

**Submission
No 33**

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

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SUBMISSION FOR THE ANIMALS IN ENTERTAINMENT INQUIRY

There are many inherent welfare problems associated with using captive animals for entertainment purposes such as those in traveling circuses and aquariums. Problems that not even the best housing, treatment or training methods can help to overcome. Despite the fact that the circus and aquarium employees and owners will tell you that they love their animals, these animals do not require human love, they require freedom to live as the wild animals that they are, and to express their natural behaviours. The concept of five freedoms for animals is a widely accepted benchmark for animal welfare, and includes:

- **Freedom** from hunger and thirst.
- **Freedom** from discomfort.
- **Freedom** from pain, injury and disease.
- **Freedom** to express normal behaviours.
- **Freedom** from fear and distress.

It is impossible to provide these five freedoms when the animals is:

- confined to small spaces
- trained using negative reinforcement techniques – eg bull hooks for elephants, whips for tigers
- expected to repeatedly perform unnatural behaviours to large crowds for their whole lives, especially with the threat of physical punishment if they ‘misbehave’
- transported many miles in hot, noisy cages on large vehicles
- not given access to species appropriate enrichment activities, causing boredom and a depressed mental state
- not given access to veterinary care
- deprived of socialisation with their species in a natural environment causing frustration and depression

In Australia, there are no national welfare standards for circus animals. While some states have codes of practice or legal requirements, they generally focus on protecting animals from cruelty rather than promoting good welfare.

In Australia, many local councils have prohibited circuses with exotic animals, and in some cases circuses with any animals, from performing on council park lands. The public is becoming more educated about the cruelty of keeping animals in confinement and expecting them to do menial tricks for the entertainment of humans, therefore the demand for this type of business model is shrinking.

Wherever there is a business model dependent on animals for profit there is an opportunity for the animals to be exploited. The animals are dependent on the ethics

and good will of the people looking after them, and human nature dictates that often, profit will trump animal welfare especially when there are no laws or standards in place.

Many jurisdictions around the world now recognise animal sentience. Animals experience emotions like happiness, grief and sadness, subjectively feel and perceive the world around them, have distinct personalities, and can learn complex concepts, even in species like fish and birds. It is therefore even more apparent that subjecting animals to lives of torment living in circuses and tiny pools goes way beyond restricting the five freedoms to outright cruelty.

After a chimpanzee named Flint recently lost his mother, renowned primatologist Dr Jane Goodall wrote:

the last short journey he made, pausing to rest every few feet, was to the very place where Flo's body had lain. There he stayed for several hours, sometimes staring and staring into the water. He struggled on a little further, then curled up—and never moved again.

I believe performing animals in Australia should be a thing of the past and legislation should be passed Federally making it a crime to confine animals for the purpose of entertainment.