

**Submission  
No 93**

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

**Organisation:** World Animal Protection Australia

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**World Animal Protection Australia submission to the Inquiry into the exhibition of exotic animals in circuses and the exhibition of cetaceans in New South Wales.**

World Animal Protection is an international animal welfare organisation that has offices in 15 countries and is active in 50. We have worked to end animal suffering for 50 years. A major focus of our work is to stop the use of wild animals in entertainment venues. Wild animals belong in the wild; their needs cannot be met in a captive environment. Our submission will focus on cetaceans held for exhibition, however we do oppose the use of wild animals in circuses and would like to see this practise phased out.

World Animal Protection is currently working with Dolphin Marine Conservation Park (DMCP) and Action for Dolphins to determine the feasibility of moving the four dolphins at DMCP to a sea pen sanctuary in the waters of Coffs Harbour. This will provide the dolphins with more space and a more naturalistic environment. We would welcome the opportunity to update the Inquiry on this work.

Our response to the specific terms of reference is below:

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

To our knowledge there are no other cetaceans exhibited in NSW other than the four dolphins at DMCP in Coffs Harbour. While we acknowledge the level of care provided by DMCP to its dolphins, World Animal Protection does not believe that dolphins should be in a captive environment and we would not support more dolphins being



bred at DMCP, nor other venues in NSW being allowed to exhibit dolphins or cetaceans. In support of our position, we attach:

1. the recently updated report *The Case Against Marine Mammals in Captivity*;
2. *Behind the Smile*, a report on the global dolphin industry by World Animal Protection; and,
3. *The Welfare of Dolphins in Captivity* by the RSPCA.

The reports provide extensive and compelling evidence that dolphins, and cetaceans in general, should not be held in captivity.

Community attitudes towards keeping cetaceans in captivity are changing. The Managing Director of DMCP, Mr Terry Goodall, has noted publicly that "*Having whales and dolphins and belugas, other marine mammals in captivity is not publicly accepted these days*". A number of major travel companies and airlines – Virgin Holidays, Bookings.com, Trip Advisor and British Airways - have also stopped promoting and selling tickets to captive dolphin venues, reflecting the shift in community attitudes.

***(c) in light of the findings [.....] above, whether:***

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

Dolphins can live for up to 50 years in a captive environment and those that have been born into captivity cannot be released back into the wild. If a dolphin were bred today it may still be alive in 2070. Given how community attitudes to dolphin captivity are changing, it is highly unlikely that commercial dolphin venues will exist then, making it inappropriate to breed more animals that cannot be released.

DMCP has made it clear that it will no longer breed dolphins. While we do not doubt that the existing management of DMCP will honour this commitment, we would like to see a prohibition on captive breeding



of cetaceans legislated and urge the Inquiry to recommend this in its report.

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

The 1985 Australia Senate Select Committee on Animal Welfare Inquiry into Dolphins and Whales in Captivity recommended a phase out of venues that keep cetaceans in captivity. This led to Victoria introducing legislation to prohibit the keeping of dolphins in captivity and legislation in NSW to prohibit the capture of dolphins for exhibition. We urge the inquiry to now recommend a complete phase out of keeping cetaceans in captivity for purposes other than rescue, rehabilitation and release, and grandfathering DMCP.

Any phase out should include support for the development of a sea pen sanctuary for the four dolphins at DMCP. This could also serve as a rescue and rehabilitation facility for wild dolphins and other marine animals that may be injured. Such a sanctuary would be among the first in the world established for captive dolphins and would be a tourist drawcard for Coffs Harbour. It would also ensure that the employment and contribution to the local economy provided by DMCP continues.

World Animal Protection would like to appear in person to give evidence at the inquiry when public hearings are held.

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