

**Submission
No 258**

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

Name: Chris Shannon

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Hi

I am writing this submission to lend my support to the Australian circus industry and to organisations who support cetaceans in Australia.

Over the past five years i have had opportunity to meet and get to know various people in the Australian circus industry, most notably from Stardust, Ashtons, Lennon Brothers, Webers and Circus Royale. Like many other people, I was aware of the use of animals in circuses but had not met the animal handlers and did not know anything about the care the animals receive or the love the handlers have for them. What has become evident to me is that the Australian circuses who work with animals genuinely love them, care for them incredibly well, and provide stimulating and enjoyable lives for the animals, which the animals clearly love as well.

I have personally witnessed the care and attention provided to horses, ponies, cats, dogs, camels, and lions by Australian circus people. I have seen the strong bonds of love and friendship between handlers and performing animals, and have seen the joy and excitement of the animals backstage as they get ready to perform. They recognise the music and visibly change attitude, becoming excited and ready to perform. I have seen the dedication of the handlers in caring for the animals. I have also heard first hand the frustration of the circus folk at the lies being told about them by so-called animal rights activists, and have seen examples of these extremists using photographs of mistreated animals from China or other such countries, and claiming these injustices are happening in Australia. All the circus people i know take pride in having their animals available for people to meet and observe around the circus camp, and welcome the opportunity to show the public the truth about the animals wellbeing.

I am also aware that Australia has strong controls over animal wellbeing in place, and that there has not been a single prosecution of an Australian circus for many decades. There will not be either as the handlers love the animals and care for them. The RSPCA carry out inspections but do not wish to publicise this.

I urge the members of this committee to take the time to go and visit circuses to see first hand the care the animals receive. Go and talk to Zelig Bullen about her career training and breeding animals in Australia. Go and talk to Stardust Circus and see how well cared for and protected the lions are. Do not just take the words of extremists or activists who are not informed and who wish to assume cruelty exists.

I grew up in Queensland so do not know the specifics of cetacean support in NSW. I can tell you though that in Queensland, Sea World has rescued, cared for and returned to the oceans many whales, turtles and other sea life over the years. They do fantastic work to advocate for, and to deliver, the protection of sea life. it is appalling that such organisations are targeted by so-called animal rights activists.

I am happy to be contacted for further information if requested.