



Newsletter
**Moreton Island Protection
Committee Inc.**

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Million Dollar compensation paid to Sun Aqua

“The state government has paid fish cage farmer Sun Aqua about \$1 million in compensation because it encouraged the company to set up in Moreton Bay but then rejected its application.

Sun Aqua was facilitated by State Development and Primary Industries Department staff who showed it likely places for its fish cages, asked the company to undertake preliminary work and proposed a deal by which DPI would sell it fingerlings.

Last August Premier Beattie announced the controversial project would be refused, based primarily on the Co-ordinators General's recommendation that the discharge of nutrients could not be adequately addressed.”

The Courier Mail 4th March 2005.

Documents obtained under Freedom of Information by Moreton Island Protection Committee showed that direct assistance was being given by Government to Sun Aqua.

This caused community concern that the Government's assessment of the proposal could be biased in favour of the proponent. This made it necessary to demonstrate community concern about the project, to ensure that government would consider the proposal fairly. The

misplaced enthusiasm for the project by government officers cost the government about \$1 million dollars of our money. The poor handling of the proposal also cost the community dearly in resources campaigning against the proposal.

The campaign to raise public awareness and to make submissions to government and politicians was supported by the wide section of the community. Tanglooma Wild Dolphin Resort encouraged their patrons to write letters, provided a venues for community meetings, a boat for the on site protest and also along with MIPC contributed funds to Queensland Conservation Council to help fund project officers, Julie and Natalie . Get Wet Sport made boats available for the on site protest. Cowan Residents Association, Sunfish and the Seafood industry added their names to those against the proposal. Rod Spence from Promedia provided invaluable promotional assistance and lobbying. Academics including Peter Hale wrote submissions, briefed campaigners and spoke at public meetings. Thanks to all who contributed to this valuable campaign, especially the letter writers.

Federal grants to environmental lobby groups end!

The Queensland Conservation Council has lost \$92,000 of funding from the federal government. QCC is Queensland's peak conservation group with over 70 member groups including MIPC. The viability of QCC as a peak environment group is important as it can respond quickly to threats against the environment state wide eg. Co-ordinating the campaign against the proposed fish cages in Moreton Bay.

The new grant criteria announced on the 8th April, limits grants to a maximum of \$10,000 and requires grants be spent on hands on environment projects such as tree-planting, weed control.

Another threat to conservation groups (and to charities with tax deductible status) is the Federal Governments preparation of legislation to prevent organisations with tax deductible status from carrying out political activity. Charities assisting disability groups could be prevented from publicly criticising government policy.

QCC urgently needs donations now to continue – make your tax deductible donation while its still tax deductible at www.qccqld.org.au or send to QCC, 166 Ann St Brisbane. 4000.

Moreton Island Protection Committee Inc.

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Statement of Aims

1. To promote the preservation of Moreton Island as a natural area to be managed for public recreation and enjoyment, provided always that the recreational uses are consistent with conservation aims.

2. To foster the conservation of the vegetation, fauna and natural features of Moreton.

3. To facilitate public awareness and appreciation of Moreton Island as a natural area and encourage support for its preservation and management in accordance with these objects.

4. To co-operate with, or promote co-operation by any means with and among persons, trusts, corporations, firms, associations, institutions, governments, instrumentalities or government, municipal authorities and other bodies in the Commonwealth or its Territories or elsewhere for the purpose of carrying out any object of the organisation.

5. To oppose any development or usage of Moreton Island which is contrary to the preservation and good management of the island in accordance with these objects.

6. Generally, to take such lawful action as it considers necessary or appropriate in the interests of promoting the preservation and good management of Moreton Island in accordance with these objects.

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Moreton Island Protection Committee or its members.

Contributions to this newsletter are welcome, but the editors accept no responsibility for alterations made to articles.

Printed by Rex Leo ph. 3878 5248

Editor Alan Genninges

Printed 28th May 2005

Sea grass survey

The Moreton Island Site 2 survey group completed our latest seagrass survey on Saturday 9th April. The site is located well south of Tangalooma near the Kounungai Red/White beacon. Janet and Jenni were unable to participate so Linda and Petra joined us for the weekend. Once again, Jenni collected the kit from Cleveland.

The low tide was 4.11 pm, so we reached the site around 2 pm. We immediately set out markers and began recording the data. The weather was appalling - cold, wet with poor visibility.

On this occasion, the seagrass did not appear to be as healthy. The epiphyte cover was very high throughout the site, although this was mainly confined to the *Zostera capricorni*. There was also a relatively high cover of an unidentified algae which was also mainly attached to the *Zostera*. Growths covering seagrass prevents the seagrass photosynthesising effectively thereby reducing seagrass productivity. We hope the growths on the seagrasses are a seasonal peak and will dissipate. There did not appear to be any *Lyngbya majuscula* in the area on the day of the survey. (*Lyngbya*, is a toxic blue green algae) On Sunday the weather was fine – so Linda went sketching, and Nanette, Petra and I decided to snorkel under the jetty at the resort. (There has to be some reward after undertaking a survey under such difficult conditions).

A big thanks to Trevor Hassard who on behalf of Tanaglooma resort arranged accommodation, meals and transport to and from the island and personally drove us to and from the site. This type of support is invaluable and makes undertaking these surveys much easier. For further information, please ask one of us or check the website.

www.seawatch.org/MoretonBay.html

Patricia Cavanagh

Mossman River Grass

Ranger in Charge, Chris Hanlon is investigating the use of superheated steam to control Mossman River grass. Steam has the advantage of being able to kill both plants and seeds in the one treatment, without resorting to chemical sprays.

Hand pulling by volunteers can complement steam treatment by targeting light reinfestations after steam treatment. An added bonus is that hand pulling can be done at any time knowing that Mossman River grass is not being controlled with chemical sprays.

Lost for 10 days. Mr Sirutis was found about 4 kilometers S.E. of The Desert. He was apparently heading for The Big Sandhills. The recently burnt area around The Desert would have initially made the going fairly easy. Four kilometers would have put him just outside the recently burnt area.

January 2005 wildfire

Each Anzac weekend from 1993 to 1998 MIPC conducted a plant survey on Middle Track. A total of nine 50 by 50 metre plots were surveyed twice. Three different fire regimes were surveyed. The January wild fire burnt the 2 western sites on the southern side of Middle Track. It seems the third site remains unburnt. I and Gordon have been relocating the corner posts for each site and recording their GPS positions.

Alan



Estimated area burnt by January 2005 wild fire, provided by Greg Carter N P & W S.

Report on Cape trip – March 11-13

A group of five (Philip Squire, Linda Back, Janet Dovers, Trish Cavanagh & Bronwyn Smith) went on one of our regular weeding trips to the cape – staying in the flat behind the information centre while another six members stayed at the Moreton Experience camp at Blue Lagoon, travelling by taxi.

We travelled up in Philip and Linda's 4WD on the Friday night. It was near high tide on an eroded beach with a big sea running which meant a very uncomfortable trip – for me anyway as the driver – so we sought refuge at the Moreton Experience camp at Blue Lagoon for the night, continuing early the next morning.

Saturday's task was weeding the cape around the houses – prickly pear, lantana and sundry other undesirables. On Sunday Janet did some experimental injecting of prickly pear with Glyphosate to see how effective this might be while Linda and I went to North Point to follow up on prickly pear removal from 12 months ago. We took out 10 bags which just about cleaned it up.

We also looked at the management plan option for a car park and toilet at the top end of the new camping ground site. This has been shelved due to lack of funds but we feel it's imperative particularly as the new camping ground will generate many more visitors, most of whom will drive from the camping ground to North Point along the beach. The pollution of the bush behind Honeymoon Bay indicated a well-used toilet site which will only get worse. There are still the remnants of a gently graded track from the proposed car park to the back of Honeymoon Bay of about 500 metres. MIPC is pursuing the matter of closing the last few hundred metres of the North Point beach along with the development of the car park and toilets. We also feel strongly that with the development of a large camping ground a section of family-friendly (ie car free) beach is important. Unless this happens with the finalising of the management plan it will be nigh impossible to implement later.

We drove back down to Blue Lagoon for a committee meeting and lunch. As well as the usual items we talked about the aforementioned problem at North Point and it was agreed that we should lobby the minister directly and try and arrange a meeting with her.

Dennis brought us up to date with the oral history book and showed us a draft. Some concern was expressed by most members present about the cover which we considered needed modification.

The meeting closed giving us a bit of time for a swim before heading back to the barge.

Philip Squire

Growing Pains:

Managing a larger protected estate

On 6th April 2005, conservation and union representatives came together to review the state of protected area management in Queensland. Linda Ward represented MIPC.

Exerts of the paper presented by Peter Stanton.

(Full report at www.qpsu.org.au follow links [Newsroom](#), [8th April 05](#) pages 39 to 41)

I have in recent years become increasingly concerned about the condition of the State's National Parks. We are continually being treated to the ludicrous spectacle of the total abandonment of long standing and successful management programs and their reinvention by staff who have no knowledge that the previous programs ever existed.

The removal of staff from parks means the loss of the intimate knowledge and interest that staff must have if effective management programs are to be determined and implemented. There is evidence that in some parts of the state there is a deliberate policy of driving such people (*experienced and motivated staff ed.*) out of the park service.

Margaret Throsborne and I recently wrote to the Minister enquiring as to whether or not there was a policy to remove staff from remote National Parks. I found the reply we received from the minister's office to be patronizing and deeply depressing I am told that "*QPWS presence in remote areas will continue where a sound business case applies*". This is not the language I would expect from those who care about the National Parks. The Queensland National Parks did not arise because somebody woke up one day with a sound business plan. They were conceived in altruism and pursued with passion.

Increased funding and resources are part of the answer but these will serve nothing without some major institutional changes first, for history clearly shows that there is no direct relationship between funding and results achieved by the department. Parks once well managed now bear the trappings of neglect in spite of the availability of resources that earlier managers could only dream of. Nothing will be achieved whatever the resources without highly skilled motivated staff with a strong sense of ownership of an area of responsibility. Staff must therefore be retrained on parks and skilled long serving staff must be valued as an essential link with the corporate past, rather than treated as dead wood to be cut off. **The sense of fear and repression within the Department must be lifted.**

Peter Stanton, started in Qld National Parks in 1963. From 1982 to 1988 he was Regional Director for Far Northern Region of Qld NP & WS. He then returned to The position of Field Conservation Officer, leaving QPW&S in 1997. He received the Public Service Medal in the 1996 Australian Honours.

Alan Gennings

Queensland Public Service Union EPA Staff Survey March 2005

Of 1600 EPA staff under QPSU coverage about 45% responded to the QPSU survey.

Full report at www.qpsu.org.au links [Newsroom](#), [28th April 05](#)

Summary of Survey results;

Over 40% felt they had been a victim of unethical/unprofessional management practices.

Over 45% felt there was a culture of fear management.

About 34% agreed they had been pressured at times to achieve unreasonable political objectives at the expense of basic priorities.

Over 20% reported that their interaction with the public and stakeholders had been often discouraged.

Over 45% reported they had been required to undertake more work than is reasonable for their position.

Over 75% reported that permanent positions had disappeared from their work unit.

Over 90% reported that that positions in their unit had been vacant for more than a month.

65% reported their operating budget had reduced over the last 3 to 4 years.

55% reported their operating budget was inadequate for the duties they had to perform.

Individual comments

The survey also detailed 358 individual staff comments. These were edited to protect the respondents identity. Some of the comments which reflect on the ability of EPA to adequately care for our National Parks are presented below.

“Executive performance is measured by budget outcomes, not environmental outcomes.”

“There is a high level of awareness of the poor state of parks generally”

“QPWS has allowed the disempowerment / disengagement of Managers previously heavily involved in the delivery of day to day management program.”

“operating budgets have not grown for approx 7 years and staff reductions have taken place over the last couple ... We are told to do less however this means in simple terms that our collective obligations under the Acts are not met – park values are in decline and job satisfaction is dismal.”

“Management is obsessed with keeping their political noses clean to the detriment of the workers and conservation itself”

“I find conservation increasingly difficult as a career because of bureaucracy, lack of resources and top down hierarchy”

“Senior Managers actively promote the staff management rationale “if you don’t like it, leave”

“I don’t think upper management gives a rats arse aboutachieving conservation objectives.

“Management are taking skills such as gun licenses off staff ... I have not been allowed to utilize a weapon for xx months, and on a daily basis look after (greater than 300,000 ha) I see ferals all the time, we are instructed to let them go, once trapped we are not allowed to shoot them humanely, but are given money \$x0,000 to trap, but not kill pigs for example.”

“My immediate managers are good-those at a higher level are pretty dreadful”

“Over 70% of our operating budget is used to pay contractors – with the result there is no money for basic operating”

“The Agency is all about systems, processes and reporting ...actual outcomes are irrelevant”

“In 6 months of management by a new District manager 6 hard workers have left”

“We are being drowned in useless paperwork ...Management has no environmental expertise”

“Service delivery, especially in regional areas has fallen”

“Practises and protocols introduced by senior management have made tasks in my branch much more difficult....customer service has declined significantly”

“Support systems provided by management actually hinder efficiency...Ecotrack is an absolute nightmare. Data that should take 10 minutes to enter can take hours.”

“Problem lies with management at the very top of the EPA”

“Senior mangement is far too willing to compromise environmental outcomes ...for their own careers”

“Staff whose original duties were in the research fields have been instructed over time to stop all monitering of areas and sit behind a desk”

“Lack of responsibility is a problem”

“Large numbers of staff are leaving and NONE are being replaced except through external funding sources”

“Research in EPA seems to be targeted for demolition”

“Managers are selected by interview on financial, administration and spin ability, and not on any proven ability to manage staff or operational knowledge of land management”

“Field staff are severely chastised for questioning poor decisions”

“Changes in management has lost a lot of the community engagement knowledge and culture we used to have”

“Most managers are not interested and/ or do not value accurate scientific products”

“Corporate services are making too many operational decisions”

Queensland Public Service Union EPA Staff Survey March 2005 Cont.

“There is no time to follow through and achieve acceptable environmental protection out comes”

“I enjoy my job but experience considerable frustration with the move to push rangers off park I am based in a work centre with no rangers on park and all our remote parks are of considerable travel distance. Management should do some sums to determine if they really are saving by not having rangers on park”

In relation to diminishing resources to deliver service to the public “ranger staff have to face the brunt of public dissatisfaction through verbal abuse over the phone and face to face”

“The xxx region suffer at the expense of Head Office – resources get scarcer while highly paid positions are developed and filled in Brisbane”

“I have personally not reported injuries and have paid for my own treatments, rather than report them and risk a ‘NONE’ policy or procedure that may prevent me or my colleagues from performing an essential part of the job”

“all the money is sucked up in Brisbane and not enough ground staff to carry out protecting the environment”

“we have lost our core business direction that rangers should be doing such as fire weeds and ferals”

EPA response to QPSU concerns.

On Friday 6th May, the Director General of EPA, J Purtill, agreed at a meeting with the QPSU secretary and 2 delegates to;

- review results of the QPSU EPA staff survey
- establish a working party of union delegates and management to collaboratively investigate issues raised by the survey and to develop solutions.

Charleville Senior Ranger dismissed.

On the 1st April Senior ranger Keith Walker, stationed at Charleville, previously Fraser Island, was dismissed from the EPA. Six of the 7 reasons were all related to departmental procedures not being followed rather than poor management decisions. eg. purchasing a pallet jack on capital works.

The seventh reason was for spending substantial time pursuing personal interests such as tourism, education and community based projects to the detriment of Agency and Regional goals.

Keith vigorously refutes all the charges.

Rangers will now be compelled in the interest of job security to abide by even the most trivial or absurd protocols developed in head office. Delivery of good environmental outcomes will suffer. The Park visitors friendly educational chat with a ranger is also threatened as it apparently lies outside Agency goals.

EPA Voluntary worker dismissed

Ms Darbellay, a voluntary worker for 10 years at the Moggill koala hospital was sacked after a heated exchange developed with an EPA conservation officer. Ms Darbellay had been informed that the department would no longer fund tea and coffee for the 4 volunteer workers rostered on 7 days a week.

EPA’s Minister Boyle has asked for the sacking to be reviewed and stated “*Departments have to learn the lesson that complaints are perfectly reasonable. Sometimes they can lead to us doing things better. It doesn’t matter who it is, EPA or health or whoever. There has to be a better culture right across the public service. People have to know they can bring their complaints to us and get a fair hearing*”. **We hope the Minister intends including EPA staff concerns about resourcing and management practices as deserving of a fair hearing.**

A Moreton Island perspective.

It is obvious from the QPSU’s EPA staff survey, that a great number of EPA staff are very concerned that what should be their primary role – responsible stewardship and presentation of our national parks - is being compromised by inefficient work processes imposed from above, and declining allocation of departmental resources to actual expenditure in the Parks. They see little evidence of their upper level staff fighting hard to improve the government budgetary allocation required for them to effectively do their job. The workplace culture as demonstrated in the above examples is not conducive to either getting the best from staff or EPA’s budgetary allocation.

We ask the Minister to take a fresh look at the department, take on board the well meaning comments by staff and the community and take positive action. Many low level staff working on the ground have enormous experience and professional knowledge – trust them to them make the decisions that concern their own area of expertise. Dismantle non-critical agency protocols that unnecessarily prevent staff on the ground working efficiently.

Eg. Moreton Island with a staff of 9 rangers did not to have anyone on duty over a 4 day period authorized to kill a pig, even if contained in a trap. On the ground qualified staff are not trusted to identify weeds. Before application for resources to control a weed species, even the most common weed must first be identified by the Queensland herbarium.

Over recent years MIPC representations to EPA and the Minister regarding lack of weed and feral animal control has resulted in diversion of resources from other projects. This unfortunately results in “staff having to do more with the same resources” as staff on the ground respond to MIPC’s requests. By supporting the QPSU campaign, we hope to enable EPA staff to more effectively manage the protection and the presentation of Moreton Island.

Alan Gennings.

Japanese attack on humpbacks a tourism threat

By Philip Hammond

Courier Mail 16 APR 2005, Page 029

TO ANYONE who has been enraptured watching a humpback whale glide close to a whale-watch boat and "eyeball" the people on board, the proposal is nothing less than appalling.

But the word out of Japan this week, although not yet officially confirmed by the Government, is that it wants to expand its "scientific" whale killing project from minke to include fin whales and humpbacks.

Any whaling by the Japanese in the Antarctic "could have devastating ramifications" for Australia's east coast whale-watching tourism, according to Oceania Project principal Wally Franklin. He says humpbacks are intelligent enough to become wary and shy of humans in boats.

At least 250,000 people enjoyed boat-based whale watching, involving probably 75 operators in New South Wales and Queensland. Thousands more watched the humpback migrations from vantage points on the coast, he said.

Peter Lynch, spokesman for Whale Watch Operators of Hervey Bay, agreed. "Even if the Japanese only took five, 10 or 20 humpbacks, it would affect the animals' behaviour around our vessels," he said.

Federal Environment Minister Ian Campbell this week voiced the Australian Government's stand and met his New Zealand counterpart to discuss this as one whale-related issue.

"Australia will continue to pursue a permanent global ban on all forms of commercial and scientific whaling.

"If these reports of Japan's proposed whaling increase are true, it will significantly raise the stakes at the next meeting of the International Whaling Commission in Ulsan, Korea, in June," he said.

But Lynch wonders just how serious the Australian Government is about protecting the environment.

"Japan used its economic ability to woo smaller countries to its way of thinking but Australia has never come even close to any trade sanctions with Japan," he said. "Would Australia use its trading power to sway Japan's position. There's not a hope in hell."



TARGET.....a Humpback Whale

Japan snubs whale plea

By Luke McIlveen

Courier Mail 26 MAY 2005, Page 010

JAPAN has delivered a blatant snub to Prime Minister John Howard and the rest of Australia, declaring it will slaughter endangered humpback whales if it gets the chance.

Mr Howard's letter to Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi appears to have fallen on deaf ears, with the Japanese Embassy in Canberra yesterday confirming it will push to have the ban on whaling in Australian waters lifted.

"Neither Japan nor Australia wish to see whale populations threatened. However Japan believes that if scientific research establishes that certain whale populations can be harvested sustainably, then such whaling should be permitted," the embassy said.

The message was polite but firm: Japanese whalers would begin slaughtering humpbacks if Japan managed to gather a two-thirds majority at next month's meeting of the International Whaling Commission in Korea.

Mr Howard wrote to his Japanese counterpart last week but has heard nothing. Mr Koizumi appears to have instructed the embassy to reply on his behalf.

In its lengthy defence of whaling, the embassy claims Japan kills 440 minke whales in southern waters each year out of a population of 760,000.

The humpback whale is not referred to by name, but the statement made clear that other species would be hunted if the IWC agreed to a change in the rules.

"Arguments as to what species of whale and how many may be caught for scientific purposes should be based solely on the scientific data pertaining to current stock levels and should be discussed by experts in a level-headed manner within the framework of the IWC," the embassy said.

The "scientific data" shows there are only 4000 humpbacks left in the world, some of which call into Australian harbours on their annual voyage from Antarctica to the warmer waters of the Great Barrier Reef.

In 1962 the humpback population plummeted to just 100 and conservationists fear harpooners will drive the creatures into extinction.

While Mr Howard's letter was significant, there has been no sign from the Federal Government that it is prepared to force whalers out of Australian territorial waters.

Environment Minister Ian Campbell yesterday suggested the states should push for change through their largely decorative "sister-city" ties with Japan.

"Australia and Japan have forged six

formal sister-states associations as well as sister-city relationships with some 99 cities," Senator Campbell said yesterday.

"These sister-state relationships between Australia and Japan provide another avenue for seeking support in lobbying the Japanese Government to end the so-called scientific whaling."

Labor foreign affairs spokesman Kevin Rudd yesterday accused the Government of failing the whales.

"What we've now got is a spineless Foreign Minister and a spineless Environment Minister pursuing a spineless policy when it comes to Japan's attitude to commercial and scientific whaling," Mr Rudd said.

"What's the Howard Government done? Sent a very cross letter to Japan. We've seen how the Japanese have responded," he said.

Shy whale pops up for a look around

By Ainsley Pavey

Sunday Mail 03 APR 2005, Page 057

IF THERE were an under-the-sea dance, it would likely be this whale which was hiding shyly in the corner with its head bowed. The Bryde's -- pronounced Broodah's -- whale is not big on public appearances.

So this rare image of the species captured last weekend by The Sunday Mail off Moreton Island, near Brisbane, has scientists' tongues wagging.

The slender, fast-moving cousin of the gregarious, stocky and fun-loving humpback is usually too quick for the cameras. It has a get-away speed topping 25km/h.

So shy of the limelight, this mammal with three distinct ridges on its head, lets out air metres before surfacing to empty and refill its lungs instantly before diving again.

It can also eat -- a mouthful of up to 365 teeth trap 165kg of bait fish a day.

Despite being named in 1878, it is still a mystery to scientists worldwide.

Some researchers predict 90,000 live in the Pacific region but confusion with the lookalike Sei whales makes the population uncertain.

The International Whaling Commission refuses to put a figure on the warm-water-dwellers' population.

Australia's leading whale researchers last year declared the Bryde's whale one of the nation's most mysterious.

Southern Cross University Whale Research Centre director Peter Harrison, the man behind the probe into Migaloo, the world's only white humpback, said the Bryde's whale could be under threat.

"Netting in remote Australian waters and Indonesia may be killing them, but we really don't know," Dr Harrison said.

Request John Howard to take further action on your behalf by;

Email log onto www.pm.gov.au/email.cfm

mail The Hon J Howard MP

Parliament House, CANBAERRA ACT 2600

Blood in the water

By Brendan O'Malley

Courier Mail 28 MAY 2005, Page 029

The Japanese want to kill more whales. Brendan O'Malley reports on the fight to prevent them extending the cull

FOR the past four years Peter Harrison has been the money man behind a team of marine biologists who unpack their binoculars and fire up their speed boats each spring, waiting for the whales to swim by. There's little hard cash in it -- less than \$1million a year to fund all whale research in the country. But what they lack in funds they make up in inventiveness -- driven by admiration for the largest animals to live.

Harrison, who heads whale research at Southern Cross University, doesn't get to spot whales much -- he is too busy tracking the even-more elusive grants. Yet even in the past four years the recovery of the humpback whales which wander up the east coast from their icy Antarctic feeding grounds has been hard to ignore. Best estimates put the so-called "area five" population these days at between 6500 and 7000 -- when the explosive-tipped harpoons fell silent in the 1960s, survivors numbered about 200-500.

Within the next two decades and populations growing 10 per cent a year, we will come close to pre-whaling numbers, about 30,000.

So now Japanese whalers want to resume commercial hunting. At next month's International Whaling Commission meeting in Ulsan, Korea, they will push for the quota for so-called "scientific culling" of minke whales to be doubled and a new quota of 50-100 fin and humpback whales. But the resurgence is uneven and could collapse at any time, Harrison says. Area four whales, which appear off the West Australian coast each year, are multiplying at a healthy 9-10 per cent a year and number as many as 14,000. In contrast, nine years of intensive study has uncovered a paltry 23 humpbacks on the Fiji-New Zealand migration route.

Western researchers scorn Japanese claims that scientific culling is necessary. The key research is into the diets of humpbacks, minkes and fin whales -- shown decades ago to be small crustaceans called krill. The Japanese insist they need liver samples to extract DNA and that they need to kill whales to work out the age mix. "Very little of their results are published in international peer reviewed journals, the research is generally of poor quality and it's simply not necessary any more," he said. "We got all the scientific information you can

get from killing, like the age when they give birth to their young, from the whaling days. DNA from skin flakes can tell us just as much about their genetic diversity, sex and very soon even their age."

Even Japan's lead negotiator, Joji Morishita, admitted on Thursday that the real reason for scientific culling was to work out the number of whales which could be harvested sustainably. However, Harrison said there was no doubt an annual take of even 50 to 100 fin and humpback whales a year would slow their rate of recovery and, in a few years, could reverse it.

There are moral issues also. "You've got a highly intelligent air-breathing mammal like us, in their natural environment, suffering for a long time because when you kill a 27-metre animal it can take hours -- it's not the same as humanely killing terrestrial animals like cows," he said.

There is another issue -- the impact on Australia's \$270 million whale-watching industry, about \$60 million of which is based in Hervey Bay.

"I have no doubt their behaviour will be affected if whaling resumes," said Wally Franklin, the director of whale research group The Oceania Project.

"The worry is that the Japanese will target larger ones which are more likely to be the breeding females we see coming into Hervey Bay every other year," Franklin said.

Until yesterday, this was a war of words -- a letter from the Prime Minister, an attack by Federal Environment Minister Ian Campbell and a stinging rebuke from Japanese bureaucrats. It was good media for the Government.

Humane Society International wildlife spokeswoman Nicola Beynon said court action was needed because Japan had proven impervious to diplomatic pressure. HSI lost the first battle in the legal stoush yesterday morning when Justice James Allsop refused it leave to bring a case against Kyodo Senpaku Kaisha Ltd. Greenpeace claims to have photographic and video proof KSK regularly kills minkes in the Australian Whale Sanctuary in Antarctica. Challenging the action, the Federal Government conceded this fact and Allsop based his decision on the Government's argument for diplomatic rather than court action. Its stance has outraged environmentalists, who point to the double standard in the Government using navy boats to go after countries poaching Patagonian toothfish in our Antarctic waters.

"The window for court action is close because if Japan gets a simple majority in the IWC next month and passes a resolution in favour of scientific whaling it could undermine any case in the International Court of Justice," Beynon said.

Japan only needs a majority of one to amend clause eight (on scientific culling) of the International Whaling Convention and only a simple majority to amend clause six (the commercial whaling ban of all species).

Twenty-seven IWC members are believed to be against whaling while 28 support it, mostly Third World countries, which it is claimed, have been bought by Japanese aid.

The looming showdown has led to calls for Australia and New Zealand to try for a re-run of history and plead their case before the ICJ, where the two cases against French nuclear testing in the Pacific were thrashed out.

That could open up troubling difficulties for Australia, however.

Firstly, it could take years for a judgment just when a quick turn-around is needed, University of Sydney law professor of international law Donald Rothwell warned.

"Clearly, given the issue at stake that's not necessarily productive," he said. "A better option would be to go to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea to seek a provisional measure to stop any attempt by Japan to hunt humpbacks," Rothwell said.

"It's something akin to a domestic court issuing an injunction and could be issued in a month as a stop-gap until it was sorted out in the ICJ." Australia did just that recently over exploitation of southern blue fin tuna by Japan, which would

be exposed to the risk of trade or other sanctions from the United Nations Security Council if it breached a provisional measure. A more serious problem for the Government was that an ICJ case could expose the tenuous nature of Australia's claim to sovereignty over 42 per cent of Antarctica.

University of Melbourne international law expert Professor Gillian Triggs said Australia had always been careful not to go it alone on issues involving Antarctic Treaty nations for that reason. Triggs, who has served on the Federal Government's taskforce on whaling, said the ICJ also might not have jurisdiction despite there being a credible case that Japan had failed to act in good faith on its scientific whaling.

The other tricky issue for the Government was its desire for a free trade agreement with Japan. The Japanese would love an excuse to dump the FTA to get farmers off its back. Whales could provide that excuse.



Japanese whalers on board the Yushin Maru harpoon a minke whale in 2001 inside the Australia's Southern Ocean whale sanctuary

What's on!!! Ph 3321 1463

June 4 NPA 75th birthday at Fort Lytton

June 24 to 26 Volunteer weekend at the Cape.

July 15 to 17 Volunteer weekend at the Cape

July 15 to 17 Whale watch, camping at the Cape

Aug 17 AGM on Moreton – Exhibition Day

Fort Lytton National Park

National Parks Association

75th Birthday celebrations

Saturday 4th June 10am to 3pm

Entry to NPA's 75th birthday celebrations at Fort Lytton, Lytton Rd, Lytton is free, as is the sausage sizzle. There will be guided walks, historical displays and relics to explore, interesting talks, NPAQ special interest group displays. All MIPC members and friends are **welcome to help MIPC with our display**. MIPC is affiliated with NPA, so come along and help celebrate.

Volunteer Weekend at Cape Moreton

June 24th -26th. Volunteers for weed removal at The Cape will stay in the bunkhouse at the rear of the Information Center. An added bonus is the chance to spot whales while pulling weeds. Dep 6.30pm Cost \$60

Volunteer Weekend, Cape Moreton

July 15th - 17th July (Unconfirmed) As the bunkhouse has to be available for other community groups and EPA workers, our request for July cannot be confirmed now. If others require the bunkhouse, volunteers will still be able to transfer to the whale watching camp. If interested in being volunteer at the Cape, please register your interest so we can contact you as opportunities arise. Dep 6.30pm Cost \$60.

Whale Watching Camp July 15th – 17th

Camping at our traditional spot on the southern edge of the Cape. BYO everything. Depart Fri 6.30pm. Cost \$70.

Volunteers for cane toad search

Sen Ranger Chris has requested volunteers to search for possible cane toads on the Bayside. Anyone interested in spending a weekend on the Bayside, and searching at night for toad calls please contact MIPC. Parks may be able to help with accommodation and transport on the Bayside.

Volunteers needed for St Helena

Parks are calling for volunteers to remove Prickly pear on St Helena. Could be a day or overnight event. Please contact MIPC.

Volunteers to assist Information Centre

MIPC is talking to the QPWS with a view to MIPC volunteers manning the Cape Information Centre. Initially it would be for one weekend a month throughout the year. Each person would have to commit to one or two of these weekends over a year. We would need a pool of about 10-12 members willing to participate. If we get sufficient interest we will arrange a training day with the QPWS, probably in August. Transport and accommodation at the Cape will be provided by QPWS. **Phone to register your interest on 3321 1463.**

Hurry to MIPC whale watch, to see Humpback whales before they are killed!

Contact the PM to encourage him to take further action.

To Email log onto www.pm.gov.au/email.cfm

To mail The Hon John Howard MP, Parliament House, CANBERRA ACT 2600