

Submission
No 255

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

Name: Pixi Robertson

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

As a founding member of Circus Oz (1977), Associate Artistic Director of the Flying Fruit Fly Circus (1979-82), as a performer who has worked on classic circuses in Europe and Australia, and as the owner/operator of Festival Circus touring outback Australia under canvas (1991-1995), I bring a wide experience as an animal trainer and a wealth of animal husbandry knowledge to this debate.

Generally speaking, classic circus refers to those circuses with animals, domestic and/or exotic, and are sometimes known as Traditional or Family circus.

And in this vein, the origins of Circus Oz were predicated on the desire to build a “new” circus, but not at the expense of the animals who are the back-bone of circus culture. Tim Coldwell, also a founder and long-term member of Circus Oz, said some years ago on national television, that the reason Circus Oz does not have animals is because, to paraphrase, it is an urban performance group and most of the members have no animal training or husbandry experience. This said, there are a number of classic circuses *still* successfully plying their (unfunded) trade around Australia who *do* have this experience and knowledge.

As an academic (Assoc. Deg. Vis. Art; BA Eng [1st Class Hons Writing]; Masters), I have spent much time researching and considering alternative views to a problem and I write this submission from a position both inside and outside this particular situation.

I retired from active participation with travelling circuses in 2013 but retain my involvement as the Oceania Co-ordinator for World Circus Day and as an organiser with the Australian Circus Festival. Both WCD and ACF are affiliated with the Fédération Mondiale du Cirque which represents circus owners and operators around the world.

Should exotic animals be in circuses?

There can be no doubt that the keeping, training, nurturing, breeding and exhibiting of exotic animals in circuses contribute in this increasingly alienating world to the

understanding, appreciation and preservation of animals whose natural habitats are at risk.

Should the breeding of animals in marine parks and circuses continue?

It is a well-documented fact that contented animals breed, and breed freely in captivity; the astounding success with the breeding of many exotics in Australian circuses, marine parks and zoos is testament to the exemplary treatment these animals receive in situ.

Does the current legislation adequately protect the welfare of animals?

Current NSW legislation and Federal and State regulations already in place more than adequately address the welfare needs of animals in circuses, marine parks and zoos. Australia has an enviable reputation amongst First World countries as an innovator in exotic animal husbandry practise; witness the use of air-conditioned mobile lion quarters and the extensive out-door lion enclosures introduced by Stardust Circus many years before these kinds of concerns were written into law. The images utilised by animal activists of tethered bears and other unfortunate animals in Asia are definitely archaic and atypical of Australian circus practise. They are used as an emotive tool to manipulate the emotions of, generally, impressionable and compassionate young women, and bear no relationship to the reality of contemporary circus animal husbandry in Australia.

Attempts by groups, who have no intrinsic understanding of animal husbandry or empathy with the bonds that exist between humans and animals, to abolish the right of responsible professional animal trainers, owners, breeders, exhibitors and circus and marine park owners and operators to continue to own, breed and exhibit exotic animals and cetaceans, is abhorrent and flies in the face of current knowledges that recognize the deep and visceral need and possibilities for interaction, indeed the very fundamental inter-connectedness that exists between humans and other animals, exotic and domestic. There is a plenitude of literature and studies to support the stance of the Australian Circus Industry; references to a few studies are appended.

Please, before you vote, consider the long-term and detrimental ramifications of this bill.

I respectfully submit this document for your information and consideration.

Pixi Robertson

Oceania Co-ordinator, World Circus Day

References:

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ANIMALS
in CIRCUSES and ZOOS
Chiron's World?

Dr Marthe Kiley-Worthington



**including the independent scientific
report commissioned by the RSPCA on
ANIMALS in CIRCUSES**



ANIMALS IN CIRCUSES AND ZOOS: *CHIRON'S WORLD?*

Chiron was a centaur, half man, half horse, symbolising the joining together of humans and animals. Is this close relationship what is happening, or what could happen, between people and animals in circuses and zoos?

Dr Marthe Kiley-Worthington, one of the world's foremost animal behaviour experts, was commissioned by the RSPCA to carry out an independent, scientific study of circus animals, in comparison with animals in zoos and other husbandry systems and in the wild. The results of her 18 month investigation are in this book.

- Do animals in circuses and zoos suffer psychological ill-health?
- Is handling and training cruel?
- Does transportation cause stress?

Dr Kiley-Worthington makes constructive recommendations for all sides of the debate to consider, aiming to bring circuses, zoos and the animal welfare lobby together in the interests of the animals. This book cuts through the ignorance, woolly thinking and clouds of emotion that often muddy animal issues. The result is essential reading for everyone interested in animals, the environment and people's future on this planet.

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***ANIMALS IN CIRCUSES AND ZOOS:
CHIRONS WORLD***