



Submission regarding the exhibition of cetaceans in New South Wales

Marine Connection is a UK based charity which has, for almost 3 decades, been working both nationally and internationally against the keeping of cetaceans in captivity for public display.

Since the opening of the first commercial dolphinarium in the 1930s much has been learned about the impact that keeping cetaceans in captivity has on their physical and psychological wellbeing. In a captive environment a cetaceans' entire existence is managed and keeping them confined in controlled circumstances removes their freedom of choice - something a captive born animal will never experience. Keeping cetaceans in captivity undoubtedly causes them immense, unnecessary suffering as cetaceans are genetically programmed to be far-ranging oceanic predators, ecologically tied to the ocean environment and cannot thrive in confinement, therefore what right do humans have to prioritise our entertainment over their welfare?

We wish to briefly address just two justifications given by facilities for keeping cetaceans in captivity:

Conservation: Due to poor breeding/survival rates in captivity, cetaceans continue to be taken from wild populations to stock facilities using them for public display. The species of cetacean ordinarily bred in captivity are not listed as endangered, furthermore cetaceans bred in captivity remain within the industry and are often transferred 'on loan' between facilities for breeding purposes and inbreeding is now commonplace. Breeding therefore should not be allowed to continue as it only serves propagate the public display industry rather than provide any real conservation purpose.

Education: Dolphin and whale shows are usually very theatrical and loud - meant to entertain, not educate the public. Seeing a dolphin or whale in a captive environment, in a tank that in no way resembles their natural habitat, trained to behave in ways they would not in the wild, provides no real insight into their social or biological behaviours and provides mis-education about wild cetaceans.

There is also concern for the welfare of marine mammals held in captivity for entertainment. The tourism sector increasingly are deciding to either ban or develop stronger policies relating to animals being used in entertainment. Leading tour operators and airlines have also severed ties with facilities which display these marine mammals, all of which has led to many public display facilities deciding not to continue, or to phase out, displaying and/or breeding dolphins and whales. Public opinion has also led to changes in legislation with many countries, one of the latest being Canada, which recently [passed Bill S-203](#) banning the keeping of cetaceans in captivity.

Reference

To support our submission I include a [2016 statement by leading marine mammal scientists regarding captive cetaceans](#).

Recommendation

It is our belief, and recommendation in this case, that the future of captive cetaceans is sanctuary, for them to be placed in authentic sanctuaries that offer more natural surroundings and a retirement from performance. The only facility displaying captive cetaceans in New South Wales, Dolphin Marine Conservation Park at Coffs Harbour, has announced they will stop breeding their dolphins and are now investigating an alternative for those in their care. This would be an ideal opportunity to establish a sanctuary for these dolphins and for New South Wales to lead the way forward and bring an end to what is undoubtedly the outdated and unethical practice of keeping cetaceans in captivity for entertainment.

Prepared, submitted and authorised by:

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I would agree to this submission being made public