

INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW

Organisation: Greyhound Adoption Program NT
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To the honourable members of the Select Committee enquiry into Greyhound Racing New South Wales (GRNSW).

Along with a committee, I run a small non-industry aligned Greyhound rehoming group in Darwin, Northern Territory. We think ourselves lucky that our racing industry is miniscule compared to NSW, and our welfare issues are correspondingly smaller in number, especially as we have very little breeding up here. Nearly all of our dogs come from down south so I feel that I need to speak about the issues that I see in the industry as a whole.

I am a Delta Accredited Dog Trainer with a Cert IV in Companion Animal Services and many years' experience training dogs and owners. I am also a qualified Greenhound Assessor having taken and passed the course run by GRNSW. We don't have a green collar testing program here in the NT as our dogs are not required to wear muzzles once they are deregistered from racing. Although our issues are lesser in number, they are concerning enough that a group of people give up their time and money to ensure that where possible, Greyhounds get rehomed after they retire from racing. We are in contact and network with similar organisations all over Australia and the world, so are aware of what the issues are and the scale of them Australia and worldwide.

We believe strongly in responsible pet management and to that end all the dogs we rehome are desexed (unable to breed) vaccinated (C6) micro chipped (for traceability), health checked and have their teeth cleaned (due to poor diet, Greyhounds often have severe tartar on their teeth, which untreated can lead to infection, inflammation and severe pain). We guarantee to take any dog back if the home does not work out. We treat any injuries and have rehomed dogs that have ended their careers due to broken legs, toes, muscle strains etc. These injuries are life threatening in a racing greyhound in that they are no longer able to run, which often signs their death warrants, in a pet dog however they are negligible and once treated do not impact on quality of life. We raise funds so that we can cover the \$250 - \$550 per dog it can cost to do all this. This cost is at a 50% discount because we have a wonderful vet practice that helps us out.

So far since February 2012 we have rehomed 35 dogs and currently have 6 in foster. All this without any financial support from the industry. So, why do we do it? We believe that animals have an intrinsic value and do not exist solely for our entertainment. We believe that Greyhounds are companion animals and as such are owed the same level of basic care that is expected to be delivered to any pet dog. Greyhounds are not commodities nor are they a production animal, yet they are raised as such.

We believe that the industry system for breeding, raising, training and rehoming Greyhounds is currently deeply flawed and needs to be seriously reviewed at all levels. We think that the Industry is also rife with corruption from the top down, and its' current breeding, rearing, auditing, governance and regulation practices need to be put under the microscope of public scrutiny.

So, to answer your terms of reference

The economic viability of the greyhound racing industry in New South Wales

If, as good governance and welfare dictates, Greyhounds were tracked from litter to grave, and GRNSW enforced this, including costing in rehoming failed (dog that never make it to the racetrack) and retired racing dogs with the appropriate veterinary work done (as per my description above) industry wide it would cost around \$15,000,000 (Figures are based on the average number of dogs bred each year in NSW over the last 8 years¹) for the vet work alone, never mind kennelling, parasite treatment and prevention, and feeding. GRNSW is not putting this amount of money into rehoming dogs therefore it needs to readjust its' bottom line based on the true cost of stating that welfare of the dogs is paramount in the industry

(b) The financial performance and conduct of the industry and of Greyhound Racing NSW including a comparison to other states of Australia

I suggest that the conduct of the industry in NSW is on a par with other states bearing in mind that Queensland has also had a parliamentary enquiry and Queensland racing is being investigated by the Crime and Misconduct Commission

"It (the racing industry) has been mired in controversy for decades, something which all involved must accept does not advance the overall interests of racing," Justice White said in her opening remarks."

(d) The effectiveness of current industry regulation, including the level of autonomy of Greyhound Racing NSW

Greyhound Racing NSW is now an autonomous non-government body that is not subject to direction by government nor is it oversighted by ICAC. Being responsible for both commercial and regulatory functions mean it is inherently compromised and conflicted.

(e) The selection process for the board of Greyhound Racing NSW

No comment

(f) The effectiveness and accountability of the board and management of Greyhound Racing NSW

See (d) above

(g) The effectiveness of the current arrangements for, and role of, the Integrity Auditor of Greyhound Racing NSW

Integrity Officer David Landa resigned because *"Nowhere in the world would the gaming industry be allowed to self-regulate like this. I believe the situation is worse than before because it has created the illusion that there is some independent oversight and there isn't"* What a damning indictment from the former NSW ombudsman.

(h) The capability and performance of Greyhound Racing NSW and governance of the industry

See (d) above

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(i) The incidence of drug administration and doping in the industry and the efficacy of Greyhound Racing NSW's control and testing processes

SYDNEY, Oct. 15 (UPI) -- The use of performance-enhancing drugs appears to be common in Australian greyhound racing, the Australian Broadcasting Corp. reports.

An investigation by the broadcaster's current affairs program "7.30" also found evidence of cruelty to the dogs in the sport. Trainers breed freely in hopes of getting a winner and then kill about 17,000 dogs a year for failing to measure up, ABC said.

Australians bet about \$3 billion Australian (\$2.85 billion U.S.) a year on greyhound racing, with the country ranking number three in the world.

Smaller greyhound trainers complain the regulations are enforced inconsistently, favouring big kennels.

"Eighty per cent of greyhound trainers are looking for something to dope their dogs," Christos Aletos, a Sydney trainer, told ABC. "I can't compete with the high quality of drugs when they use them."

Drugs were found in the systems of more than 70 dogs this year, many of them also used by humans for recreation or performance enhancement. They included cocaine and caffeine.

Ted Humphries, a veterinarian whose whistle-blowing sparked an investigation 10 years ago, said cocaine is most effective when gotten into the greyhound just before a race.

"The improvement is quite remarkable," he said. "These drugs are stimulatory and it will make a greyhound do its utmost to win."²

(j) Sale and breeding of Greyhounds including the market conditions and welfare of animals

3,300 litters per year are registered with Greyhounds Australasia³

13,300 Greyhounds named (registered for racing)

3,300 x 6 (average numbers of puppies in a litter)=19,800

19800-13,300 = 6500 puppies unaccounted for per year

NSW is the main contributor to these statistics being the state that breeds most Greyhounds. Does that sound like efficient breeding? Too many dogs are bred and disappear into oblivion. GRNSW does not track them despite saying that it is enforcing micro chipping – ask them to show you their database of micro chipped dogs and tell you where they all are.

(k) The welfare of animals in the industry and the role of Greyhound Racing NSW in establishing and enforcing standards of treatment of animals

They say a picture speaks a thousand words. This one says it all. This animal was given away by a greyhound trainer – free to a good home, and dumped recently at Wagga Wagga pound with a another greyhound in similar condition. Not a good look for the industry and not an isolated case, certainly many dogs end up in pounds in NSW though thank fully not usually in such extreme condition.



² http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2013/10/15/Report-Doping-common-in-Australian-greyhound-racing/UPI-95821381877996/

³ <http://www.galtd.org.au/GreyhoundsAustralasia/index.php?q=node%2F111>

The GRNSW Greyhounds As Pets waiting list is long and the failure rates extremely high.

I am a professional dog trainer, so I get that greyhound breeders want to breed a fast dog that is highly predatory (it is the Greyhounds prey drive that stimulates it to chase, all dogs have this hard wired into their brains, they are predators, if they didn't catch prey to eat they would have died out eons ago. We fine tune and select the traits we want in our dogs by selective breeding, eg Border Colies to herd, Dobermans to guard, Terriers to rat, Pitbulls to fight etc.) If predatory aggression was all we as rehomingers had to deal with we could probably rehome more dogs. Predatory aggression is perfectly normal in a dog, yet we require any rehomed Greyhounds not to show it – they are tested for it by the industry rehoming groups and failed if they show it. Additionally because of the way Greyhounds are bred and reared our job is doubly difficult. Large scale breeding operations fail young dogs at a very basic level. Young dogs need socialisation.

Socialisation can be described as the process whereby an animal learns how to recognise and interact with the species with which it cohabits. In the wild this is likely to be limited to the animal's own species, but for the domestic dog it includes other species such as man and cats. By learning how to interact with these the socialised dog develops communication skills which enable it to recognise, amongst other things, whether or not it is being threatened and how to recognise and respond to the intentions of others.

Habituation can be described as the process whereby an animal becomes accustomed to non-threatening environmental stimuli and learns to ignore them.

There is a sensitive period of development in which socialisation and habituation must occur and be properly completed if the dog is not to grow up to be maladjusted. The degree of deprivation a dog suffers in respect of socialisation and habituation will be reflected proportionately in the extent of maladjustment. Accordingly, a dog that has had no experience of a specific stimulus at the completion of the sensitive period will always be fearful of it; a dog that has had some exposure, but not sufficient, will be better adjusted, although not entirely sound; and a dog that has had adequate experience of the stimulus in the sensitive period will grow up to be "bomb proof". Dogs that grow up to be fearful because they have been subjected to stimulus deprivation can be improved by counter conditioning programmes, but the maxim prevention is better than cure was never more applicable than the first few weeks of a domestic animal's life⁴

Dog trainers and behaviourists know it is vital to having a well-balanced family dog that can cope with the pressures of everyday life and is as safe as we can make it around people and other dogs. More dogs die before their second birthdays through behavioural issues (i.e. get taken to the vet or shelter and get euthanised) than die through disease. Greyhound breeding is just puppy farming under a different name, with one major difference. The dogs are bred for function and so are generally physically healthy. However no attempt is made to socialise them and expose them to novel stimuli (i.e. new people and environments) meaning we have completely unsocialised dogs that react with fear (sometimes extreme fear) aggression and anxiety when placed in new situations. Breeding operations are usually in secluded rural environments, meaning even less stimuli than say an urban back yard breeder. Puppies when weaned are placed in large yards and pretty much left to their own devices until they are ready to "break". Imagine the human equivalent. We've all seen the footage of Romanian orphanages, well this is the canine equivalent except it's deliberate, unnecessary and it's for profit. It's a testament to the breed that any make it out alive to be well balanced family pets, it's all down to luck as trainers and breeders make no deliberate preparation for life after the track.

(I) Financial incentives for reducing euthanasia and prosecutions for animal mistreatment

We know the RSPCA does not overlook the Greyhound industry, nor enforce the 5 freedoms for Greyhounds, but breeding, rearing and training kennel usually fail the dogs at this very basic level.

⁴ <http://www.apbc.org.uk/articles/puppysocialisation1> David Appleby

RSPCA Australia considers that the welfare of an animal includes its physical and mental state and that good animal welfare implies both fitness and a sense of well-being.

1. *Freedom from hunger and thirst:* by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
2. *Freedom from discomfort:* by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
3. *Freedom from pain, injury or disease:* by prevention through rapid diagnosis and treatment.
4. *Freedom to express normal behaviour:* by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
5. *Freedom from fear and distress:* by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

1. I would suggest that Greyhounds are often denied food and water to keep them at race weight or in a misguided idea that they will run faster. Trainers feed them weird and wonderful supplements and additives without any veterinary evidence that they work or are even safe. Then there are the drugs....
2. Greyhound kennels are often barren concrete pens with no soft bedding as boredom often drives the dogs to chew and ingest anything, indeed often retired greys of any age have very worn teeth from chewing their pens. Chewing releases endorphins in a dogs brain, similar to autistic children rocking – I return to my Romanian orphanage analogy, the dogs are self-medicating by chewing to calm there anxiety at living in the deprived but often noisy environment.
3. We regularly receive dogs in rescue that have broken bones, urinary tract infections, parasite burdens, inherited diseases such as Pannus, - these dogs have not been treated by trainers because it is seen by them as uneconomical.
4. Once a greyhound is “broken” and begins racing it is often confined to a very small kennel, just large enough to have a sling bed and water bowl and that is then home for probably 23 hours a day. Walls are cyclone wire, floors are concrete. Even in a clean, well-managed kennel, this is a hideously barren environment where the only environmental enrichment will be a radio left on. Kennels often have their view restricted so that the dogs **cant** see things that will make them bark. Dogs are very rarely allowed to interact with each other to minimise risk of injury. Toys are not allowed in case of injury or ingestion on the part of the dogs. It is an extremely sterile environment that leads to boredom and stereotypies – repetitive behaviours and self mutilation.
5. Add up all of the above and then factor in handling from unsympathetic and untrained staff. Many of the dogs that we see come through rescue are frightened of hoses (where water has been misused when hosing out kennels; hosing out kennels with the dogs in them is a very common but very poor husbandry practice) Many of our dogs whilst keenly anticipating feeding time are very nervous of the food bowl where it has been used to hit them of the head if they jump up. Many dogs are also hand shy, head shy, frightened to have their collar grabbed and fearful of brooms and rakes – this is not normal behaviour and often an indicator of previous abuse. There is also inadequate policing of kennel conditions to ensure adequate shade and cooling in summer or heating in winter. Greyhounds are originally a desert bred dog with thin coats and very little body fat. They suffer in extreme heat and cold.

(m) The adequacy and integrity of data collection in the industry, including the number of pups born, the number of dogs euthanased and injury rates,

We call into question both the adequacy and integrity of data collection. The Greyhound Australasia website is 2 years out of date. (latest figures available are 2011) Pups are not required to be registered until 12 weeks old when they are microchipped. This requires breeders and trainers self- regulating and self- reporting on numbers in litters. The Greyhound Advocacy Group Greyhound Freedom has determined that in 2012 510 dogs fractured a bone or died due to their injuries at a tab greyhound track in

Australia. There were 1583 further injuries and 3386 Greyhounds were scratched from their races due to injuries.

In 2013 from January to September 849 dogs were died or killed as a result of their injuries and there were 12,084 injuries from racing. This does not include details from the 20 non tab tracks where steward's reports are not available to the public.

(n) Any other related matter

Add into the mix an industry that if it were any other, having a commodity wastage percentage of around 97% would be considered grossly incompetent.

In 2006 Greyhound Racing Victoria brought together industry leaders, the RSPCA, and respected veterinarians to form the 'Responsible Breeding Task Force (RBTF)'. This taskforce looked at all aspects of the breeding of racing Greyhounds and put forward a number of recommendations aimed at addressing the major identified issues within the sport.

There was also consultation with industry participants through an Industry Discussion Paper as well as face to face sessions at a number of race meetings. The outcome of this process has seen 17 recommendations be made to address a variety of issues identified as most important⁵. However very little in real terms has been achieved, and this is the racing authority that has most money and had made the most initiatives around welfare. It is still failing miserably to address the core issues – too many dogs are bred, go unaccounted for and disappear every year. GRNSW has the same lack of auditing and accountability.

As an industry, it is supported mainly by hobbyists who use the breeding and training of Greyhounds as an addendum to their main income. The money from the sale and training of Greyhounds and the winnings often fall under the radar and does not get taxed so wider society does not receive benefit. The Productivity Commission in Victoria found that if greyhound racing were to be phased out over time, jobs would very easily be absorbed into other industries. Please take this opportunity to place GRNSW under the spotlight and put in place plans to begin the ending of Greyhound racing Australia wide.

To sum up, I object to Greyhound racing for the following reasons:-

- There is nothing sporting about dogs dying to entertain us.
- There is nothing noble in an industry that puts profit far ahead of welfare.
- Any other industry that wasted around 97% of its 'commodities' would be shut down.
- Integrity Officer David Landa resigned because *"Nowhere in the world would the gaming industry be allowed to self-regulate like this. I believe the situation is worse than before because it has created the illusion that there is some independent oversight and there isn't"* What a damning indictment from the former NSW ombudsman.
- Greyhound Racing NSW is now an autonomous non-government body that is not subject to direction by government nor is it oversighted by ICAC. Being responsible for both commercial and regulatory functions mean it is inherently compromised and conflicted.
- GRNSW pays lip service to the accountability and traceability of the pups born – ask them how they are maintaining their microchipping database? Microchips are implanted but trainers are not registering the pups and GRNSW are not following it up.
- The constant allegations of bkie involvement, money laundering, corruption and mismanagement.

As a society we have evolved and moved on apart from a few dinosaurs who still want to exploit animals for entertainment and profit.

⁵ http://www.daff.gov.au/animal-plant-health/welfare/aaws/aaws_international_animal_welfare_conference/improving_the_welfare_of_the_racing_greyhound_-_a_grv_perspective

Despite claims from the industry that the sport is part of Australian cultural heritage, there is something distinctly un-Australian about a so called sport where the punters are taken for mugs and the poor bloody dogs are literally running for their lives.

Finally, I find it extremely disturbing that the comments of the chair Robert Borsak

“I spoke to the Greyhound Action Group.... They all love their dogs and treat their dogs properly.

I can’t pre-empt what the submissions are going to say and, equally, I cannot pre-empt what conclusions the committee is going to come to. But, I wouldn’t be putting too much of an emphasis on the animal welfare side. What is more important is to look at the issues around the inter-code agreement, issues around the governance and maybe explore where the industry thinks it is going in the future”

Perhaps Mr Borsak would like to re-examine exactly what his remit is as Chair? *“fostering a non-partisan environment that allows discussion of diverse points of view before making decisions as a committee.”*⁶ Perhaps he should also find time to publicly endorse an opposing view such as Animals Australia or the Animal Welfare League or the RSPCA .

I urge this committee to use this opportunity to do the right thing and come up with recommendations to framework the phasing out of greyhound racing. Don’t waste this opportunity as other enquiries have done previously. If you believe in the intrinsic value of our companion animals please be a voice and advocate for them

Eileen Fletcher

Greyhound Adoption Program NT

⁶ Legislative Assembly Handbook 2010