

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

DOLPHINS AND WHALES IN CAPTIVITY

Report by the
Senate Select Committee on Animal Welfare

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* From 1 July 1985

** From 21 August 1985

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(7 December 1983 - 30 June 1985)

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(7 December 1983 - 30 June 1985)

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LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

8.9 The Committee RECOMMENDS that no further facilities for keeping captive cetacea be permitted to be established in Australia and that no further permits be issued for the capture of cetacea in Australian Commonwealth or State waters. It further RECOMMENDS that importation of cetacea from overseas be banned.

8.10 The Committee also RECOMMENDS that existing oceanaria be allowed to continue keeping cetacea for the time being but that the keeping of cetacea should eventually be phased out unless further research justifies their continuance.

8.12 The Committee RECOMMENDS that existing oceanaria be required to submit to more stringent assessments of educational and research functions by supplying detailed information similar to that required for applicants for scientific and educational permits in current Commonwealth guidelines and to be able to show that education and research constitute a significant component of the oceanarium's activities.

8.13 In keeping with the accepted policy of presenting animals in a manner which improves public awareness and understanding of cetacea, the Committee RECOMMENDS that display programmes in oceanaria be designed in such a way as to present only natural forms of behaviour and the facility to approximate more closely the cetacean's natural environment.

8.15 The Committee RECOMMENDS that national standards for the maintenance and care of captive cetacea be drawn up by the ANPWS in consultation with the State Government authorities, members of the captive cetacean industry and other people with knowledge of cetacean welfare for use by authorities responsible for captive cetacea in each State. The Committee further RECOMMENDS that national standards include standards for assessments of financial viability, natural display and educational and research components of captive cetacean display as well as covering all aspects of maintenance, handling and care of captive cetacea. These standards would replace guidelines for permit applications.

8.16 The Committee supports the proposal for a licensing system for owners and managers of oceanaria in addition to the existing provisions for licensing the oceanarium facility and RECOMMENDS that such a system be implemented.

8.18 The Committee RECOMMENDS that authorities responsible for captive cetacea in each State assess any oceanaria within that State against the established national standards and, where it is found that the captive cetacean facility is unable to comply with these standards, a specified time be allocated for improvements, and if, after this period, the facility is still unable to comply with these standards, it be closed down.

8.20 The Committee RECOMMENDS that a national advisory body be established comprising representatives from Federal and State Government authorities, non-government organisations and oceanaria, which would advise the Federal and State Governments on matters relating to cetacea, both captive and in the wild and to encourage and monitor research in this area.

8.21 The Committee, recognising the role played by some oceanaria in the rescue and rehabilitation of sick and stranded animals, RECOMMENDS that oceanaria continue this work provided that it is directed towards returning the animals to their natural environment, where possible, and that the cetacea are not rescued with the ultimate intention of rehabilitating the animal for the purposes of display and of circumventing the directive that no more wild cetacea be captured.

(Note: the Committee's conclusions and recommendations are contained in Chapter 8)

PREFACE

All the public evidence on dolphins in captivity in this inquiry was taken by Senators G. Georges, Jack Evans, J.M. Hearn and the Hon. D.B. Scott, before the retirement of three of the members from the Senate on 30 June 1985. These former Committee members assisted the present Committee in the preparation of this report.

I pay tribute to the three former members for their dedication and spirit of co-operation in this and other areas of the inquiry investigated by the Committee. I also thank the staff of the Committee for their work in support of the Committee.

G. Georges