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Committee Secretary
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Submission from Pianos Recycled into the Parliamentary Joint Committee's examination into Trade in Elephant Ivory and Rhino Horn

Pianos Recycled thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide a submission to your inquiry into the trading of elephant and rhino ivory in Australia.

Pianos Recycled recognises the importance of undertaking such an inquiry into the illegal trading of elephant and rhino ivory and the ethical issues the topic of ivory raises in Australia. Sadly, in the past the piano industry has not been innocent in this area, and by virtue of the enormous global demand for pianos in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries did contribute significantly to the decline of the elephant population through the utilisation of ivory for piano key-*coverings*.

Pianos Recycled is a startup whose purpose is to recycle and create markets for unwanted pianos and prevent instruments being dumped unnecessarily in landfill. Our Values embrace a "5 x R's" approach and are: Respect (the ancient skills, craftsmanship, scarce resources and provenance embodied in the piano); Reduce (the number of pianos ending up in landfill and consequently the impact on the environment); Restore (a piano to playable condition where possible and feasible); Repurpose (a piano's materials into unique, customized, individually designed products.); and Recycle (a piano's residual materials for later re-use).

Corrections to submissions already made

Pianos Recycled wishes to comment on some of the submissions already made to the Parliamentary Inquiry, which are in our view, ambiguous, incorrect or popular misconception. In response to those, we want to clarify the following facts about ivory in pianos:

- Ivory makes up approximately 1/1000th of a piano's construction, whether by weight or cubic measurement.
- Ivory is used solely for *covering* the wooden keys of the piano and is not used in any other part of the piano.
- Ivory plays no part whatsoever in the tonal or musical aspects of the piano (nor similarly for pipe-organs or bagpipes), and its removal for instance, for export to USA or UK from existing mature pianos, may have some effect on the value of the instrument, but none that detract from the instrument performing in the way it was designed to.
- The ban citing 1975 as a cut-off date is in our view, meaningless as no manufacturer of any repute has produced an ivory-covered keyboard on a piano since then.
- Cellulose-nitrate based keyboard coverings (caps) were introduced as early as the 1870's in America and not long after that in the U.K. ('Celluloid' is the most famous US brand-name associated with the material, Parkesine in the UK). Piano-keyboard manufacturers,



especially those supplying the cheaper, mass produced 'commercial' manufacturers tended to use these coverings.

- Alternative materials such as 'Galalith', made from the casein of milk, also were used extensively until the development of 'plastics' for the use of piano keyboards in the post-WW2 period. Numerous other products (labelled 'Ivorite', 'Ivorine' 'Elfenit' for example) were also marketed, all synthetic, but designed to replicate ivory in appearance and feel.

Pianos Recycled's position

Pianos Recycled is a startup venture. We are a globally unique enterprise in the area of piano recycling and therefore can offer insights and observations on the effects of proposed bans, such as the UK model, of all ivory trading being banned without considered exemption.

Our position on the ethics of ivory trade, importing and poaching is as follows

- 100% commitment to international bans on illegal ivory trading, poaching, illegal activities including the creation of falsified documentation, fake agencies, corruption of official/government or NGO's and in all matters pertaining to the slaughter of elephant and rhino populations.
- 100% support the introduction of meaningful legislation and regulation controlling the sale of imported ivory and ivory trading.
- Express support for punitive and legislative actions enacting meaningful punishments for importers, agents, retail outlets and auction houses caught breaking the law.

Pianos have been part of Australia's history from the First Fleet, brought out to Australia by a surgeon, George Wogan who travelled on board the flagship Sirius. When George Wogan completed his tour of duty in 1791 he gave the piano to Elizabeth Macarthur, wife of the infamous John Macarthur.

Australians have had a love affair with pianos since that time. Pianos were extremely popular in households around the world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and particularly in Australia which through this period boasted the highest rate of piano ownership per capita. Between Federation and 1930 more than 300,000 pianos were imported into Australia, an additional 50,000 (or more) were made here and it has been claimed 700,000 pianos were imported during the 1800's.

Pianos Recycled has a social business purpose, that is we want to create new uses for unwanted pianos and in doing so reduce the negative impact on the environment caused by increasing landfill. We estimate that currently at least 10 pianos a week end up in landfill in Melbourne alone and that across Australia this number is approaching 3,000 per year. This number will increase in the next decade as the older 90 - 110-year-old pianos are discarded so that across Australia in the next 6 years, the number of pianos ending up in landfill would almost fill the MCG.

Pianos Recycled has conceived a way to enable support for elephant preservation by using the demand motivation for ivory products against itself. While our model's approach is to firstly use the ivory keys for re-use in the piano industry, we also want to repurpose ivory keys into jewellery where 100% of profits go to supporting elephant protection and preservation projects. Also, an important element of our "Respect" value is provenance. We can reasonably identify the year or period when an unwanted piano was manufactured through the serial number of the piano. That serial number also enables us to authenticate the minimum age of the ivory and, as for all our intended products, we would provide certification guaranteeing that a repurposed product's material, ivory in this case, would be a certain age and therefore not have contributed to the plight of any elephant in the last 60 years.



There is no one answer to stopping the problem to the slaughter of elephants and rhinos for their ivory. A multi-faceted approach is required as evidenced by the destruction of illegal ivory stockpiles. Pianos Recycled supports the views of some economists and conservationists who argue that the destruction of stockpiled ivory has created a vacuum in the international illegal market for ivory, further elevating the demand for ivory and raising its prices and ultimately leading to greater poaching of elephants. Between June of 2009 and 2014, 170 tons of ivory were estimated to have been illegally trafficked and the price of ivory also skyrocketed from a USD\$5 per kilogram in 1989 to USD\$2,100 per kilogram in 2014 in China.

While Pianos Recycled does not claim that repurposing of ivory keys will end the industry of elephant poaching, we do believe that an enterprise with a social objective based upon/in 60- to 120-year-old ivory piano keys can not only stimulate education on the plight of the elephant but also attract more advocates for the elimination of the illegal trade plus, additional financial support for proactive protection and preservation of elephants.

Summary Statement of Piano Recycled's position

- Pianos Recycled outlines on its website and all promotional material that it is committed to not only recycling and re-purposing valuable aged materials, but also to contributing to the preservation of the very animals that the piano trade has decimated in previous centuries.
- Pianos Recycled is actively involved in making the public aware of the negative impact the piano trade has had on the ivory trade from the 1700's through to the cessation of ivory's use in piano keyboards by the 1970's.
- Pianos Recycled can reasonably identify and authenticate the age of piano ivory and does already provide a heritage certification for an unwanted piano
- Pianos Recycled would happily contribute our knowledge base to a broader government led campaign to promote increased public awareness of the origins and uses of ivory.
- Pianos Recycled does not believe that banning a material from sale that is a) aged, and b) cannot be reconstituted as anything other than small scale items is a meaningful step.
- Pianos Recycled believes the utilisation of these slivers of ivory, removed from pianos heading for landfill, creatively repurposed by skilled artisans and in conjunction with the appropriate 'social awareness message' of ivory's origins and the evils of modern day poaching, can provide a more positive outcome via the direction of profits from a constructive process.
- Ivory upcycling is an important component of Pianos Recycled's business model and its relevance and viability, not especially monetarily, but environmentally, ethically and philanthropically. It enables the creation of positive benefits beyond the normal reach of our business, and has parallels in the recovery of gold, palladium and platinum at iPhone processing centres which has the flow on effect of making recycling other components financially viable.
- Ivory key-caps are uniquely identifiable by their very limited dimensions of length, width, and in particular thicknesses of no more than 1.0-2.0 mm, resistant to modern adhesives and cannot be effectively re-used or utilised in a more physically substantial form.
- Pianos Recycled has committed to returning its profits from the sale of piano keyboard ivory products to elephant preservation organisations in Africa.

As with our commitment regarding ivory, we are similarly engaged with using the ebony from pianos in productive and ethical fashion. Ebony is also endangered and on a CITES' list of illegal trade. We



have developed a social-inclusion approach for the ivory and ebony problems rather than an ivory- or ebony-exclusion approach.

Pianos Recycled approach is founded in our belief that something socially positive can be achieved to address the sins of the past or otherwise these problems will be buried. Literally.

Conclusion

The ivory situation in Australia needs to be viewed within a broader context, particularly considering society's contemporary need and push for recycling and creation of new, and beneficial uses for unwanted items. The risk is that an elephant's life is not treated with respect. If ivory keys are unceremoniously thrown in the dump where is the respect for those elephants when their legacy could be used to protect current elephant populations, as Pianos Recycled is proposing to do. As we argue, the age and heritage of piano-key ivory can be authenticated, and that knowledge can help current elephant populations.

Some of the unintended consequences of a blanket ban on ivory can be reasonably foreseen. These include:

- Every second-hand piano equipped with an ivory keyboard could not be sold privately or commercially, a figure that could represent up to 85% of all pianos sold in Australia prior to World War 1.
- Piano tuners and repairers (and other musical instrument technicians) would be unable to supply clients with second-hand replacement ivory caps where damage or age had affected individual keys on an instrument
- Landfill and waste transfer stations would possibly be unable to accept fees for processing pianos.
- The wording of legislation becomes important particularly in relation to "carriage and importing" as the moving industry in Australia would have to develop an intensive screening process where pianos are involved.

While unequivocally supporting a 100% ban on illegal ivory trading, poaching, and related illegal activities Pianos Recycled views a blanket ban on ivory as counter-productive as it will force current demand for the material underground and its "market" value skywards, inadvertently creating black markets and leading to an unregulated and more lucrative market for the very people whose activities the legislation is trying to restrict.

It is our view that more stringent steps need to be enacted to deal with the processes and the proceeds related to current day ivory poaching and illicit international trading, and severe action prescribed for those so involved.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

References

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About Pianos Recycled:

Website: www.pianosrecycled.eco

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Partners:

Mike Hendry

Mike Hendry is a piano tuner and restorer of forty years experience in Australia and internationally, with a range of clientele across all levels. His lamenting of the wastage of quality, aged natural materials being consigned to landfill inspired the Pianos Recycled concept and the establishment of a unique world-first business.

Sandra Klepetko

Sandra Klepetko is an environmental scientist with extensive experience in environmental management aspects within the mining, petro-chemical, industrial and other business sectors, and a vision of changing the way we think to create a sustainable world for the future

Peter Humphreys

Peter is an economist and independent innovation and transformation strategy advisor with a 30+ year history of engagements in Australia and right across the Pacific and Asia regions and who still has a piano his grandfather bought for him as a child.