

SUBMISSION TO AUSTRALIAN SENATORS

Food Standards Amendment (Truth in Labelling – Palm Oil) Bill 2009

I write to express my strong support for this bill and respectfully to request Senators to vote in favour of the mandatory labelling of products containing palm oil.

In my profession as a travel writer and magazine editor, I recently visited Kalimantan in southern Borneo and observed orangutans living in the Tanjung Puting National Park. I have attached a pdf of the article I wrote for The Weekend Australian about the experience.

Travelling upriver towards Camp Leakey, where orangutans can be observed in a semi-wild state, there are occasional glimpses of the vast swathes of palm oil plantations that lie beyond the fringe of riverside rainforest. On one bank of the river, a small and dwindling area of national park protects a small population of critically-endangered primates – on the other bank, their natural habitat has been totally destroyed to grow oil palms.

I do understand that palm oil is a useful product with wide applications in food and other products. I also know that there are sustainable ways to produce it. However in large areas of Indonesia and Malaysia, broad-scale plantations are pushing one of our closest animal relatives to the brink of extinction.

As a consumer, I would like to be able to make an informed choice about whether or not to purchase items containing palm oil. This legislation would provide that transparency. Again, I respectfully urge Senators to pass the Bill.

Chris Viney