

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

Organisation: PETA Australia
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PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

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**Submission Regarding
the Inquiry Into the Exhibition of Exotic Animals in Circuses
and the Exhibition of Cetaceans in New South Wales**

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- PETA US
- PETA Asia
- PETA India
- PETA France
- PETA Germany
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (UK)

About PETA Australia

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) Australia is the local affiliate of PETA US – the world’s largest animal rights organisation – and is opposed to speciesism, a human supremacist worldview.

Responses to the terms of reference:

(a) the welfare of exotic animals exhibited in circuses in New South Wales, with consideration of community expectation,

Exotic animals in circuses exhibit signs of severe psychological distress, which indicate they suffer in the cruel conditions of their confinement.¹ They are kept in cages or pens, often psychologically under-stimulated, forced to obey after their spirits are broken, and deprived of everything that is natural and important to them. Pacing,² bar-biting, and self-mutilation are common among animals exhibited for entertainment. It is now recognised that such neurotic behaviour is caused by captivity and an unnatural lifestyle.³

A 2015 survey found that 68% of Australians are concerned or very concerned about the use of exotic animals in circuses.⁴ The Australian community expects consideration to be given to animals’ most basic needs – and the reality is that these are not being met in travelling circuses. Lions in nature roam vast areas, claiming territory and seeking out mates – none of which they can do while being confined to circus wagons or trucks for days at a time. Macaque monkeys, who are our close relatives and naturally live in large mixed social groups, are kept in metal cages with limited opportunity for socialisation. It is the circus environment itself – relentless transport, confinement, and lack of opportunity to engage in natural behaviour – that leads inevitably to compromised welfare for wild and exotic animals, and there is simply no improvement that could be made to housing or transport that would overcome these inherent problems.

A 2016 survey confirmed that 33 countries had banned the use of some or all exotic species in circuses or their import or export for use in circuses.⁵ In Australia, the Australian Capital Territory has banned circuses using exotic

¹Universities Federation for Animal Welfare, “Are Wild Animals Suited to a Travelling Circus Life?” 2009
<<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/ee5d/ab82f173944c0b3160d0f3a7b9ab8406c272.pdf>>.

²Animal Liberation, “Anxious Lion in Captivity at Stardust Circus”, 1 July 2012
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gpKIELCILvM>>.

³Laura Smith, “Zoos Drive Animals Crazy”, *Slate* 20 June 2014
<<https://slate.com/technology/2014/06/animal-madness-zoochosis-stereotypic-behavior-and-problems-with-zoos.html>>.

⁴McCrindle Research, “RSPCA 2015 Brand Awareness and Perception: National Representative Survey of 2,011 Australians Conducted in November 2015”, 2015.

⁵Jo Dorning, Stephen Harris, and Heather Pickett, “The Welfare of Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses”, 1 Apr 2017 <<https://gov.wales/welfare-wild-animals-travelling-circuses>>.

animals, and upward of 40 local councils⁶ – including Blue Mountains, Camden, Canterbury-Bankstown,⁷ Hornsby, Ku-ring-gai, Lake Macquarie, Lismore, Liverpool, Manly, Newcastle, Parramatta, Pittwater, Randwick, Warringah, Wingecarribee, and Woollahra – have banned exotic-animal circuses from performing on land owned or controlled by the council.⁸

Whenever PETA Australia posts on social media about the fact that animals used in circuses are being hauled from town to town in our own country, many members of the public are shocked that this is still happening in 2019; they believe that forcing animals into a meaningless, unnatural existence merely for our entertainment is an archaic idea.

(b) the welfare of cetaceans exhibited in New South Wales, with consideration of community expectation,

Dolphins are social, intelligent animals who, in nature, swim up to 100 kilometres a day with their family pods, diving and riding the waves. But in captivity, they're trapped and forced to perform meaningless tricks for noisy crowds.

Dolphins are acoustically oriented – they use clicks, whistles, and echolocation to perceive their surroundings. In tanks where there is no opportunity for them to use sonar to navigate and explore, captive cetaceans can grow frustrated and despondent⁹ and may express this by swimming in endless circles or floating listlessly at the surface of a tank.¹⁰

The global community's understanding of the physical and psychological issues facing dolphins and other cetaceans in captivity has deepened in recent years, leading jurisdictions around the world – including Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, India, Luxembourg, Norway, Switzerland, and the UK – to pass laws banning or significantly restricting the display of captive marine mammals.¹¹

(c) in light of the findings in (a) and (b) above, whether:

⁶Ruby Cornish, "Circus Featuring Performing Animals Met With Protest in Coffs Harbour", *ABC News* 9 Mar 2017 <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-03-09/circus-with-performing-animals-sparks-protests-in-coffs-harbour/8339994>>.

⁷Canterbury-Bankstown Council, "Exotic Animals Banned in Canterbury-Bankstown", 17 Oct 2018 <<https://www.cbccity.nsw.gov.au/media/news/exotic-animals-banned-in-canterbury-bankstown>>.

⁸Mark Pearson, "Exotic Animals and Circuses", 25 Oct 2018 <<https://markpearson.org.au/exotic-animals-and-circuses/>>.

⁹Animal Welfare Institute, "Confinement of Marine Life: Wild vs Captivity" <<https://awionline.org/content/wild-vs-captivity>> (last accessed on 21 Oct 2019).

¹⁰World Animal Protection, "Dolphins and Marine Animals in Captivity" <<https://www.worldanimalprotection.org.au/dolphins-and-marine-animals-captivity>> (last accessed on 21 Oct 2019).

¹¹World Animal Protection, "Canada Bans the Captivity of Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises for Entertainment", 11 June 2019 <<https://www.worldanimalprotection.org.nz/news/canada-bans-captivity-whales-dolphins-and-porpoises-entertainment>>.

- (i) to allow the continuation of the practice of breeding of exotic animals for use in circuses and cetaceans for exhibition,**

Neither exotic animals nor cetaceans should continue to be bred for use in circuses or exhibitions. This is the only way to address all the welfare concerns discussed above for future generations of animals. Community expectations are so in line with this step that some of those currently profiting off the use of these animals – namely, Stardust and Lennon Bros circuses and Dolphin Marine Conservation Park – have decided not to continue breeding animals. In 2018, Janice Lennon of Lennon Bros Circus told News.com.au that the circus had resolved not to breed another generation of lions. “Once they’ve died off we won’t replace them,” she said.¹² Likewise, Dolphin Marine Conservation Park has publicly stated that it “no longer intend[s] to breed our dolphins in line with the future direction of the organisation”.¹³ Prohibiting such breeding programmes would ensure that these forward-thinking intentions are upheld.

- (ii) there should be a phase out of the use of exotic animals in circuses and cetaceans for exhibition, and/or**

These animals can be freed from the entertainment industry very quickly. Lennon Bros and Stardust circuses already have a relationship with a sanctuary, Zambi Wildlife Retreat, to which they have retired lions.¹⁴

Australian cetaceans in captivity could be successfully transferred to sea pens that mimic their natural environments and potentially released back into their home waters, depending on the needs and abilities of each individual. Action for Dolphins, World Animal Protection, and Dolphin Marine Conservation Park are currently working on a feasibility study to determine if the four remaining dolphins at the park can be moved to a sea sanctuary in Coffs Harbour. We defer to their expertise and the findings of this study after it is complete.

- (iii) there should be any other legislative or regulatory action that the committee considers appropriate.**

A ban on breeding would be a great step toward ending the suffering of future generations of exotic animals in circuses and cetaceans used in exhibitions, but the animals currently being forced to perform deserve to

¹²Megan Palin, “Australia’s Stardust Circus Under Fire for Being ‘Cruel’ and ‘Inhumane’”, News.com.au, 9 Feb 2018

<<https://www.news.com.au/technology/science/animals/stardust-circus-receives-death-threats-well-release-the-lions/news-story/03a0ff02347def21e7fb09726ee3216c>>.

¹³Dolphin Marine Conservation Park, “Frequently Asked Questions”

<<http://www.dolphinmarineconservation.com.au/faqs>> (last accessed on 21 Oct 2019).

¹⁴Michael Dahlstrom, “Aussie Tradies’ Sacrifice to Help Lions Retired From the Circus”, Yahoo! News 6 Oct 2019 <<https://au.news.yahoo.com/aussie-tradies-sacrifice-to-help-lions-rescued-from-the-circus-070034692.html>>.

live out the rest of their lives in a peaceful sanctuary, rather than being confined to cramped transport wagons or small chlorinated pools. In their natural environment, lions roam vast areas, macaque monkeys live in large mixed social groups in rainforest canopies, and dolphins swim long distances, dive, and ride the waves. Captive exotic animals who have been denied the opportunity to fulfil these most fundamental needs must be provided with the highest-quality care, which they desperately need, for the remainder of their lives.