

Submission  
No 205

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

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Wild circus animals are usually captive bred but this does not mean that they are tame. It takes thousands of years for animals to become domesticated and the wild animals used to perform in circuses have the same needs as they would in the wild. These needs simply cannot be met in a travelling circus environment.

Problems with travelling circuses:

Harmful effect on animal welfare as captive animals are unable to socialise, get enough exercise or exhibit natural behaviour.

Many develop behavioural and health problems due to their forced captive life.

Poor conditions.

Regular transporting.

Forced training and performance.

Cramped, bare and regular temporary confined housing.

The inability to meet the social, behavioural and physiological needs of the animals.

Providing for the needs of non-human primates such as macaques in captivity is extremely difficult. Space, social interactions and an interesting and stimulating environment are critical to prevent boredom and frustration.

Lions face a range of similar challenges. In their natural state, lions spend time hunting or foraging, engaging in social interactions, breeding and territory marking.

A study examining the impact of captivity on large carnivores concluded that naturally wide-ranging species such as lions show the most evidence of stress and psychological dysfunction in captivity (Clubb and Mason 2003).

In Australia, there are limited number of veterinarians that specialise in exotic species.

The provision of environmental enrichment is likely to be extremely limited or non-existent due to the need to maintain portability, ease of handling of the animals and compliance during training sessions.

Inappropriate social conditions, such as isolation of social species, grouping of solitary species and/or proximity of incompatible species.

Caging/tethering and the performance of unnatural movements contribute to physical deformities, injuries, lameness and psychological distress.

Animals that circuses use to entertain audiences do not stand on their heads, jump through hoops, or balance on pedestals because they want to or because it's natural. They perform these and other difficult tricks because they're afraid of what will happen if they don't.

Unlike the human performers who choose to work in circuses, exotic animals are forced to take part in the show. They are involuntary actors in a degrading, unnatural spectacle.

Travelling circus life is likely to have a harmful effect on animal welfare as captive animals are unable to socialise, get enough exercise or exhibit natural behaviours. Many animals develop behavioural and/or health problems as a direct result of the captive life that they are forced to lead.

Australian community expectations: A 2015 survey found that 68% of Australians are concerned or very concerned about the use of exotic animals in circuses (McCrinkle 2015). This proportion is even higher in young adults, with over 75% of Australians aged 18-25 years being concerned about the use of exotic animals in circuses. A similar trend was seen with domesticated animals in circuses with 56% being concerned or very concerned including over 68% of young adults.