

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Prohibition of Live Imports of Primates for Research) Bill 2015

Public Hearing, Friday 5 February 2015

Questions on Notice

Department of Environment – Input from NHMRC

Question from Senator Rhiannon (Hansard Page 35):

Could you tell us what species of primates are held in Australia at the moment – for research purposes at the three institutions. Can you give the scientific names for those animals.

NHMRC Input

Information provided by the national non-human primates breeding facilities is as follows:

- Common marmoset (*Callithrix jacchus*)
- Pigtail macaque (*Macaca nemistrina*)
- Long-tailed macaque (*Macaca fascicularis*)
- Baboon (*Papio hamadryas*)

Question from Senator Rhiannon (Hansard Page 36):

Could I ask about owl monkeys—the 46 owl monkeys that came in from the United States sometime between 2000 and 2015. Are they the only owl monkeys in Australia or are there more?

NHMRC Input

There is an owl monkey breeding facility in Queensland and NHMRC understands that these are the only owl monkeys in Australia. However, this facility is not funded by NHMRC.

Question from Senator Back (Hansard Page 36):

In terms of this identification and confirmation, are the resident population of non-human primates here microchipped, and are those that are intended for import into Australia microchipped under CITES arrangements, please? It seems to me that we will answer a lot of the questions that are being asked here in terms of identification of these animals.

NHMRC Input:

The *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes*, 2013 (the Code) sets out requirements for the identification of animals used for scientific purposes, including the use of non-human primates. The requirements are set out below. Investigators are responsible for ensuring that these requirements are met. NHMRC cannot comment on the requirements for identification of non-human primates under CITES.

The requirements under the Code for the identification of animals:

Clause 2.4.18 (iv): Investigators must ensure that animals used are identified either individually or in groups

Clause 3.1.13: Animals must be identified either individually or in groups.

Clause 3.3.6: Methods used to identify animals must:

- be appropriate for the species and the circumstances
- be compatible with the purpose and aims of the project or activity
- involve non-invasive methods whenever possible. The use of invasive methods must conform with Clause 3.3.1

- (iv) cause the least harm, including pain and distress, to the animals.

Question from Senator Urquhart (Hansard Page 36):

With respect to the three breeding facilities in Australia - How many primates do those facilities have?

NHMRC Input:

Information provided by the national non-human primates breeding facilities is as follows:

- Baboon: 165
- Pig-tailed Macaques: 167
- Long-tailed Macaques: 76
- Common marmosets: 343

Question from Senator Urquhart (Hansard Page 36):

With respect to the three breeding facilities in Australia - Are the primates at these facilities used solely for research?

NHMRC Input:

The national non-human primates breeding facilities have confirmed that the animals are used solely for research purposes.

Question from Senator Urquhart (Hansard Page 36):

With respect to the three breeding facilities in Australia - Do non-government facilities purchase primates from these facilities for research purposes?

NHMRC Input:

Information provided by the national non-human primates breeding facilities is as follows:

Non-government facilities may apply for access to the primates for research purposes provided that the proposed use has been approved by the Animal Ethics Committee.

Question from Senator Reynolds (Hansard Page 37):

Finally, if primates were not imported into Australia, how long would it be until lack of genetic diversity became a problem for researchers?

NHMRC Input

NHMRC is not able to provide an exact period of time as the numbers required to maintain genetic diversity will be dependent on the size of the colony, the genetic background of each individual non-human primate and the rate of depletion.

Question from Senator Reynolds (Hansard Page 37):

We heard in earlier testimony—and I am not sure whether either of you heard that—some pretty terrible allegations about the treatment and conditions of primates in one of the three research facilities. We heard evidence of butchering, neglect and primates disappearing—they were quite horrific allegations. I am just wondering if you have been aware of any allegations like these at breeding facilities, and what are the inspection requirements to ensure that they are well looked after?

With respect to ongoing public concern about the treatment of live animals in research and in research facilities - Would you categorise them as anecdotal? You have not seen any actual evidence of that occurring?

NHMRC Input

NHMRC has not received any complaints about the allegations referred to in Ms Marston's testimony.

Inspection of institutions and animal facilities, and addressing complaints and non-compliance, are the responsibility of the state and territory governments under state and territory legislation.

The requirements of the *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes, 2013* (the Code) with respect to inspections of animal facilities, and complaints and non-compliance are as follows:

- Institutions must ensure compliance with the Code, with inspection and monitoring of animal research conducted by institutional animal ethics committees (Clauses 1.32 [i], 2.3.2 [iv], 2.3.17-2.3.23).
- Inspections conducted by AECs may be announced or unannounced (Clause 2.3.21).
- Institutions must also ensure the conduct of an independent review to assess the institution's compliance with the Code, and to ensure the continued suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of its procedures to meet its responsibilities under the Code. Section 6 outlines responsibilities with respect to this review. The Code outlines that reviews carried out under the administration of state or territory legislation may satisfy the requirement for an independent external review.
- Institutions must have procedures for addressing complaints and non-compliance related to the care and use of animals for scientific purposes. Specific requirements and the responsibilities of institutions and AECs are outlined in Section 5 and Clause 2.3.25 of the Code.

Question from Senator Rhiannon (Hansard Page 38):

You also said that there are three registered breeding facilities. Are there any unregistered breeding facilities in Australia?

NHMRC Input

Advice was sought from the state and territory regulators. Breeding of non-human primates without appropriate approval/licensing/registration under state/territory legislation would be an offence under state/territory legislation.

Question from Senator Rhiannon (Hansard Page 38):

If those breeding facilities then supply animals to a hospital or another institution, would they be able to breed those animals?

NHMRC Input

Advice received from the national non-human primate breeding facilities is that there is no indication that any primates supplied to other institutions have been subsequently bred in those institutions.

Were any breeding to be performed outside of the colonies, then this would need to conform to the regulatory requirements and with appropriate ethical approval from both the local and outside institution's Animal Ethics Committee.