

Whale of a swindle

In reply to Catherine Cheung's letter re offshore seismic blasting, Jonathan Young (Daily News 11/1/18) downplayed its impact on Maui dolphins. Mr Young made the point that the ocean is a noisy place. Indeed it is, and made a lot noisier by blasting, which generates very loud, repeated shocks every 10 seconds, for months on end. The peer-reviewed science is clear. This stresses whales directly, and has significant impacts across multiple levels of the food chain. To place Mr Young's statements in context, in 1992, New Zealand signed the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, Article 8 of which requires us to actively foster recovery of threatened species. Since signing, the Maui dolphin population has declined by half, to the point where it is critically endangered. The relevant DoC report (Currey et al. 2012), specifically listed offshore mining as a risk to recovery. But it is not only Maui dolphins at risk. South Taranaki Bight hosts at least six globally endangered whale species, along with another 30 cetacean species, among the most diverse such places on Earth. Yet we continue to treat it as a sacrificial zone for fossil fuels and seabed mining, abrogating our international responsibilities. Mr Young concludes that such concerns are actually about stopping fossil fuel exploration, a poignant protest at best, given our societal addiction. Yes, we are hooked, and have wasted precious decades, the transition deliberately hindered by premeditated lies from industry, perverse subsidies and irresponsible legislation of successive governments – surely the swindle of the millennium.

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