

Submission
No 232

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

Organisation: Dolphin Marine Conservation Park

Date Received: 11 December 2019



December, 2019

Hon Mark Banasiak MLC
Chair, Portfolio Committee No.4 – Industry

Parliamentary Inquiry into the use of exotic animals in circuses and the exhibition of cetaceans in New South Wales

Dear Mr Banasiak,

Please find enclosed a copy of our submission and attachments relating to the “Parliamentary Inquiry into the use of exotic animals in circuses and the exhibition of cetaceans in New South Wales.”

Terms of Reference (ToR)

1. That Portfolio Committee No.4 – Industry inquire into and report on the use of exotic animals (defined as any animal that is not native and is not a stock or companion animal) in circuses and the exhibition of cetaceans in New South Wales, and in particular:
 - (a) the welfare of exotic animals exhibited in circuses in New South Wales, with consideration of community expectation,
 - (b) the welfare of cetaceans exhibited in New South Wales, with consideration of community expectation,
 - (c) in light of the findings in (a) and (b) above, whether:
 - (i) to allow the continuation of the practice of breeding of exotic animals for use in circuses and cetaceans for exhibition,
 - (ii) there should be a phase out of the use of exotic animals in circuses and cetaceans for exhibition, and/or
 - (iii) there should be any other legislative or regulatory action that the committee considers appropriate, and
 - (d) any other related matter.
2. That the Committee report by 27 June 2020.

This submission responds to the following aspects of the ToR:

- 1(b) the welfare of cetaceans exhibited in New South Wales, with consideration of community expectation,
- 1(c) in light of the findings in above, whether:
 - (i) to allow the continuation of the practice of breeding of exotic animals for use in circuses and cetaceans for exhibition,
 - (ii) there should be a phase out of the use of cetaceans for exhibition,

As the Pet Porpoise Pool Pty Ltd trading as Dolphin Marine Conservation Park (DMCP) is not engaged with nor has any expertise in the use of exotic animals in circuses, this document will address the ToR only as they relate to the exhibition of cetaceans. That said, much of what this submission alludes to in relation to the fundamental requirements for maintaining the welfare of cetaceans under human care will no doubt apply to exotic animals exhibited in circuses.

Given that this inquiry focuses on the exhibition of cetaceans in NSW, that DMCP currently has four (4) dolphins we are caring for and exhibiting, that DMCP is the only facility in NSW caring for and exhibiting cetaceans and the fact that we have been rescuing and rehabilitating cetaceans and other marine fauna for the best part of half a century we are the only organisation in the state that a) is qualified to make informed comment on this topic and b) that this inquiry is directly targeting in relation to cetaceans in NSW.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this submission, please feel free to contact me.

Kind Regards

Terry Goodall

Managing Director

Dolphin Marine Conservation Park

Prepared by **Dolphin Marine Conservation Park**

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1.0 Introduction

The Portfolio Committee No.4 – Industry has called for submissions as part of an inquiry into “the use of exotic animals in circuses and the exhibition of cetaceans in New South Wales.” This document is the official submission from Dolphin Marine Conservation Park (DMCP) – the only organisation in NSW exhibiting cetaceans. We have formatted this paper, taking into account the ToR directly relating to our activities rather than answering each point in turn. We believe that in doing so we have addressed all relevant points requiring comment.

DMCP would like to re-emphasise that this submission addresses the terms of reference regarding exhibition of cetaceans only, excluding the use or breeding of exotic animals in circuses. It is felt by DMCP that to comment on the use of exotic animals in circuses without being directly involved and having a more in depth understanding of the regulatory, operational and practical requirements of such would be providing observational, non-research validated and unscientific opinion only. Therefore we have chosen not to waste the committee’s time with such content.

Therefore, the following terms of reference are addressed in this submission, regarding exhibition of cetaceans:

- 1(b) the welfare of cetaceans exhibited in New South Wales, with consideration of community expectation,
- 1(c) in light of the findings in (b) above, whether:
 - (i) to allow the continuation of the practice of breeding of cetaceans for exhibition,
 - (ii) there should be a phase out of the use of cetaceans for exhibition.

Note: DMCP believes that this inquiry has or should have – at its base – the welfare of the animals in question and so will not be accommodating uninformed hyperbole. It is expected that objective, justifiable comment will be accepted over subjective statements based on personal factually unsupported ideology that will only serve to cloud what is a very important debate.

2.0 Background – Dolphin Marine Conservation Park

The original idea behind Dolphin Marine Conservation Park was to provide the Coffs Coast with a rescue and rehabilitation centre for native marine animals. It was opened to the public on Boxing Day 1970 as the Pet Porpoise Pool Pty Ltd. Today, trading as Dolphin Marine Conservation Park (previously Dolphin Marine Magic), the operation works closely with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services and animal rescue groups to assist in marine animal emergencies including caring for sick or injured marine turtles, rescuing injured sea birds and rehabilitating and releasing stranded cetaceans (whales and dolphins) and pinnipeds (seal).

There are currently four (4) Indo Pacific Bottlenose Dolphins residing in the pool complex at DMCP. One of these dolphins – Calamity – is a rescued dolphin and has lived at the park for the past 28 years. Calamity was twice rescued due to serious entanglement in fishing line and following rehabilitation from her second entanglement she was deemed non-releasable. The other three dolphins – Zippy, Bella and Jet – were all born at the park and so have never lived in the wild. The three (3) younger dolphins have become reliant on the dedicated human care they receive and so are unsuitable for release. All these dolphins act as advocates for their species and are used in the daily presentations run by the park to educate the public on their natural behaviours, how husbandry techniques are used to care for them and how they receive their daily enrichment. Feedback from the public is testament to the importance and value of this. The messaging provided during guest visits is conservation based with an emphasis on the need to protect and care for our environment and the animals we share it with. (See Appendix 1)

DMCP has public engagement and education at the very heart of its conservation philosophy:

‘To inspire people to conserve marine animals, wildlife and their environments for future generations through interactive education.’

Conservation messaging and calls to action to assist marine conservation activities are included in all of the educational presentations conducted daily. These include:

- Seal the Loop; where DMCP staff manage bins for used fishing line around local beaches.
- Pets inside Save Lives; where DMCP calls visitors to keep their cats inside each night to decrease the impact on native wildlife.
- Fish for Good; where DMCP encourages guests to only purchase sustainable seafood.

Given the specialised skill set required for handling cetacean stranding and entrapments, training is provided by DMCP to agencies such as the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service in NSW and QLD and to indigenous landowners to ensure animal welfare, staff and volunteer safety and culturally significant protocols are respected during these events.

In addition to this, DMCP has provided specialised training to over 120 veterinarians along the NSW coast to improve welfare outcomes and increase scientific knowledge obtained from stranding events.

DMCP also funds a charitable trust Dolphin Marine Rescue Animal Rehab Trust that conducts the rescue, rehabilitation, release and research for marine wildlife in the area. This includes seals, turtles and cetaceans and costs the company (DMCP) in excess of \$100,000 annually. This charity also runs a youth education program called EcoGrooms that facilitates activities such as beach clean ups and works with the local Aboriginal Land Council and Southern Cross University to ensure that children are exposed to a cross section of historical, cultural and scientific knowledge.

3.0 Welfare of cetaceans exhibited in New South Wales

3.1 Defining welfare and ethics

Reference 1(b) raises “the welfare of cetaceans exhibited in New South Wales, with consideration of community expectation.” However, the terms of reference established for the inquiry provide no definition of the term “welfare” nor is there any reference made to what expertise is being sought to define the welfare of cetaceans exhibited in New South Wales.

DMCP agrees that it is critically important to differentiate between the personal philosophy of keeping animals under human care and the ability to provide animals under human care positive welfare. In this regard, cetaceans should be treated as any other animal.

Note: The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) is the peak industry body for veterinarians in Australia and has numerous policies on multiple issues, many of which relate directly to animal welfare. In 2018 there was discussion within the AVA regarding the review of the AVA policy on Cetaceans in Captivity. Following extensive discussion and member consultation, the AVA concluded that cetaceans should not be singled out as a species and that captive cetaceans should be included in the AVA general policy on zoos.

This means that there are two questions the inquiry should be asking.

Firstly, and more broadly:

- Is it possible to provide positive welfare to cetaceans under human care and can this appropriate welfare be measured? Secondly and more specifically:
- Is the welfare of dolphins under human care in NSW positive?

To answer the first question, an objective, reputable and contemporary methodology needs to be developed to measure welfare by industry and veterinary experts.

To answer the second question, that methodology needs to be applied – preferably by experts in the field – to assess the welfare of those cetaceans under human care in NSW.

Being absolutely aware and dedicated to its responsibilities to the animals under its care, the following assessments have been voluntarily completed at DMCP.

- ✓ The first assessment was conducted by the peak industry body for captive animals in Australia – the Zoo and Aquarium Association of Australia (ZAA). ZAA have invested an

extensive amount of work in developing a welfare based Accreditation Program for their member institutions based on the Five Domains – see 3.2 below.

DMCP has twice undergone this accreditation program and the results in both cases showed that the dolphins were in positive welfare.

- ✓ In addition to this, DMCP (in collaboration with Action for Dolphins and World Animal Protection as part of our joint Sea Sanctuary feasibility study) engaged one of the few international cetacean welfare experts – Dr Isabella Clegg. Dr Clegg has developed a welfare assessment tool that is specific to cetaceans and has assessed the welfare of the dolphins at DMCP employing this methodology and found once again that the animals were in positive welfare – see 3.3 below.

In line with ZAA, DMCP accepts the World Organisation for Animal Health’s definition of animal welfare as “the physical and mental state of an animal in relation to the conditions in which it lives.”¹

3.2 A science-based model for animal welfare assessment

Not only does DMCP comply with the very strict regulations and requirements set out and policed by the Department of Primary Industries of NSW (DPI) for all facilities housing and exhibiting collection animals, as an accredited member of ZAA and their progressive approach to animal welfare we strictly enforce the use of the Five Domains Model to manage and assess the welfare of all of our collection animals. This model is a science-based structure for assessing the welfare being provided to animals of all species, including cetaceans. Evidence under the first four domains (1) Nutrition, (2) Environment, (3) Health and (4) Behaviour provide insight into the animal’s various experiences, which make up (5) the Mental Domain.

The Five Domains Model was developed by Professor David Mellor,² founding member of the Animal Welfare Science and Bioethics Centre at Massey University in New Zealand. It is also the animal welfare assessment model adopted by the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) in their Animal Welfare Strategy.

As mentioned above, DMCP has recently been provided its second successful accreditation using the 5 Domains welfare model. As per the Accreditation Program process, positive welfare must be demonstrated through evidence using the Five Domains Model and validated by an Association Accreditation Officer before being recommended to the ZAA Board for ratification and approval by the Association’s Standards and Accreditation Committee.

¹ https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Health_standards/tahc/current/chapitre_aw_introduction.pdf (accessed 05-12-19)

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5575572/>

3.3 Independent expert report

As mentioned in 3.1 above DMCP also engaged an independent animal welfare assessment as part of its ongoing collaboration with Action for Dolphins (AFD) and World Animal Protection Australia (WAP). Dr Isabella Clegg³ is an internationally renowned cetacean welfare expert, who has ongoing communication with DMCP's management and trainers. Dr Clegg holds a PhD in dolphin welfare and her knowledge of welfare science and captive dolphin management led her to develop the first objective welfare assessment of dolphins under human care – the C-Well© Assessment.

The aim of Dr Clegg's welfare assessment at DMCP was to objectively assess the current welfare of the dolphins. In addition, Dr Clegg assessed each of the dolphin's individual personalities and also provided a theoretical assessment of how each dolphin might fare if they were to be relocated to a sea pen sanctuary environment. *(As mentioned above DMCP has been working closely with AFD and WAP in looking into whether a sea sanctuary in Coffs Harbour would be a viable alternative home for our four dolphins.)*

Dr Clegg assessed the four cetaceans at DMCP over a 12 day period, on site in mid-2019. Using her cetacean specific welfare assessment tool she recorded 13 hours of observational data, undertaking more than 30 behavioural and health tests on the dolphins. All four dolphins were found to be in positive welfare.

3.5 Community expectations of welfare of cetaceans in NSW

While there is a plethora of subjective opinion on whether cetaceans and other animals should remain under human care there do not appear to have been any recent studies conducted using valid or accredited market research methodologies, which represent an accurate sample of the New South Wales community's expectations around cetaceans for exhibition or remaining under human care. For community insights to be valuable to this inquiry a formal research methodology outlining all the circumstances within which an animal may find itself under human care (E.g. Stranded or critically injured and undergoing rehabilitation versus simply being taken from the wild) needs to be put to the research group for their feedback. Scientifically researched and accepted requirements and regulations for ensuring the ongoing welfare of those animals also need to be clearly explained to the research groups and weighed against the realistic alternatives to the subject cetaceans remaining in human care (E.g. safe release and or euthanasia) for the research to be worthwhile to this Inquiry.

DMCP notes that as part of this inquiry process an online questionnaire was distributed, however there has been no communication as to the methodologies used to a) develop the survey content or b) recruit a representative sample of respondents. It would be valuable to understand what, if any, governing and weighting parameters were used.

³ <https://www.animalwelfareexpertise.com/organisation> (accessed on 07-12-19)

3.6 Summary

The welfare of the cetaceans exhibited in New South Wales, when evaluated via the Five Domains Model (a science-based animal welfare assessment model) and an independent expert in marine mammal (cetacean) welfare, is confirmed to be positive. Additionally DMCP complies with all the regulatory requirements demanded of the NSW DPI pertaining to maintaining collection animals under human care to ensure their best welfare, including applying its own specific and strict limitations on how long our cetaceans can interact with humans and participate in public presentations on a daily basis.

While it appears attempts have been made to garner community expectations on the exhibition and maintaining under human care of cetaceans in NSW, with limited knowledge of how the study candidates were selected and how responses were validated, it will be difficult to determine the worth and hence relevance of this research.

4.0 Breeding of cetaceans for exhibition in NSW

In New South Wales DMCP is the only facility exhibiting cetaceans. We are currently not breeding our cetaceans having made an official announcement to that effect at the commencement of 2019.⁴ Therefore we find 1(c) (i) to be completely irrelevant to this inquiry in the context of exhibited cetaceans in NSW.

5.0 The purpose of cetaceans for exhibition

5.1 Connecting people with nature

Modern zoos and aquariums such as DMCP play an essential role in conservation. We are uniquely placed to create deep, personal connections between people and the animals in our collection as an outcome of educating our guests and allowing them to have up close and personal – albeit strictly supervised – experiences with these animals. We invariably find that the guests develop a love for wild animals and our hope is that the experience helps create a society with a greater understanding about nature and inspires people to take action to protect it. Again reference is made to the customer feedback we receive on a daily basis affirming this. (See Appendix 1)

As well as educating the guests who visit the park, DMCP is involved in education at multiple levels from pre-school and primary through to secondary school, TAFE and university students. Using the NSW board of study outcomes, we have designed syllabus specific programs⁵ that are presented to over 2500 school students each year; we host up to 30 TAFE students per annum as part of the Captive Animal Certificate Three Course and accept 10 Veterinary Students each year. We believe that these programs will help to build a

⁴ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-03-15/dolphins-no-longer-bred-in-captivity-at-marine-park/10900832> (accessed 05-12-19)

⁵ <http://www.dolphinmarineconservation.com.au/school-education> (accessed 05-12-19)

generation of environmentally conscious young people with the knowledge to change the outcomes for wildlife now and into the future.

5.2 Conservation advocates

The rescued and facility born dolphins we have as part of our collection play an integral and important role in our education programs and guest presentations as advocates for their species. Powell and Bullock state that, “A growing body of literature suggests that emotional stimulation is affected by characteristics of both the visitor and the visitor’s experiences and is important for learning and inspiring pro-environmental sentiment.”⁶

DMCP has a thorough understanding of the husbandry needs, dietary requirements, socialisation and behavioural needs of the species under our care and so are able to provide a safe space for our animals and people to interact – again in strictly controlled and limited sessions. Because of the close relationship between our carers and animals and the specialised training the carers have, we succeed in creating a highly emotive, enjoyable and educative experience for visitors along with a safe and enriching one for the animals. Throughout their visit, conservation messages pertaining to the ongoing health of marine animals and ecosystems are delivered to the guests via signage and educational presentations. Due to their charismatic and curious nature, dolphins are particularly powerful as advocates for the conservation behaviours that will mitigate the threats faced by all marine animals off the coast of Australia.

The value of this advocacy through human encounters and the environmental benefits it ultimately brings are immense and can be achieved without compromising animal welfare, and more often than not, can provide enriching experiences contributing to the positive welfare of the animals.

5.3 Marine wildlife rescue and rehabilitation

For almost half a century DMCP has successfully rehabilitated and released thousands of animals, including dolphins, seals, turtles and sea birds, back out into the wild. As previously stated in the Background (Page 4) DMCP currently works with a number of state and interstate departments and organisations in protecting our wildlife.

All the animal rehabilitation services performed by DMCP are done so at our own cost with very little external financial support. Along with other marine species – seals, penguins, turtles and so on – the cetaceans exhibited at the park help to maintain the financial means to allow us to continue our rescue, rehabilitation and release services to hundreds of sick and injured animals each year.

5.4 Contribution by DMCP to conservation research

The four cetaceans at DMCP provide an opportunity – albeit limited by the small number of subjects and the extended time spent by them under human care – to conduct research to

⁶ <https://doi.org/10.2752/175303714X13903827488042> (accessed 05-12-19)

better understand and conserve marine mammals without the potential to compromise animal welfare, that research on wild cetaceans' presents.

Additionally and as a zoo that is actively engaged in numerous research projects and hosts an estimated 60,000 visitors each year, DMCP is in the unique position of being able to merge these two roles and explain to the public contemporary issues affecting the marine environment.

Current research projects include;

- Metabolomic changes of sea turtles during rehabilitation, Griffith University
- Antimicrobial resistance in marine mega-fauna, Macquarie University
- Causes of mortality in stranded marine fauna, National Parks and Wildlife
- Dugong Health Assessment, University of Queensland
- Morbidity and mortality of spirorchid flukes, University of Queensland
- Echocardiography as a health assessment tool in sea turtles, Southern Cross University,
- Development and implementation of best practice protocols in sea turtle rehabilitation, Sea turtle Foundation.

In addition to this DMCP provides training to the general public so they are able to provide assistance to marine wildlife if and when required.

5.5 Summary

The four dolphins (Calamity, Jet, Zippy and Bella) at DMCP play an invaluable role as advocates for their species through their ability to connect with the public and solicit behavioural change to protect our marine ecosystems.

DPI NSW compliance, C-Well© Research and the requirements for ZAA accreditation has indicated that the welfare of these animals is uncompromised. Calamity was rescued and has remained under human care for many years and Jet, Zippy and Bella were born into the DMCP complex and so none of the four can safely be released. Therefore, combined with the opportunity they provide for education and more importantly, their ability to inspire a deeper personal connection with the public for the long-term protection of our oceans and marine life, it is unarguable that they remain under human care at DMCP.

6.0 Recommendations

Reference 1(b) the welfare of cetaceans exhibited in New South Wales, with consideration of community expectation:

As stated earlier in the submission, there needs to be a clear differentiation between subjective personal philosophy and the results emanating from evaluation of animal welfare science.

Regarding the welfare of cetaceans exhibited in NSW, DMCP recommends that the Committee consider the science-based and evidence-based welfare assessments of the four cetaceans exhibited in New South Wales conducted by multiple external, experienced

stakeholders, which demonstrate positive welfare. If community expectations are to be included as a valued component of the Inquiry, then this should be secondary to the welfare status of the animals as assessed by industry professionals and must be conducted using sound research methodologies to obtain a representative sample of the New South Wales population and garner informed response.

Reference 1(c, i) in light of the findings in 1(b) above, whether:

to allow the continuation of the practice of breeding of cetaceans for exhibition,

While there is no current legislation banning the breeding of cetaceans under human care in NSW, as DMCP is the only facility in NSW caring for cetaceans and whilst DMCP has unequivocally demonstrated that the welfare of cetaceans can be maintained under human care, the company has made the decision to transition to a full rescue, rehabilitation and wildlife research and education facility. In making this decision we have freely and publicly announced a moratorium on breeding our collection cetaceans. Therefore the question of breeding is completely irrelevant to this Inquiry – as it pertains to exhibited cetaceans in NSW.

Reference 1 (c, ii) in light of the findings in 1(b) above, whether:

there should be a phase out of the use of cetaceans for exhibition,

DMCP believes and has provided ample evidence in this submission, that the welfare of Bottlenose Dolphins can be maintained under human care. DMCP is therefore a strong advocate for the continued exhibition and long term care for animals where the alternative is euthanasia, E.g. dependant calves and physically impaired animals.

DMCP's four dolphins play a significant role in advocacy for their species, for wild marine animals in general and for the marine environment. The ability for visitors to DMCP to have a close up and personal experience with these animals along with their engaging nature helps to ensure that those visitors develop a conservation-friendly behaviour change after they leave the Park.

In addition, the exhibited cetaceans help to fund DMCP's significant marine rescue and rehabilitation work every year, saving the lives of hundreds of animals including dolphins, whales, seals, turtles and sea birds, with the majority of these safely released back into the wild.

It should be noted that DMCP and Sea World Gold Coast are the only facilities on the Australian coastline that have the specialist expertise required to successfully carry out cetacean rescues, attend and perform onsite medical aid to cetaceans at stranding's and carry out successful rehabilitation and release programs for cetaceans. The importance of this work cannot be overstated and should be supported by government.

Taking into consideration the positive welfare of the four exhibited dolphins at the park, the points above highlight the considerable benefits of exhibiting non-releasable cetaceans for conservation, research into the rehabilitation of wild cetaceans and many other marine species and ecosystems. DMCP would therefore recommend that exhibiting of non-releasable cetaceans is not phased out in New South Wales as long as the science continues to demonstrate conservation benefits without compromise to animal welfare.

Final note

If this Parliamentary Inquiry is genuine in promoting animal welfare and maintaining community expectations, DMCP calls upon the Parliament to provide financial assistance to the DMCP's transition to a full rescue, rehabilitation and wildlife research and education facility. An investment by the government into this model would facilitate transparency, maintain the local economic stimulus provided by DMCP and most importantly, support the capacity of DMCP to continue the rescue, rehabilitation and release of marine fauna along the NSW coast.

APPENDIX 1: Guest Comments

The following are unedited guest comments from DMCP's website.

[Ash 23-Jul-2018](#)

My partner and I had the most amazing experience here! The animals are super relaxed and happy, the staff are friendly, and the atmosphere is so relaxing! We got to cuddle a seal, get a dolphin kiss and even got some photos!! We both love the fact that the animals are rescues! Was an amazing experience and worth the trip from Tamworth. Prices are great too! Best money we have spent!

[Rubi Merchant30-Sep-2018](#)

We travelled all the way from Brisbane to visit the park after finding it online. It was worth the drive because we had a great experience - my girls had the time of their lives. The show and the kiss the dolphin and hug a seal experience is once in a lifetime. The fact that you get to see the animals up close and personal is amazing. Thank you for making our holiday the best.

[Taquiah Lukaszewicz08-Dec-2018](#)

Wow! What a thrilling and educating experience! The animals are all so beautiful and very well looked after ! Amazing to see such wonderful progress in helping out our sea life ! I did a ultimate experience and it was amazing! So many facts and encouragement on how to properly look after our environment , staff were amazing and just over all the best marine centre helping towards a better future

[Dee Kirkham23-Jan-2019](#)

This place was amazing and extremely educational for the kids and adults. It's the only place that you truly get up close and personal with the marine life. It was a fantastic experience for the whole family and I even got to feed a fish to a dolphin! Great prices and knowing the money goes back into the centre and to rescues is extremely important to me. It was my first time but definitely not my last. Will be going back whenever I'm in Coffs. A must for all ages

Hayden wells19-Mar-2019

i was there on saturday the 16th with the create foundation and i really enjoyed it i believe that the park is a incredible place not only for the public but for the animals that live there. not only is it an amazing day out for families but it makes people stop and think about the issue of recycling to help keep rubbish out of the ocean. the problem of rubbish in the ocean is not going to stop without the help of people. it is also incredibly impressive that miri the sea lion can recycle better than most people. keep doing what you do it is helping the world

Sonia Bailey23-Mar-2019

We were in Coffs Harbour for 4 days to visit friends, and saw a sign for the Dolphin Marine Conservation Park. ON my birthday, we decided last minute to go to the park. Best. Decision. Ever! I got free entry for my birthday, we all had a really great time, and because it rained a little, the other families left early. We got to enjoy the remaining presentations in first class style! I'm planning on booking the kids in for the Marine Ranger Program on our next visit. This place is AWESOME!!!

Tammy Hawkins08-May-2019

By far the best family friendly park for children and adults to learn and interact with marine life. The staff are friendly and helpful, willing to answer any questions. There is something for everyone at any age. Love this park.

Amelia15-Jul-2019

I was a junior marine ranger for the whole day and it was such an incredible experience, it is definitely worth coming and having a look at, and even if you are not a junior marine ranger it is still mind blowingly awesome, one of my favorite moments there was being able to see the dolphin show and also being able to pat the dolphins belly, my favorite dolphin is Calamity because she is really affectionate and kept coming over to the area were i was and bobbing her head out of the water to have a look at me and to say hello, i have never had a better experience, this has definitely been the highlight of my holidays. Thank you for giving me the best experience ever 🐬🐬🐬🐬

Sent: Thursday, 10 October 2019 8:11 PM

To: Bookings

Subject: FeedbackHello to you all at the Park.

I wanted to pass on my huge thanks.

My Daughter (9) was a marine ranger for a day during the holidays and loved it.

She has mentioned being a dolphin trainer for years (as a job) and this was so awesome.

I was a little skeptical that they wouldn't get much hands on time with the animals, but it was just perfect.

Her favorite part was looking after the injured Turtle.

I did ask Cam if there were any Volunteer roles at the park during school holidays, but I understand the laws (stupid).

Anyway if anything ever came up where a longer program or volunteer program was established she would jump at the chance.

We are in QLD, so we can only get there during school holidays or weekends.

Thanks again it was an awesome day.

Cheers Andy

[Lisa Park16-Oct-2019](#)

We absolutely loved visiting the Dolphin Marine Conservation Park on our recent holiday in Coffs Harbour. The park is such a relaxed environment to learn lots about the animals and meet them up close and personal. We particularly enjoyed the Dolphin experiences and we will be back to do this again soon. Thank you to all the friendly staff for answering our many questions and making us feel very welcome!

[Sumit Thapa02-Dec-2019](#)

Our 2 kids under 3 and 5 had great fun watching the dolphins, penguins, turtles and the seal. We arrived around 1.30 as we travelled all the way from Sydney and missed all the big shows but kids still looked so excited just watching the animals play free. Staff were very lovely and caring and they seemed to have real love and passion towards what they do which was great to see. We hope to return again in future.

For additional guest comments please go the following link:

<https://www.dolphinmarineconservation.com.au/share>