



Media Release

25 May 2015

Gorillas are highly cognitive and sentient beings – not objects for entertainment or research.

The [distressing news](#) this week of Julia, a 33 year old gorilla who died from injuries inflicted by young silverback Otana, should perhaps serve as a reminder that great apes – gorillas, orangutans, chimpanzees and bonobos - are individual and highly sentient animals - not objects to be observed in a zoo or used in research.

Captive great apes exhibit symptoms which, in humans, are associated with psychiatric disorders such as depression, anxiety and eating disorders and post traumatic stress disorder.

The similarities in social, cognitive and emotional functioning between humans and primates indicates that the exploitation of great apes in laboratories, circus, entertainment shows and zoos can be considered a kind of slavery, similar to how humans treated their own kind, who were considered to be inferior, more than one century ago.

There are no recent records of research conducted on great apes in Australia, and whilst the National Health and Medical Research Council has strict guidelines on their use, it is not explicitly prohibited.

Concern was raised recently however, when [changes were announced](#) by the Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) to the Victorian Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 2008.

HRA Chief Executive Helen Marston: *“What the changes mean essentially, is that Australian researchers CAN use great apes – gorillas, bonobos, chimpanzees and orangutans - for human medical research (if not being funded by the NHMRC) – so long as they convince the minister that it’s justified.”*

“It would therefore be prudent for Australia to implement a ban on the use of great apes in research, with the only exception being for non-interventional observation studies. Any variation in this exception allows for loopholes which could permit invasive zoological research on individuals.” **Ms Marston concluded.**

Further information:

http://www.banprimateexperiments.org.au/ban-primate-experiments/great_apes