

Submission
No 126

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

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TO: Members of the

It is a pretty sad state of affairs with animal welfare in Australia that we are still debating this issue. As with so many other animal welfare issues, much of Australia is lagging behind other countries when it comes to banning circuses with wild animals. Even Bolivia has banned wild animals in circuses along with least 30 other countries which have also banned the use of wild, or all, animals in circuses. Over 40 councils in Australia have banned exotic animal circuses from performing on council land, and more are pledging to phase them out.

Circus animal in circuses spend most of their time in small cramped cages. When they are not in their cages, they are forced to carry out unnatural, inane tricks in loud, frightening circus tents. Wild animals do not naturally do tricks such as standing on their heads, ride bicycles, balancing on tiny balls, or jumping through rings, or flaming hoops of fire. Their training is based on fear and punishment and not, as is often assumed, on 'reward'. To force them to perform these demeaning and physically uncomfortable tricks, trainers abuse these animals by the use of whips, tight collars, electric shocks, food deprivation, muzzles or physical beatings.

Constant travel means that animals are confined to wagons or trucks for days at a time. While touring, they may spend more than 23 hours a day confined to small, barren enclosures in which they must eat, drink, sleep, defecate and urinate – all in the same place. I have personally seen these animals in their small cages biting the bars or pacing in frustration.

After years of beatings and shackles, sometimes animals snap. When animals such as lions retaliate against trainers' physical dominance, trainers cannot protect themselves, let alone the public. In August 2001, lion trainer Geoffrey Lennon, from Stardust Circus, was mauled by three lions during a performance.

Because of concerns about animal mistreatment and public safety, a growing number of communities are banning or restricting the use of exotic animals in circuses. And then, just look at the popularity of human circus performer, trapeze artists, jugglers, clowns, tightrope walkers and acrobats. Australians do not need or wish to see animals mistreated. Animal circuses are out of fashion, tired and boring. The declining attendance numbers are a testament to how irrelevant, and indeed to some how embarrassing and shameful they are. Let's get rid of them, and instead enjoy animal-free circuses, and leave these animals alone.

Sincerely

Heather Barnes



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Lion cub at Stardust Circus, Australia



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Lion at Stardust Circus, Australia

