

**SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS**

**LEGISLATION COMMITTEE**

**Food Standards Amendment (Truth in  
Labelling - Palm Oil) Bill 2010**

**SUBMISSION**

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: 449**

**SUBMITTER**

**Kim Halliday**



# Zoos Victoria's Don't Palm us Off Campaign Report



**Campaign Period:** 16/8/09 to 30/6/10

## **Key Conservation Messages**

You have the right to choose food products that don't destroy Orang-utan habitat, yet you currently do not have the choice. Tell Food Standards Australia New Zealand that you want palm oil labelled on all food products. Tell them **don't palm us off**.

## **Key Objectives**

Melbourne Zoo's *Don't Palm us Off* community conservation campaign aims to:

1. Raise public awareness about the palm oil crisis exposing the link between food products and orang-utan survival in the wild.
2. Change food-labelling legislation in Australia and New Zealand to mandate the labelling of palm oil on all food products.
3. Develop a market driver for sustainable palm oil driven by consumer choice.

## **Indicators of success**

### **Indicators utilised to measure success of objective 1 are:**

- More than 130,000 people responded to the call to action.
- Public awareness data collected by PhD student Elissa Pearson (Social Scientist from University of South Australia) assessed community awareness prior to the campaign versus during the campaign indicating a rise in awareness from 53.4% to 97% amongst zoo visitors.
- Media generated by the campaign reached a range of audiences with several high profile media articles generated throughout the campaign period (7pm project, Fairfax, Herald Sun etc).
- More than 45,000 community enquiries were received in support of this issue during the campaign period.
- Hundreds of web-blogs were initiated during the campaign period, some as far reaching as the UK urging their nation to get involved.
- More than 31,000 people joined the facebook page.
- A rise in student awareness was noted within the Melbourne Zoo education team, prompting the team to redesign a learning program. It now assumes prior knowledge.
- The Palm Oil Action Group (POAG) experienced an increase of 80.43% in web-hits since the campaign launch, with the majority of unique visitors linking from the ZV webpage.
- The Campaign website has driven traffic to the zoo website generating more than 138,000 unique viewers. An above average view time was also noted for this page.
- The campaign attracted support from Country Life Soap who sponsored the campaign for \$50,000 whilst placing the Melbourne Zoo logo and call to action on product going into more 5 million Australian homes.
- Tiger Airways extended the campaign call to action through their database and website reaching more than 100,000 people.
- *Don't Palm us Off* was showcased within the New York Times demonstrating the geographical reach of the campaign.
- Melbourne Zoo's FUSE website continues to be utilised by more than 20 students on average per day to create their own unique 'mash-up' videos that they then send on to raise awareness of the issue through friends.
- Perth Zoo, Auckland Zoo, Adelaide Zoo, National Zoo and Taronga Zoo extended the campaign through their respective states.



Figure 1. More than 130,000 signatures were received via postcard and online



Figure 2. Orang-utan characters were utilised to engage children and layer the visitor experience.

### Indicators utilised to measure success of objective 2 are:

- A bill titled Truth in Labelling (Palm Oil) - 2009 was introduced to parliament by Senator Nick Xenophon, co-sponsored by Senators, Barnaby Joyce and Bob Brown. The Bill requests mandatory labelling of palm oil and was inspired by the *Don't Palm us Off* campaign. It now sits with the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs.
- A large number of submissions in support of the Truth in labelling Bill were received (with more than 80% in favour of the bill). These include submissions from Woolworths, all major zoos, WWF, Centre for Sustainability Leadership, Firestarter, Lawyers for Forests and more than ten celebrities to name a few.
- Zoos Victoria was invited to put forward a submission to the Food Labelling review process commissioned by the Australian Federal Government. Our organisation influenced several submissions in favour of palm oil labelling from within and outside the zoo industry. This review process continues and submissions are currently being reviewed.



Figure 3. Celebrities such as Claire Hooper and George Columbaris supported the campaign

### Indicators utilised to measure success of objective 3 are:

- 5 of the major 6 major importers of palm oil into Australia made public time-bound commitments to switch to certified sustainable palm oil by 2015 during the campaign period. Woolworths made additional commitments such as voluntary labelling. Both Unilever and Woolworths liaised with Zoos Victoria directly and confirmed that their decision was in response to a rise in community awareness, which they both attributed to the *Don't Palm us Off* campaign and work of WWF.
- A beauty product store based within Melbourne Central noted a drop in sales due to raised awareness (which they tell us peaked after the 7pm project ran a feature story on our campaign on Easter Monday, 2010). This prompted the store to produce signs promoting their range of certified sustainable palm oil products. Community enquiries indicate this is one example of many.
- Unilever decided to suspend all future purchases of palm oil from the Indonesian company PT Smart, part of the Sinar Mas group.
- Green palm certificates purchased by food manufactures within Australia increased during the campaign period, as did demand for RSPO certified palm oil.

### Stakeholder Relationships and Conservation Value

The *Don't Palm us Off* campaign strategy was developed to compliment strategies of lead organisations such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Australian Orang-utan Project (AOP), both of whom supported the campaign by sharing networks and advice.

The foundation of the campaign was based on logic; creating a market driver for certified sustainable palm oil (CSPO) saves biodiversity. Shifting sales towards CSPO supports the development of a process that aims to tackle environmental and social inequities through the ethical production of palm oil.

In order to create this market driver, labelling is required to allow food manufactures to respond to consumer needs and expectations. The benefits of advocating for labelling are two-fold as it also helps to raise consumer awareness and expectations.

Key statistics (provided by WWF) that demonstrate Australia's opportunity to have an impact on this issue are:

- Australia imports 130,000 tonnes of Crude Palm Oil annually.
- 32,500ha or 325km<sup>2</sup> of Indonesian forest is lost each year to service Australia's demand for palm oil. This equates to 32,500 football pitches a year.
- One hectare of forest is spared for every 5 tonnes of CSPO purchased in replace of unsustainable palm oil



Figure 4. The Sumatran Tiger was utilised as an ambassador generating further media interest.

## Where to from here?

Zoos Victoria remain committed to achieving the following objectives:

1. Raising public awareness about the palm oil crisis exposing the link between food products and the survival of species impacted such as Orang-utans in the wild.
2. Changing food-labelling legislation in Australia and New Zealand to mandate the labelling of palm oil on all food products.
3. Developing a market driver for sustainable palm oil driven by consumer choice.

However the tactics employed to achieve these objectives are likely to be sequenced as follows:

July 2010 - Public interface of Melbourne Zoo's *Don't Palm us Off* (DPUO) campaign finishes. DPUO is no longer classified as a ZV campaign. It now meets the criteria of a Community Conservation Medium-Scale Initiative with small yet targetted onsite and offsite presence.

The refreshed public call to action communicated via the website will now be:

- Contact your favourite food manufacturer and request that they source certified sustainable palm oil or avoid it all together. Let them know you care about Orang-utan conservation.

Oct 2010 - The General Manager of Community Conservation (ZV) will share the campaign model with American Zoo's in an attempt to extend the campaigns reach internationally. America has been selected as the best country to target due to low market awareness.

Nov 2010 - If the Bill is not successful, Zoos Victoria will continue to work with lawyers (working pro-bono) to submit a proposal to FSANZ. The Bill will be revisited once the labour government settles in to the new term.

Jan 2011 – Community Conservation will work with the commercial team and/or Zoos Victoria Foundation to explore the potential of a food-labelling concept that would help generate conservation and commercial gains and aid consumer choices in lieu of mandatory labelling.

Jan 2011 – Melbourne Zoo's visitor experience will utilise the birth of relevant iconic species to maintain community awareness.

July 2011 – Review strategy. Assess community awareness and the value of raising campaign efforts (or winding down the initiative) based on labelling outcomes. Consider the needs of the issue as well as organisational capacity. Update ZAA and POAG on any plans.<sup>1</sup>

August 2011 – In keeping with Zoos Victoria's vision of becoming a world leading zoo-based conservation organisation, ZV will consider which international zoos would be most strategic to share campaign strategies and resources with to better enable other zoos to make an impact within their region.

Jan 1 2015 – Zoos should play a role in following up on whether food manufacturers have honoured their public commitments to source 100% CSPO.

Ongoing – CEO's, Directors and campaign coordinators continue to opportunistically educate people within key positions of influence when feasible to do so.

Ongoing – General Manager of Community Conservation will continue to liaise with key stakeholders to seek strategic advice and update any shifts in strategy.

Ongoing – Zoo's will continue to opportunistically raise awareness of the issue through the media.



Figure 5. Maintaining relationships and levels of community awareness is a key strategic goal moving forward.

<sup>1</sup> Please note that communication from PNG currently indicates that one of Zoos Victoria's long-standing conservation priority projects may be under serious threat of palm oil expansion in the near future. We therefore may need to revise the role of community conservation prior to this time if the issue continues to escalate.

Ongoing – Zoos Victoria's *Don't Palm us Off* website and facebook page will be updated fortnightly to maintain relationships with supporters and harness community actions when needed.

For further information please contact Rachel Lowry, General Manager, Community Conservation, Zoos Victoria.