

# Keeping eye on whalers

The fight to stop whaling has been a long one, and there is still plenty to do. *Rachelle Stewart* talks to local people working to keep Kiwis aware or the issue.



WHALE WATCH: Members of Friends of Tangaroa from left Don Richards, founder of the group, Goldie Crawford, 9, and Jo-Anne Crawford.

Photo: Rachelle Stewart SW/Whaling 0206609-01RS

The serene seas that surround our whales could become a blood bath if an international ban on whaling is lifted soon and people in Wellington do not need to feel powerless about it.

The New Zealand government will be part of the International Whaling Commission in Portugal where countries from around the world will consider lifting the ban – meaning Japan will again be free to hunt the endangered species in their coastal waters.

While this is a global issue, support to stop the proposal being adopted can start in the community by signing petitions at Body Shops or joining a local group.

Don Richards is founder of Friends of Tangaroa – a non-political Wellington based group started up in 2007 which is on a mission to make a difference to whaling.

“There are 10 of us in the group

and rather than protest against whaling in a violent way, we are looking at understanding the Japanese position and for them to understand ours,” he says.

“It’s a highly emotive area, we’re trying to take a step away from the emotional side of it but it does need to be treated sensitively. Our group is called the “Friends of Tangaroa” as Tangaroa is the Maori god of the ocean and we respect and honour Tangaroa’s domain.

“We are also friends of Owatsumi, the Japanese lord of the sea and all water creatures and we respect and honour Owatsumi’s domain.”

Don’s interest in getting involved with putting a stop to whaling was sparked two years ago when a lone whale visited Island Bay.

“I had sort of been thinking about doing something but after I saw the whale at Island Bay it felt like a sign,”

he says.

Don says not only is the meat no longer being eaten in Japan as it once was but the whaling business is losing money. “They argue it’s for science. They hunt in our Southern Oceans around the Antarctica because the sea is cleaner and the meat is better.”

The group has sent a letter to Japan outlining their concerns about whaling and last October a campaign to stop ‘scientific whaling’ in the Southern Oceans was launched at the Beehive.

A pamphlet has also been sent to 15 Mayors throughout New Zealand who will then forward it on to 15 Mayors in Japan of our sister cities.

Don believes New Zealander’s have a good understanding about whaling and show respect for the gentle giants, but says people need to be aware of how their actions against whaling will be seen in Japan.

“They don’t like to be told what to do by the West and it only forces

## Body blow

Staff from The Body Shop has been working in conjunction with WSPA for their campaign which runs until June 12, collecting signatures for a petition against the proposal, which will be presented to the government mid-June.

Bridget Vercoe from WSPA says it’s a call for action to encourage the New Zealand Government to speak out against the proposal.

“Our main concern with a proposal which would allow Japan to hunt endangered whales in their coastal





LOCAL SUPPORT: Jacqui Larkin from The Body Shop gets support from the public against whaling.

PHOTO SUPPLIED

them to defend themselves," he says. "If the proposal does get the go ahead, my biggest concern is that other countries will join in the hunting of whales, such as South Korea and things will become even worse."

Don says people may feel they can't make a difference to what is an issue of such grand scale, but by joining one of the many groups against whaling they will be making a difference.

"There are only 10 of us and already we are making a difference and have been in contact with the Japanese Embassy," he says.

"You're not powerless, you can make a difference."

waters is that it would effectively lift the whaling ban," she says.

So far The Body Shop has collected 890 signatures and WSPA more than 2000 but they are hoping to collect even more - if you'd like to make a difference visit [www.wspa.org.au](http://www.wspa.org.au)

■ If you'd like to get involved visit [www.friendsof-tangaroa.co.nz](http://www.friendsof-tangaroa.co.nz), [www.projectionah.org.nz](http://www.projectionah.org.nz) or [www.greenpeace.org.nz](http://www.greenpeace.org.nz) to find out which group best suits you.

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