



The Hon. Tony Burke MP

T R A N S C R I P T

Press Conference

17 February 2011

Subjects: Whaling – AWU Comments – Scott Morrison unfit for office

E&OE only

TONY BURKE: Cameras alright to go? Okay, terrific.

I wanted to bring you up to date on the situation at the moment in respect to the Japanese whaling fleet. At the moment there are still conflicting reports.

We have not been able to, as yet, have it confirmed that the Japanese whaling fleet is in fact intending to finish operations for the current whaling season that they've been engaged in. So, at this stage, we are certainly not in a position to be able to say that Japan has determined to stop whaling for this season.

Even if we were to get reports of that nature, I have to say that, in the view of the Australian government, it's not time to celebrate until we get a decision from Japan that they are stopping whaling for good.

Australia's position is really simple on this: whaling should end.

Japan should be in a situation with the rest of the world which is in opposition to whaling. Our position remains that we will continue to pursue the action in the International Court of Justice to try to bring whaling to an end all together. But until we've got a clear signal that whaling is ending, and ending all together, we certainly don't believe it's time to celebrate.

JOURNALIST: How will the suspension of whaling affect that international legal case?

TONY BURKE: We've had no legal advice on that particular issue. But, can I say, as long as there is an intention to resume whaling at any point, then Australia has a case to run.

JOURNALIST: Are you talking to the Minister over there in Japan to find out what the, what the actual situation is? To get this confirmed?

TONY BURKE: The information, we've been dealing with our post in Tokyo and we've been getting our information via the embassy there.

JOURNALIST: Mister Burke, there've been some question about how effective this international legal action will be. How many whales has the government rendered being taken by the, the Japanese whalers so far?

TONY BURKE: Through a court action that's not yet determined? I think you know the answer in terms of the court action that hasn't yet been held, we haven't got a decision yet, then you don't get the action from it. But certainly we're running the case with the intention of winning it. Simple as that. We want to have a situation where Australia has a successful action against Japan in the International Court of Justice. An action which our predecessors always refused to take, but an action which we are taking for one simple reason: we want to win it, we want to stop whaling.

JOURNALIST: How long will that process take though?

TONY BURKE: I'm not going to be prejudging each stage of a legal process; legal processes always take longer than they should, that's true. It is the case that if we could have a decision tomorrow that was favourable to us that would be our preferred position. But we are running the case with the intention of winning a case and stopping whaling.

JOURNALIST: But so far it's true that current policy has not lessened the number of whales that have been taken at all. That's true isn't it?

TONY BURKE: I must say that it's the case with any legal action that until the legal action is concluded you don't get an outcome from it. I'm not sure beyond that what you're alluding to.

JOURNALIST: Have you given credit to the Sea Shepherd for doing what the government couldn't?

TONY BURKE: There's a presumption in that question about whether or not for this season has stopped. As I say, we still don't have confirmed reports on that and I'm just not going to prejudge that in anyway and the premise of the question that you've asked there would demand that. I'm just not going there.

JOURNALIST: So the Australian embassy in Tokyo has asked the Japanese government for confirmation and they haven't replied, is that the case?

TONY BURKE: On the precise status on who's spoken to who and things like that, what I've been asking for is "Do we have a clear answer yet?" At this point we do not have any statement from the Japanese Government to us confirming that this season of whaling is at end.

JOURNALIST: Can I just ask, on a different issue, the AWU the other day attacking Rio Tinto, you know: "We're at war with them". Craig Emerson said yesterday that that wasn't the sort of language he would use. Do you agree with him?

TONY BURKE: It's not the sort of language that I'd use either.

JOURNALIST: Do you agree, what do you think then about the fact that today in Brisbane Bill Ludwig and Paul Howes have attacked Craig Emerson as a 'rat' who's only, only wage he ever negotiated was his own?

TONY BURKE: On that basis, I presume there's some people who are giving a view that they hold. It's not a view that I hold.

JOURNALIST: Do you think, do you approve of that kind of language?

TONY BURKE: Oh look, you've just given me a quote that I haven't heard. You've just given me a quote that I haven't heard nor do I know the context of and so, Matthew, as you'd expect, I'm not going to run-off at the mouth with that. But certainly the language that was used is not language that I'd use either.

JOURNALIST: What do you make of Scott Morrison, the reports today that he's pushing for an anti-Muslim immigration policy. He says that he won't talk about gossip, but do you think this is an approach that the Coalition shouldn't be looking at?

TONY BURKE: Scott Morrison is out of control. Scott Morrison is not up to the job that he holds and he should be gone. Tony Abbott should know that and if Tony Abbott's fit for a national leadership position he'd get rid of Scott Morrison.

JOURNALIST: Even if he-

JOURNALIST: Tony Abbott agree with, agree with Scott Morrison that, on, two days ago when he said that he, he'd thought what Morrison was saying was correct.

TONY BURKE: And then he praised Scott Morrison for being manly enough to give a 'non-apology' on issues that Tony Abbott had made similar comments as well. Don't take any of my comments here as being praise for Tony Abbott. There's action against Scott Morrison that Tony Abbott should take.

Thank you very much.

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