

Submission
No 254

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

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To the Parliament of NSW

I am the Manager of 365tix, the online ticket agency specialising in circus ticketing. My interest is primarily in circuses, but the recent false PR campaigns, wrongly accusing animal entertainment businesses of cruelty, affects our colleagues in marine parks and zoos equally. There is never any evidence and there has never been a prosecution for any animal cruelty in recent decades.

Existing laws cover all aspects of animal care already. Like circuses, marine parks and zoos, have impeccable standards of animal care and the hardworking trainers devote their lives to educating people about their animals. This gives an opportunity for people to see beautiful and rare creatures up close. As NSW faces catastrophic wildlife loss from the recent fires, we should be turning to the animal experts with gratitude not bullying them for non-existent crimes. They hold the key to preventing mass animal extinctions by keeping animals in the public eye and educating the public from their position of expertise. The businesses and their trainers are protecting the animals they devote their lives to caring for. This is why they are wildly popular with the public.

At 365tix, we work with both animal and non-animal touring shows. The only really commercially viable circus shows have animals because this is what attracts the audiences. Family circus shows which do not have animals tend to (a) need taxpayer support through government funding, (b) never tour outside the major cities due to high costs or (c) fail and close down.

Before joining the Australian circus community with 365tix, I worked for two decades in the subsidised arts in Australia and overseas. We could almost never find a way to take shows to the smaller towns without paying a fortune in transport, infrastructure, marketing and logistical costs. All of the tax-payer subsidised arts companies today in NSW face the same logistical challenges and the end result is that the regional communities miss out on almost all touring shows. The one big exception to this is classical circuses with animals which tour all over regional NSW for 11 months a year, going to small towns which have never enjoyed a visit from the Australian Opera or the Sydney Theatre Company.

It has been an honour for me to meet and get to know the handful of professional Australian Circus families who hold the key to much of the touring entertainment in regional Australia. I am impressed by their dedication and love for their animals. They know far more than I do about animal care and training and are always very generous with their time to explain to me what they do and how it all works. I recently spent time with Stardust Circus filming their trainer interacting with the lions. We had the RSPCA list of happy cat behaviours (e.g. slow blinking, rubbing cheeks against their person etc). We wanted to see how many of these behaviours were exhibited by the big cats and the answer was all of them, continuously.

It must be an endless source of frustration to the small, vocal minority of animal activists, that they will never get any footage of cruelty in Australia's circuses. They have certainly tried, but the cruelty just does not exist. The public who flock to the shows see the rescue dogs at Webers Circus leap joyously into their trainers arms. Australians know what a sleek, well cared for, healthy horse looks like - exactly like the Liberty ponies at Lennon Bros Circus. There is a strong tradition in Australia of working with animals, particularly horses and dogs. This is what people want to see when they choose to come to an Australian show featuring animals. The people want to get up close and see the human-animal connection.

Celebrating the human-animal connection is what the militant activists want to stop people doing, when they target the touring circus community they see as vulnerable. It is much easier to bully a small company than a large one with considerable legal and PR resources. This is why the same militant activists target small family farms for their invasions rather than take on property

held by the publicly listed AA Co. one of the largest national beef producing companies in Australia.

Outside a circus big top you occasionally see less than a dozen protesters huddled together outside a single performance trying to look like a crowd for their Instagram feed. Meanwhile inside the big top, the online ticket sales show a tens of thousands of ordinary Australians are cheering the beautiful animals under the big top, every year in NSW.

Your sincerely

Regards

Eloise O'Toole

Manager

365tix

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