, inability to detect prey, changes in migration route, death, dreadful injuries, starvation, confusion, pain, panic, anxiety.

Whales can suffer from temporary and permanent deafness. Their lungs can explode and the pain is

appalling. Fish with swim bladders can also suffer the same kinds of injuries.

AFA works with some of the world's leading acoustic experts and we have access to critical information which the charity continues to disseminate as we try to raise awareness and political action.

GREAT BARRIER GRIEF SHIPPING VESSEL TRAFFIC

For the last two years, AFA has been working tirelessly on the underwater noise issue. When Greenpeace revealed last year the massive increase in coal ships, AFA committee made a decision to focus on noise.

In 2011, the number of coal ships going up and down the Great Barrier Reef numbered 1,722. By 2020, the number of coal vessels will be 10,150. That's one coal ship every hour all year round.

These ships create big noise. Add to the mix dredging, pile driving, blasting, building ports and infrastructure, underground pipes to carry gas to LNG terminals. The constant noise creates enormous problems for whales, dolphins, dugongs, fish and coral. With no studies being carried out by the state and/or federal governments, the issue of cumulative impacts of



Beaked whale killed by noise

noise in the marine environment are being completely ignored.

We know that certain frequencies and decibel

levels will cause permanent deafness in some marine mammals. Some species of whales will be unable to communicate to their young. Many will be sufficiently stressed by the ongoing noise in their environment that their reproductive systems will be inhibited.

AFA has sent letters to every single MP and Senator in the Federal Parliament on the underwater noise issue. Letters which clearly set out the problems without going into the science of noise which can be difficult to understand.

The charity received approximately 8 letters in response. In other words, the collective politicians in Canberra, whether they be Green, ALP or Coalition, or Independents just ignored the issue. So too have most environmental organisations.

We're also including a photo of a stranded whale which was almost certainly a result of noise impacts.

Humpback whales travel up and down the Great Barrier Reef. With the exponential increase in port facilities and resource exploitation, these whales will be at risk. Is this their fate?

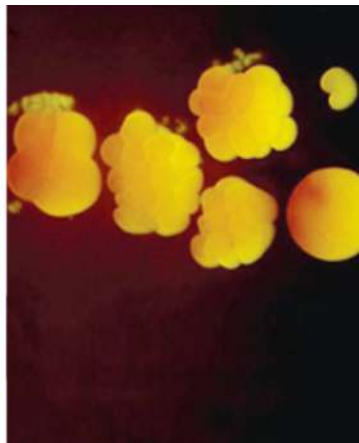


Image Source: Discover Magazine <http://tinyurl.com/coralsound>

CORAL IMPACTED BY NOISE

More than 50% of the Reef's coral has gone. Whilst the governments blame the crown of thorns starfish, invasions of these kinds of terminal predators are symptoms of a sick ecosystem.

One Australian scientist has said that the Reef will be just mud and seaweed if some very decisive steps are not taken soon to save this global heritage.

Scientists have discovered that baby corals, in their first days as free-swimming larvae in the ocean, find their way home by listening to the noise of animals on the reef, and actively swimming towards it.

The findings raise new concerns for the future of coral reefs, as increasing human noise pollution in the world's oceans, from ships' engines to drilling to seismic exploration, is masking reef sounds. A Dutch led team came to this conclusion.

Since corals, like fish, respond to reef sounds, then the masking effects of

human noise pollution in coral environments is of extra concern, he said:

"Anthropogenic noise has increased dramatically in recent years, with small boats, shipping, drilling, pile driving and seismic testing now sometimes drowning out the natural sounds of fish and snapping shrimps."

The researchers concluded that if, like settlement-stage reef fish and crustaceans, coral larvae use reef noise as a cue for orientation, the alleviation of noise pollution in the oceans may gain further urgency.

Why are Australian political parties and politicians deaf to this issue?

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BUT WAIT THERE'S WORSE TO COME URANIUM TO BE SHIPPED FROM TOWNSVILLE ACROSS THE REEF?

The United Nations' world heritage advisory body has expressed serious concerns with the Queensland Government's potential plans to export uranium across the Great Barrier Reef.

Queensland Mines Minister Andrew Cripps says once the uranium industry becomes commercially viable, a case would have to be made to have a licensed port off the east coast, and he has not ruled out Townsville.

"In the event that we are making commercially viable volumes of uranium that are being produced that result in the demand for more uranium to be exported, a case would have to be made for the costs of licensing a new port in Queensland," he said.

Adelaide and Darwin are the only licensed uranium ports now.

ABC NEWS PM REPORT:
<http://tinyurl.com/reefaudio>

Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke says he would consider an application for an east coast port.

"It wouldn't just be considered – there would have to be full assessments of it," he said.

"It's one where there's no way I could imagine a delegate dealing with it – it would be one that would be dealt with personally by any minister."

Tim Badman from the International Union for Conservation of Nature, which advises the UN's world heritage committee, has told the ABC this would be a "new threat to the Great Barrier Reef" and a "surprising activity to find in any natural world heritage site"

This news story gives some indication of the complete lack of concern at the state and federal level over major threats to the Great Barrier Reef. As Barry O'Farrell gears up to allow uranium exploration in NSW, Australia is moving towards becoming one of the world's biggest exporters of uranium. Which means more nuclear plants, more Fukushimas, more Chernobyls, more poisoning of the Earth's environment.

Australians are facing a grim reality. Our major political parties regard Australia as the world's quarry.

BOB IRWIN & COLIN RIDELL

MOUNT A HUGE CAMPAIGN AGAINST INDIGENOUS HUNTING OF ENDANGERED AND VULNERABLE SPECIES

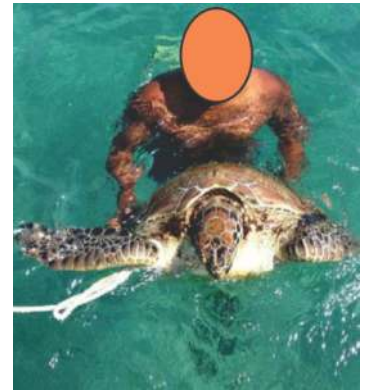
Thankfully, these two wonderful activists have mounted a long overdue campaign to stop the appalling slaughter of dugongs and turtles which is rife in Queensland, and the Torres Strait Islands.

Unfortunately, its not just dugongs and turtles but so many vulnerable and endangered species which are killed in the name of native rights.

AFA is totally opposed to the current situation where Native Title and Native Rights trump our wildlife laws and international conventions. It makes no sense to have two sets of laws in Australia, one for the general public and another for indigenous people. Particularly when there is no monitoring of the extent of indigenous slaughter and the figures that are available demonstrate a shocking situation. Rampant cruelty is part and parcel of indigenous "rights" and there is a huge reluctance on the part of authorities to prosecute indigenous cruelty.

As Bob Irwin and Colin have stated:-

It is of grave concern to us that the Native Title Act of



In Australia, this is some people's lunch

1993 still allows the hunting of endangered and vulnerable species within our country. Colin Riddell and I have been calling for a moratorium on the hunting of dugong and turtle until research shows how many are left. We now believe a moratorium is futile.

We therefore call for an urgent change to the Native Title Act 1993, so that any endangered or vulnerable animal or marine life is excluded from hunting by any means, for any reason."

The following organisations have joined a Coalition set up by Bob and Colin to stop this nightmare. Australians for Animals signed on along with many groups concerned about the issue.

- Animals Australia
- Australian Anti Shark Finning Alliance
- Australian Wildlife Protection Council
- Australian Wildlife Society
- Australians for Animals
- Bat Conservation & Rescue Qld
- Cairns Turtle Rehabilitation Centre
- Cee4life
- Cedar Creek Wombat Rescue
- Dulong Dingo Sanctuary
- Earthrace Conservation
- Fourth Crossing Wildlife
- International Anti Poaching Foundation
- Koala Hospital Port Macquarie
- Koala Preservation Society NSW Inc
- KoalaTracker
- National Animal Rescue Groups of Australia Inc.
- ORRCA – Marine Mammal Rescue & Research
- OZARK Australia Wildlife Carers Network
- RSPCA Queensland
- Save Australian Dugongs & Turtles
- Sea Shepherd Australia
- Southern Ash Wildlife Shelter
- Twinnies Pelican & Seabird Rescue Inc.
- Western Australians for Shark Conservation
- Wildlife Protection Association of Australia
- Wombat Awareness Organisation
- Voiceless

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OUR LOBBYING TRIP TO CANBERRA

In March, Dr Matt Landos and our Co-ordinator Sue Arnold spent several days in Canberra lobbying politicians and senior bureaucrats involved in "managing and monitoring" the development of the world's biggest LNG Terminal in Gladstone Harbour.

We met with a team of senior advisors from Tony Burke's office, Tony Abbott's senior policy advisor, Greg Hunt, Shadow Minister for the Environment, Queensland Green Senator Larissa Waters and several other MPs including Rob Oakeshott.

It was quite a revelation arriving at Parliament House where the parking area underneath now has a massive wall to protect the building from imagined invasions, plus hordes of police, dog squad, security people making it impossible for anyone to demonstrate close to the building.

In the Parliament itself, one could be forgiven for thinking we were walking through one of the most expensive Art Galleries in the world as no expense has been spared in constructing this lavish, over the top building where our politicians sit in their comfortable offices allowing the public a few minutes of their precious time.

We presented an astonishing amount of evidence of mismanagement, including the fact that there has been no independent third party audit of compliance of environmental



conditions of Gladstone Ports Corporation OR any of the huge LNG Terminals being constructed.

We presented evidence of the major mortality to listed EPBC species, knowing that dugongs, dolphins, and turtles are dying at an unsustainable rate. We documented the fact that none of the recommendations of the various research panels employed by Gladstone Ports Corporation have been acted on.

It was an exhausting few days and at no stage did we feel that any of our politicians were across the issue of the Great

Barrier Reef's vulnerability to resource exploitation. The Australian ran a major series of articles co-inciding with our lobbying trip. As our Co-ordinator had demonstrated to Minister Burke's advisors, no independent audit of compliance of environmental conditions imposed on Gladstone Ports Corporation had been undertaken .. with dredging now more than 52% completed. Almost none of the monitoring studies which were required under the approval of the development have been undertaken.

Gladstone Ports Corporation has been allowed to self regulate since its inception. Worse still, more research by AFA revealed that none of the mega corporations developing the LNG terminals were required to do third party independent audits unless required to do so by Minister Burke. So no third party audits of the entire development have been undertaken because Mr Burke has not required any audits of compliance.

In spite of major coverage by the Australian, there was not one single interview by any mainstream TV program, radio

program, nothing. The scandal of self regulation fell on deaf ears.

AFA then tried the FOI Act to see if any internal audits had been undertaken by the department and to obtain any documents which discussed the impact of dredging on listed species such as dugong, dolphin and turtles.

The Federal Government has refused to grant the charity a fee waiver, insisting that our request is NOT in the public interest.

Given that AFA now runs the Great Barrier Reef Blog which now has a rapidly growing audience (several thousand a month) at: www.greatbarrierreef.org.au) it's hard to see how our request is not in the public interest.

Instead, the charity would have to pay up over \$2,000 to get the information which Canberra has described as "not being in the public interest" in spite of the fact that AFA has obtained material which demonstrates more than 60 environmental offences by Gladstone Ports Corporation.

So much for our democracy. AFA is in the process of attempting to get any independent audit of conditions by the Queensland government as required under Queensland's approval conditions. We've been trying now for several months and we will continue to obtain any evidence, if any exists, that the development has had any proper auditing or monitoring.

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WHAT YOU CAN DO

AFA knows that this newsletter is destined to make everyone feel depressed as we bear witness to the appalling loss and destruction of our wildlife, our environmental treasures.

The charity works with some top notch scientists and lawyers and we have not given up hope that changes can still be made and sanity prevail.

What we need most of all are funds.

Sometimes we have to pay for FOI material because the processes of review and complaints can go on for months and years.

Right now

We're struggling to get an open meeting with Minister Burke's so called Independent Review Panel set up to examine the problems at Gladstone Harbour.

Dr Landos has had his work slandered and ignored by Government scientists and AFA is fighting hard to ensure that both his research and our investigative work re the failure of the self auditing process is dealt with.

All this takes funds

The issues are so complex that its impossible for most people to write letters to politicians and petitions do not help.

Please support AFA as we work tirelessly in our attempts to protect the precious environmental heritage of this nation.

*For the Animals,
Sue Arnold & Friends.*

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