

INQUIRY INTO THE EXHIBITION OF EXOTIC ANIMALS IN CIRCUSES AND THE EXHIBITION OF
CETACEANS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Supplementary questions for Dr Isabella Clegg
Hearing – 13 August 2020

1. Can you please provide details of your engagement with Sea World, including your role, any funding you have received and any research undertaken during that engagement?

I am an independent, paid consultant working with Sea World on a long-term basis to optimise the welfare of the dolphins, and other animals, under their care. Sea World currently engages me for around 4 days work per month, which includes regular on-site visits. My role is to help to make sure that the dolphins' environment and management at Sea World is in line with providing the best quality of life possible. I manage the collection of continuous data on the dolphins' behaviour, health and mental state to track each individual's welfare over time, and work closely with the trainers and managers to implement a high-quality enrichment program, ensure that the training sessions are stimulating for the animals, and to monitor the various human-animal interactions at the park. I also supervise the two ongoing PhD animal welfare projects at the park, as well as developing future research opportunities for students.

2. The Committee's terms of reference refers to the 'welfare' of exotic animals and cetaceans.

(a) Do you believe the term 'welfare' is satisfactory?

(i) If so, how should it be best defined in legislation?

I cannot easily answer whether the term 'welfare' is satisfactory without knowing what exactly the Committee is looking to address, beyond what is written in the TOR document which just mentions 'use' and 'welfare'.

If the Committee is interested in the concept that encompasses these animals' quality of life, including their physical and mental well-being, then yes I think the word 'welfare' is the proper term for this.

As the Committee outlined in the TOR, they are also interested in "community expectation". I'm not aware of this term's use in relation to animal welfare ('public perception' seems to be commonly used), but agree that it's an important part of this issue. However, the objective assessment of animal welfare does not involve community expectation in any form: the expectation discussion relate to ethical standpoints which can be formed using welfare data, once it's collected. I therefore think it's very important that in any legal documents pertaining to animal welfare, it is made clear that community expectation should never be prioritised before or interfere with an animal's welfare needs.

In the legislation I believe 'welfare' is best defined using the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), also used by the World Association for Zoos and Aquaria (WAZA):

"Animal welfare concerns how an animal copes with the conditions in which it lives. An animal experiences good welfare if the animal is healthy, comfortable, well nourished, safe, is not suffering from unpleasant states such as pain, fear and distress, and is able to express behaviours that are important for its physical and mental state."

(ii) If not, what would be a better term, and is it used in any other jurisdiction?

3. Has a feasibility study been commenced into the creation of a sea-sanctuary/ sea-pen for dolphins at the Dolphin Marine Conservation Park at Coffs Harbour?

(a) Who approved the study being carried out? What were the specifications provided to the consultant about the proposed enclosure?

A first feasibility study for the sea pen project has been undertaken, led by a consortium consisting of Action for Dolphins (AFD), World Animal Protection (WAP) and Dolphin Marine Conservation Park (DMCP), and included studies on the sea pen design, acoustics, water quality and animal welfare. The sea pen design aspect was carried out by Manly Hydraulics Laboratory (MHL) in 2018 and 2019. The animal welfare segment was conducted in May 2019, where I was contracted by the consortium to conduct a current welfare assessment of the then 5 dolphins at DMCP, as well as advise on their prospective welfare if they were to move to a sea pen environment. Since at this point the sea pen was not created, nor was the design finalised, my prospective assessment was very general in nature and focussed on how the dolphins might cope with a significant environmental change (as opposed to their response to specific environmental variables). The information I was provided with regarding the sea pen's design was that it was likely to be in Coffs Harbour where a breakwater would need to be constructed to protect against swells. Water quality and acoustic analyses had not yet been carried out, and I wasn't made aware of any results.

(b) Who is carrying out the study, and when is it expected to be completed?

As mentioned above, the study is being led by a consortium consisting of Action for Dolphins (AFD), World Animal Protection (WAP) and Dolphin Marine Conservation Park (DMCP). Manly Hydraulics Laboratory (MHL) carried out the sea pen design study, and I (representing Animal Welfare Expertise) carried out the animal welfare study. As far as I know, the study is still ongoing.

(c) How is the study being funded, and how much if any is still required to finalise the study? What government agencies have been approached?

I am not aware of how the study is being funded, or what government agencies have been approached.

(d) What is the expected range of the capital cost of the enclosure? How will it be funded?

I am not aware of any of the projected costs, which will depend on the final design of the enclosure.

(e) What is the expected range of the annual recurrent cost of the enclosure? How will it be funded?

I am not aware of any of the projected costs, which will depend on the final design of the enclosure.

4. If the exhibition of cetaceans performing at the DMCP ceases, what is the estimate of the annual funding that will be forgone to operate animal marine rescue and rehabilitation services at the Park?

(a) How will this funding be maintained, and what will be sources of the funding?

I don't work for DMCP so am not aware of the details and sources of such funding.