

As an Australian who was born in South Africa, I was shocked to learn that there is still an unregulated trade of ivory and rhino horn in Australia. And that this trade is occurring when two of Africa's most iconic species – the elephant and the rhino – are facing extinction.

I was approached by Donalea Patman of For the Love of Wildlife in August last year about the domestic trade. After I read the overwhelming evidence about Australia's ivory and rhino horn trade, which indeed raises significant concerns, I joined For the Love of Wildlife in the call for a full domestic trade ban and was Ambassador for Australia's first ivory and rhino horn crush event, known as the Melbourne Crush. At this event, we publicly destroyed ivory and rhino horn, to send a loud and clear message that the only value these items have is on living animals.

I was proud to be part of this historic event, joining Jason Wood MP and other high-profile individuals along with representatives from Jane Goodall Institute Australia, IFAW, Born Free Foundation, Save African Rhino Foundation, Nature Needs More, Gordon Consulting NZ, Zoos Victoria, 3 Degrees Marketing with news agencies 7 News, ABC News and The Age.

What I have learned from my involvement in working with For the Love of Wildlife is the overwhelming public support to ban this trade. This I believe is a critical factor that must be considered through this inquiry. At the Melbourne Crush event we destroyed items made from ivory that were surrendered by members of the public. People who no longer wanted to own ivory, even when it had been inherited from significant others who had passed away.

Almost everyone I've spoken to over the last eight months has had the same response as I have to this trade - shocked and mortified that it is still legal in Australia. There's a belief that this was banned years ago and we are all left questioning "why" this hasn't been addressed until now. I was also shown the results of a survey commissioned by WildAid and a number of conservation organisations in 2016. Over 1,000 people in Australia were surveyed and the results showed 77% of people already think it's illegal to sell ivory in Australia, and 86% think it should be banned – see attached. My experience of talking to people has certainly been similar to those survey results.

What this and the Melbourne Crush event has indicated to me is that Australian society has moved beyond the desire for these 'products'. This must be considered. My experience has shown me there is overwhelming support for a domestic trade ban.

In addition to this support, I would also like to highlight Australia's global responsibility.

I was born in South Africa and understand more than most, that for Africa's people to thrive, its wildlife must also thrive. The continued consumption of ivory and rhino horn in any country, including Australia, is driving these magnificent and iconic species to extinction.

When I was a girl, I'd see rhinos in our front yard. My grandmother would chase lions off the verandah with a broom! Wildlife was abundant and we learned to live with these incredible animals, respecting that we lived alongside them. It breaks my heart to hear that we could

lose them in the next ten years if we don't act immediately. And I question, what are we waiting for?

I wish to leave a legacy for my children, and my children's children, knowing I participated in doing all I could to save elephants and rhinos from extinction. As part of the campaign, we were invited to see rhinos at Werribee Zoo and I can tell you, this will be all that we are left with. We've just witnessed the extinction of Sudan, the last male Northern White Rhino and the world grieved deeply – this happened on our watch. We cannot be the last generation to see rhinos and elephants roaming in the wild.

It's undeniable that any trade, drives the demand for these products. Every day that we allow this trade to continue in Australia, we are stimulating demand which is driving the current killing spree.

I would have thought that the Melbourne Crush event would have been enough to demonstrate that Australians want this trade #Gone4Good.

I'm heartened to see that there is a Parliamentary Inquiry into the issue, and trust that the committee will seek to understand the depth of the trade, both legal and illegal, that trading in wildlife parts and wildlife trafficking is driving the extinction crisis.

Along with the undersigned, we join in calling on the Australian Government to act immediately in a full domestic trade ban on all ivory and rhino horn products. We wish to be part of the global solution to the current poaching crisis and trust that Australia will show leadership by joining other countries in a full trade ban.

Collette Dinnigan AO