

Junior B, Semi Finals

TOPIC : *that zoos should be banned*

1. Type of Topic

This is a normative debate. This means that the Affirmative should propose a 'model' (a policy on how this idea would be implemented). This model should be clearly described to outline what changes the Affirmative team will make to the status quo, how this will be enforced, whether there are any exceptions and the expected outcomes. For example, they should outline what will happen to the animals in captivity, how they will handle employment and economic impacts, and when and how the ban will be enforced. The Negative team can either support the status quo or propose a counter-model. This counter-model must be different from the status quo, but also different from the model the Affirmative team is suggesting. The Negative team should ensure they clearly identify whether they are supporting the status quo or proposing a counter-model.

2. Background / Context

In Australia, zoos are regulated under a combination of federal, state, and territory laws, with a focus on animal welfare, conservation, and public safety. However, the strictness and enforcement of these laws can vary significantly between different states and territories. The Australian Government, through its Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, sets overarching standards for animal welfare, which zoos must follow. Each state and territory in Australia has its own specific laws and regulations governing the operation of zoos but the level of oversight and the specific requirements can vary – whilst some states have strict enforcement of these regulations, others may have more lenient or inconsistent enforcement, leading to disparities in the quality of care provided to animals in zoos across the country. This can raise ethical concerns about the welfare of animals, especially in smaller or less well-funded zoos. In Australia, there is ongoing debate about whether existing laws are sufficient to protect the welfare of animals in zoos. Advocates for banning zoos argue that even with regulations, the captivity of wild animals for public display is inherently unethical and laws do not go far enough to prevent harm. Conversely, defenders of zoos argue that with proper regulation and oversight, zoos can play a critical role in conservation and education, and that outright bans would eliminate these benefits.

3. Specific Questions for Consideration

- What are the moral implications of keeping wild animals in captivity for human education and entertainment? Can the physical and psychological needs of animals be adequately met in captivity?
- How effective are zoos in conserving endangered species compared to alternative methods such as wildlife reserves or in-situ conservation efforts? Do zoos provide significant educational benefits, or can these be achieved through other means (and if so, what means)?
- What are the documented effects of captivity on the health and well-being of zoo animals?
- How do different types of zoos (e.g., small, large, accredited, non-accredited) impact animal welfare?
- What would be the economic impact of banning zoos, particularly in terms of jobs and tourism?
- How would communities and societies adjust to the loss of zoos as cultural and educational institutions?
- What alternatives to traditional zoos exist, such as wildlife sanctuaries, conservation parks, or virtual zoos?
- Could zoos be reformed rather than banned, and if so, what reforms would be necessary to address the ethical and welfare concerns?
- How would a ban on zoos be enforced, and what would be the legal and logistical challenges involved? What would happen to the animals currently housed?
- Are there examples of countries or regions that have banned or significantly reformed zoos? What have been the outcomes of these actions?

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