



# HUMANE SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL

## Parliamentary Briefing

12 September 2011

Dear Parliamentarian,

We are pleased to provide you with our regular Parliamentary Briefing focusing on conservation matters of current concern to Humane Society International and our 40,000 supporters.

### Climate Change

HSI sincerely hopes we can look forward to the Government's Clean Energy legislative package passing the Parliament during this term. Debate rages about whether the economy can withstand a carbon tax but ignores the fact that we simply do not have the luxury of choosing our moment. Climate change is upon us and we cannot delay action to price carbon a moment longer. After many years of advocacy, HSI has been pleased to help ensure that incentives for conserving terrestrial carbon and biodiversity are part of the package.

### Albatross

Over recent months HSI has been negotiating with AFMA over new rules to prevent albatross dying in Commonwealth trawl fisheries. One simple measure would significantly reduce the problem. That is to prohibit the discharge of fish processing waste (offal) while fishing gear is in the water so that the endangered birds are not attracted to the boats when they can get caught. We are urging AFMA to apply this prohibition as a mandatory measure across all trawl fisheries where albatross are at risk.

### Live export

The Australian Government recently implemented (and then lifted) a suspension on live cattle exports to Indonesia, following the extremely disturbing footage of cruelty revealed on the ABC's Four Corners program. HSI has supported the *Live Animal Export Restriction and Prohibition Bill 2011* and the *Live Animal Export (Slaughter) Prohibition Bill 2011*, and had originally asked the Prime Minister to allow a conscience vote on live export. HSI is calling upon the Prime Minister to instigate a total ban on all live farm animal exports from Australia - the only way to address this critical animal welfare issue. HSI, working with the Indonesia Government, had previously undertaken a three year "humane slaughter" training program to help try and improve slaughter standards and practices in the region.

### EPBC review

On August 24<sup>th</sup>, Minister Tony Burke announced the Government's response to the "Hawke Review" into the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. Some nice amendments are proposed to help biodiversity, but they do not go far enough and come amongst a number of initiatives that we consider dangerous. We are particularly concerned the Minister is willing to countenance handing back powers of approval to state and territory governments and to consider weakening his leverage to improve the ecological sustainability of Commonwealth and State export fisheries. Also disappointing is the Minister's refusal to reinstate the public's right to appeal certain decisions on merit. Read our Opinion piece <http://www.abc.net.au/environment/articles/2011/08/25/3301968.htm>

### **Australian Sea Lions continue to die, science is ignored**

Despite recent scientific evidence which demonstrates the importance of Australia as a global hotspot for marine mammals, and the classification of the Australian sea lion as a political endemic species (found in only one country which increases their vulnerability), policies are still in place which allow Australian sea lions to continue to be killed at unsustainable and unacceptable rates. The gillnet sector of the Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery (SESSF), a Commonwealth fishery operating off the coast of South Australia, is estimated to kill 256 Australian sea lions a year, despite the species being protected under State and Commonwealth law.

HSI has been actively working to ensure that scientific recommendations contained within the peer-reviewed Goldsworthy report, that bycatch of Australian Sea Lions be reduced to as close to zero as possible, are translated into practice. However, AFMA's Sea Lion Management Plan and subsequent Temporary Order are, in HSI's view, insufficient measures to adequately deal with the substantial Australian sea lion bycatch in this fishery. The allowance of the **bycatch of 104 Australian Sea Lions per year** (or 52 females) or 'trigger limits' as part of the new measure, which once reached result in the closure of the fishery, is one example of this. HSI is concerned that the failure to rely on available peer-reviewed science will result in further decline of the vulnerable Australian sea lion, and is calling for urgent action to be taken to further reduce the impact of this shark fishery on the vulnerable Australian sea lion.

### **A turning point for Southern Bluefin Tuna?**

HSI recently attended critical negotiations which will decide the future of quotas for the critically endangered Southern Bluefin Tuna. The confidential negotiations, held in Sydney in late August, aimed to agree the parameters for a management procedure which, once established, will set quotas for the species for the coming years. HSI believes that quotas should be set at a level which will allow the fastest possible recovery of a species currently at a perilous level – less than 5% of its pre-exploitation biomass.

Whilst some progress has been made, negotiations will continue at the upcoming meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna, which will take place in early October in Bali. HSI will attend this meeting to continue to call for a halt to fishing while stocks at such a low level, or urge a precautionary approach should fishing continue. HSI will also be ensuring sufficient international attention is given to the thousands of endangered albatross that drown on the hooks and longlines set to catch Southern Bluefin Tuna, in addition to the sharks and turtles also killed.

### **Illegal importation of dog fur**

The exploitation of domestic dog and cats in the fur trade from China goes beyond the issue of cultural preference for animals, fortunate to be viewed as pets in some parts of the world. The violence documented by our investigative team in the slaughtering of the cats and dogs, particularly in China, is extremely alarming. HSI considers such cruelty totally unacceptable.

HSI's *Truth in Labelling* campaign for fur products follows on from our national campaign which secured a ban on the importation of dog and cat fur into Australia in 2004. Our efforts are directed at securing a commitment from Government to mandate that all fur products should be labelled with species and country of origin, so that consumers are not misled.

Subsequent investigations over the past few months have revealed that dog fur is being widely circulated throughout Australia including major national department stores and specialty chains. Mostly labelled rabbit, dog and cat fur is illegally being sold in Australia. Furthermore, independent testing has found the dog fur products to be dangerously high in total extractable hexavalent chromium, which is classified as a class 1 human carcinogen.

HSI has already asked the Minister for Home Affairs, The Hon. Brendan O'Connor MP to intervene due to the lack of action being taken by Customs to investigate these latest findings, and now calls on the Government to respond to the breach of legislation allowing the importation of such cruel products. Furthermore, HSI would like to see the Government develop labelling laws for animal products used in clothing, similar to those recently implemented in the European Union and the United States, so as to protect consumers and stop the importation of illegal products.

**Contact details for further information**

Below you will find the contact details for key HSI staff working on these issues. Please call at anytime to seek information on the above or guidance on any environmental or animal protection problem that is of concern to you or your constituents.

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**Humane Society International (HSI) Australia:** [www.hsi.org.au](http://www.hsi.org.au)

**Humane Society International (HSI) US:** [www.hsi.org](http://www.hsi.org)

**The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS):** <http://www.hsus.org/>

**Wildlife Land Trust Australia:** [www.wildlifelandtrust.org.au](http://www.wildlifelandtrust.org.au)

**Wildlife Land Trust US:** <http://www.wlt.org/>

**Species Survival Network:** <http://ssn.org/>

**Ecosystems Climate Alliance (ECA):** <http://www.ecosystemsclimate.org/>

The HSI Parliamentary Briefing is provided to all members of the Federal House of Representatives, the Senate and press gallery.