

To the Honourable Niall Blair,

Her big brown eyes were filled with pain and sadness. She stroked her baby on the head, trying to wake him. All around her, the palm trees that were once her home, lay broken and destroyed, like the baby that she held in her arms, another victim of the world's greed for palm oil.

Palm oil has become one of the world's most sought after products. It can be found in everything from hot cross buns to the detergent we use to wash our dishes. Our greed for palm oil is out of control and it needs to stop!

Palm oil is not the villain. It is the palm oil industry that is causing so much damage to the animals and planet earth. Those beautiful, big hairy creatures called orangutans have been caught in the middle of the palm oil industry. In the past ten years over 50% of their habitats in Sumatra and Malaysia have been destroyed. Did you know that 3.5 to 7.5 billion trees are cut down each year for palm oil? With no home, no source of food and no protection, the orangutans are dying from either starvation or from being clubbed to death by the people who chop down the trees. If the world does not stop this unnecessary deforestation in the quest for palm oil, the orangutans will soon be extinct. There are over 300,000 different animals found throughout the jungles of Borneo and Sumatra, many of which are injured, killed and displaced during deforestation.

Our beautiful planet is also a victim of the palm oil industry. South East Asia, where most of the deforestation occurs, is suffocating from toxic pollution. The smoke that is produced from the burning of the rainforests is killing hundreds of thousands of people every year. The deforestation is leading to large amounts of CO₂ being released into the atmosphere. This then leads to climate change.

Climate change will cause sea levels to rise and weather patterns to change. Unfortunately, because Australia is an island, the sea levels will keep rising and pushing in. Eventually, Australia's 25,000,000 people could be pushed into the centre of Australia. This means less housing, less jobs, and the list goes on. All because we want to eat hot cross buns?

How can we reduce the amount of palm oil we use? When you are buying products make sure you check the packaging and check that the products are free from palm oil. Just because it says "palm oil free", it doesn't necessarily mean it is. Products such as lipstick, instant noodles and shampoo

all contain palm oil as well as thousands of others. If there is no demand for palm oil, the industry may eventually disappear.

Next time you reach for a chocolate bar or your favourite shampoo, ask yourself, is it really worth the life of a baby orangutan?

Written by Hamish

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