

**Submission
No 241**

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

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

- **The welfare of exotic animals exhibited in circuses in New South Wales, with consideration of community expectation.**

It is crucial that the Portfolio Committee recognises that the above Term of Reference is an inquiry into animal *welfare* rather than a debate over animal *rights*.

Animal welfare refers to the responsible care and treatment of animals such as proper housing, veterinary care and humane training methods.

There is no evidence that Australian circuses have done anything other than exceed these expectations, as per their adherence to the Department of Primary Industries' governance and codes of practice. These codes include minimum enclosure sizes, requirements surrounding training methods, and the suitability of animal species to circuses.

It is pertinent to this inquiry that the *Standards for Exhibiting Circus Animals in New South Wales* state that lions are more suited to circuses than other species of big cats. The Standards state that "lions are basically sedentary individuals" and training methods can utilise the following natural instincts:

- to work as a team.
- to expend physical energy.
- to perform certain physical movements (such as leaping, rearing, running).
- to anticipate reward.

The *Standards for Exhibiting Circus Animals in New South Wales* also specify the suitability of monkeys to circuses:

Given proper care and facilities, most individual monkeys and apes adapt to existence in a circus environment...Monkeys and apes are amenable to training because of their high intelligence and inquisitive nature. Both these tendencies are well-catered for if the animals are being trained.

These animals are trained through positive reinforcement, contrary to hyperbolic claims of barbaric methods. Indeed, the current lion act at Stardust Circus is a commendable embodiment of the mutual trust achieved between trainers and their animals.

The arguments made against circuses are often based on animal *rights*, not animal welfare. Animal rights is an ideology that opposes practices such as police dogs, guide dogs and pet ownership, which it sees as a form of human domination and manipulation.

Rather than empowering this ideology, the inquiry should base its findings on the standards of welfare that are maintained by Australian circuses and are worthy of the continued use and breeding of exotic animals.