

# Ban plan to hit ivory poachers

AUCTIONEERS are backing a complete ban on rhinoceros horn imports and the sale of ivory items regardless of their age in an Australian bid to fight back against wildlife poachers.

The Auctioneers and Valuers Association will tell a parliamentary inquiry into the trade in Melbourne today that it will support attempts to follow Britain's crackdown.

The Department of Home Affairs said customs had confiscated 309 ivory items, along with 26 rhinoceros products, in the past 10 years, but no one had been prosecuted.

Investigations of online traders, auction houses and antique dealers in Australia

## ROB HARRIS

have identified legal and illegal domestic markets for ivory and rhinoceros horn worth hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Auctioneers and Valuers Association vice-president Jane Raffan said pressure and momentum for change was growing internationally and commercial decorative arts markets worldwide were coming under increased scrutiny.

"The UK is one of the largest traders of ivory items outside Asia and its new position on this issue is a clarion call," she said.

"We'd like to see the Australian Government enact similar measures, as well as a complete

ban on rhino horn, a trade that has created a calamitous environmental crisis."

Britain is set to ban the sale of ivory items regardless of their age in an effort to restrict the illegal trade, tackle poaching and help protect elephants and rhinos.

The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement held its first public hearing into Australia's domestic trade in ivory and rhinoceros horn in Sydney yesterday.

The inquiry, initiated by Labor Senator Lisa Singh and Liberal MP Jason Wood, is exploring closing legal loopholes in domestic ivory markets to ensure Australia is not contributing to wildlife trafficking.