

Why I was arrested for Climate Change.



When first asked by a friend if I wanted to get involved in Greenpeace non violent direct actions, I was sceptical about putting myself on the line. But I went ahead with a 3-day training in May, never thinking that just five months later, I'd board a massive cargo ship and get arrested raising awareness of climate change

The ship, *East Ambition*, was carrying unsustainably produced palm kernel extract (PKE) from Indonesia, which was destined for Fonterra dairy farms around New Zealand to feed cattle. Rainforests are destroyed to make the palm kernel and last year New Zealand imported one quarter of the world's PKE production. The emissions from the palm product on that ship alone were equivalent to the emissions of 127,000 cars on the road for a year. Not a good look.

By allowing the import of this product, Fonterra and the Government are failing to act in the best interests of the environment and climate, and are seriously jeopardising New Zealand's clean, green brand. I felt strongly enough to take action. I felt that the climate crime being committed was far greater than any I was about to carry out.

In my view, saving our environment and climate has now become more than just scraping the paint on the side of the car as I negotiate getting my bike out of the garage each morning; more than planting summer veggies in my chaotic garden, and more than switching off appliances when I'm not using them. All these are important aspects of saving the planet, but are not enough. Some big calls need to be made, and tough actions need to be taken.

And so it was, I found myself approaching a massive cargo ship in the ocean in a small inflatable boat. Fear and excitement were pulsing through my body. We had to hang out on the water for over an hour before boarding the ship, and while I was spared the seasickness, others weren't so lucky! Thoughts flickered through my mind, how would the crew respond? Would I make it onto the ship's crane as planned? How long would we be up there? Thankfully the crew was fantastic and even helped us lift our bags onto our backs.

It was once we got to the crane wires that the job got dirty. Every moving cable and part was lathered with marine grease. We got covered in grease getting down the cables, and then even simple tasks like tying a knot became dirty and difficult.





The inconvenience that we caused by blockading the ship for one day is insignificant compared to the emissions from that one shipment of PKE. We live in a so-called democratic society, whereby we 'vote' for the people we deem most fit to direct our country. However there are other very important aspects of a democratic society and these are the freedom of speech and the right to protest. I know that if Fonterra came over to my house and started to remove the bolts that hold my home together, I would take action to stop them. Right now Fonterra are taking out the bolts that hold our planet together - the tropical rainforests - so I took action.



I've had an amazing response from various friends and family. Most people have been thanking me for taking a stand, and representing what they also believe in. Obviously leading up to the action, I couldn't tell friends and family. Even my partner was unaware of what I was about to do, but as soon as she heard, she was extremely proud. Not all messages since the action have been positive, but great discussions have developed from these responses also.

One of the most important things to come out of the action was that the companies involved in PKE importation, and the Government, were forced to discuss the issue. This issue has been exposed nationally and internationally which is a real threat to Fonterra. Would signing petitions and writing letters have brought this issue to the forefront so rapidly? I doubt it. Sometimes direct action works more quickly and effectively than indirect action, such as lobbying your local MP to do something about it. That said, I would not support Greenpeace in every action they take – they have to be in line with my morals and ethics.

I will continue to take action to stop destructive industries in New Zealand, in the hope that both corporations and the Government will finally accept that climate change is serious and urgent. I'm also volunteering with Climate Camp Aotearoa, which is an event in Wellington in December; to share skills and demonstrate techniques to solve climate change, some of which include direct action.

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