

Monday 30 November, 2015

Committee Secretary

Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications

PO Box 6100

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

Re: Submission to inquiry on Environment Protection and Biodiversity
Conservation Amendment (Prohibition of Live Imports of Primates for Research)
Bill 2015

I wish to register my support for the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Prohibition of Live Imports of Primates for Research) Bill 2015 which amends the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 to disallow the importation into Australia of live primates for the purposes of research.

Despite the existence of three primate breeding facilities in Australia (objectionable in itself), primates are still being imported for research purposes.

Since 2000, nine permits have been granted to import primates into Australia for research. Data obtained from CITES (Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species - to which Australia is a signatory), has shown that between 2000-2015, Australia has imported:

. 331 pig-tailed macaques (*Macaca nemestrina*) listed on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species as vulnerable to extinction (from Indonesia)

. 250 crab-eating macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*) listed on the IUCN Red List from Indonesia

. 71 owl monkeys (*Aotus lemurinus grisembra*) listed on the IUCN Red List from the US.[15]

. 37 marmosets (*Callithrix jacchus*) from France.

This is an unacceptable situation due to the following reasons:

. Overseas organisations have uncovered horrific accounts of many animals being wild caught, and even those purpose-bred for research suffer the distress of long air journeys around the world.

. The National Health & Medical Research Council's own policy on the care and use of non-human primates for scientific purposes states "Non-human primates imported from overseas must not be taken from wild populations and must be accompanied by documentation to certify their status." Similarly, Indonesia has an official ban on the export of wild-caught macaques. Ironically, there is no restriction on the number of monkeys who can be trapped in the wild to replenish breeding stocks.

In April 2009, the British Union Against Vivisection (BUAV) published a report on its undercover investigation: Indonesia: The trade in primates for research. Not surprisingly, the report concluded that the ban on wild-caught macaques is a sham.

Pig-tailed macaques are classified as Appendix II under CITES, meaning that "although not necessarily now threatened with extinction may become so unless trade in specimens of such species is subject to strict regulation in order to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival." With Indonesian forests being destroyed by logging, conversion of land for agricultural use and human settlement, continual trade in these primates for research will further exacerbate the losses from habitat destruction.

. The BUAV report also documents conditions at Bogor Agricultural University (IPB) - where Australia's imports were sourced from!

Extract from BUAV Report:

"The BUAV investigators visited one holding facility at the IPB which they were told infant and juvenile long-tailed macaques who had been taken there after they had been trapped on Tinjil Island. The facility contained a number of small rooms, each containing one small chain link pen housing around 15-20 monkeys. The pens were a barren environment with a metal grid floor. There was no substrate for the monkeys to play or dig in. There was virtually no enrichment, just a few perches.

"The monkeys could only climb the side of the pens and there was nowhere for them to hide from each other or people. The pens were indoors so there was no fresh air and limited sunlight through one window. Only one pen was seen to have a water bottle attached to it. The others had free standing bowls made from either rubber or plastic. In at least one pen, this bowl was empty, leaving the monkeys no access to water. The only evidence of food was a few pieces of monkey chow seen on the wire floor of one pen. In other pens no food was visible.

"The areas underneath the pens were covered in waste and what appeared to be monkey chow biscuits that had fallen through the grid floor. Mould could be seen growing on some of the food. This was a stressful environment in which these monkeys were forced to live. These conditions were in stark contrast to living freely in family groups in a natural environment on Tinjil Island."

Added to this fear and misery are the holding pens at airports and long arduous flights to destination countries - all this before the research begins.

There is no justification for Australia to support this international trade in cruelty and perpetuating bad science.

Australian researchers should be using non-animal methodologies that are far more relevant to studying human disease rather than trying to replicate a disease in a species that is genetically different to our own and expecting to achieve accurate or indicative results for humans.

Instead of logically reducing and ultimately eliminating the use of primates, Australian researchers are utilizing those already bred within our three established colonies, and still importing more.

This Bill is an essential step towards ending this barbaric trade and towards encouraging Australian scientists and institutions to seriously investigate alternatives to animal-based research.

I urge you to recommend the passing of this Bill in order to stop the importation of primates for research in this country.