**Aggressive Non-Violence – the Grass Roots Activism of Sea Shepherd Australia**

**Graham Wells, Sea Shepherd Australia**

Sea Shepherd Australia is a non-profit conservation organisation whose mission is to end the destruction of habitat and slaughter of wildlife in the world’s oceans in order to conserve and protect ecosystems and species.

Sea Shepherd Australia uses innovative direct-action tactics to investigate, document and take action when necessary to expose and confront illegal activities on the high seas. By safeguarding the biodiversity of our delicately balanced oceanic ecosystems, Sea Shepherd Australia works to ensure their survival for future generations.[[1]](#footnote-1)

In our presentation, we aim to address the three key themes of the conference:

* **How do we know our ecological limits?**

For the last 9 years Sea Shepherd has been regularly running campaigns in the Southern Ocean. During our last campaign, our direct action tactics we helped save the lives of 932 whales.

As well as our direct action campaign, Sea Shepherd has worked proactively with other organisations and governments to stop illegal poaching and other destructive practices.

Most recently we have partnered with the Ocean Alliance to document and research the ongoing toxicity in the Gulf of Mexico arising from the Deep Water Horizon oil spill.

In addition, and at the invitation of the Goolarabooloo people in Western Australia’s Kimberley region, we collaborated to help save James Price Point from unnecessary development.

Our presentation will seek to be interactive and take questions on our philosophy and actions in realizing our ecological limits.

* **What legal and governance mechanisms can help us live within our limits?**

**How do we change our current economic, political and legal systems to create human societies that live in a harmonious relationship with the Earth community?**

There is a current injunction by the full Federal Court of Australia, against the whalers coming into the Australian jurisdiction of the southern ocean.

Whaling vessels are barred from refueling in Australian ports, however despite the injunction against whaling, and international treaties, the Australian government has elected not to enforce the Federal Court’s orders.

As well as taking direct action to stop illegal and wrongful activities taking place, Sea Shepherd lobbies via various media to challenge public opinion, and to bring the public with us, when we confront the illegal activities that take place in what is a whale sanctuary.

In operation Kimberley Minimby, and with the Goolarabooloo people, we and other non-government agencies were able to confront both the Court government and the development interests and influence Woodside’s decision to pull out of the proposed development.

Given that many legal and governance mechanisms do not help us to live within our limits, we propose to discuss collaborative and non violent strategies that help us all live in a harmonious relationship within a whole Earth community.

* **How do we change our current economic, political and legal systems to create human societies that live in a harmonious relationship with the Earth community?**

Sea Shepherd’s activism relies upon an aggressive non-violent form of direct action to stop wrongs taking place in marine environments.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss what we do, and to help other people and organisations live in more harmonious relationships with the nature.

We don’t profess to have all the answers, but the whalers have called us ‘relentless’ in our pursuit to stop whaling in the Southern Ocean. We have taken that term, and named our next campaign, ‘Operation Relentless’. We look forward to discuss this campaign, and others in this seminar.

**Speaker Biography**

Prior to re-training as a lawyer, Graham Wells worked in Outdoor/Environmental education. Since being admitted, he has worked as a civil litigation advocate in the community sector, appearing in various jurisdictions for disadvantaged people.

He currently works as a senior lawyer and clinical supervisor with Social Security Rights Victoria.

He also coordinates the Melbourne Chapter of Sea Shepherd Australia.

He also enjoys relaxing with his children and enjoys connecting with the environment, mostly through sailing.

1. Sea Shepherd Australia Mission Statement, <http://www.seashepherd.org.au/who-we-are/>, as at 25August 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)