

**Submission  
No 115**

## **INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW**

**Name:** Ms Victoria Torazzi

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## To the Greyhound Enquiry – a submission

Greyhounds, along with some other animals, were my earliest friends, companions and extended family members. Growing up and living with these dogs for nearly 30 years has made me who I am.

I was born in the mid 1960s and grew up in a semi rural area west of Sydney. Living on a hobby farm along with natural bushland, we had all the usual domestic and non-domestic animals: horses, sheep, goats, chooks, parrots, snakes, rats, feral guinea pigs and of course dogs. After my father had to leave his career with the C.S.I.R.O. he became a horse and greyhound trainer – training these animals up into his 60s. He was also a serious punter – punting until his 80s.

My earliest memories were with our first brood bitch, *Cynthia*. I saw her as another mother of our family, showing excellent mothering skills due to her own wonderful disposition. I remember her adorable loving puppies jumping all over me at the age of two. Wondering over the contrast of the soft, black, shiny, puppy bodies, with the painful scratching and battering from their tiny paws. How can I play and return the love but survive the experience without pain and scarring?!

The first occurrence with tragedy – a year later Cynthia fell to her death from a bushland rockface. Trying to grasp the concept of mortality as a very young child was hard because I felt grief instantly. Why I could never see her again was painful to accept.

The next 25 years were marked with 3 generations of a greyhound dynasty beginning with our first racing dog, a grade one champion bitch, *Hibachi*. Winning at Harold Park on television was the experience of fame for me in kindergarten. In her retirement years later her loyalty was marred by two particular events of mischievousness. One evening my father was preparing all the dogs' dinners on this huge outdoor table (at this time I remember we had at least 10 dogs in training) with all the dishes laid out and all meals individually prepared, measured, and vitamin-supplemented. He walked off to answer the telephone or something, and was gone for just for 3 minutes. When he returned all dishes were emptied! What had happened in that short time? Under the table was Hibachi bloated like a huge white blimp, licking her chops. Father threw into a rage and tossed each empty dish at her as she waddled away with a distended belly. She disappeared into the bush for two days, not daring to show her face until things calmed down. However, never ever did she steal food from the table again. A lesson had been learned and from then on you could trust her completely. As you well know, dogs are designed to gorge on a kill and then live off the feast for a few days or so. The second event was during a Sunday lunch when everyone had retreated indoors to eat. Outside in the backyard, a ground cage contained some new little pets given to us kids that day as presents – a few chicken hatchlings. After I hurriedly ate to get back outside to play with the chickens, there I saw Hibachi standing by the cage. The scene resembled a cartoon – a dog licking her lips while little golden feathers floated all round but no chickens evident.

A daughter pup born a few years later became my soul mate – the fact of her living with me in my prime growing-up years. *Mango* was her name. This was reflected by her colour and shape. The golden, russet peachy hue ended at a black smudge on her muzzle and her whole silhouette was unusually plump and thick set for a greyhound. Whenever anyone walked with her, one would always feel safe. Whether it be through scrub, bushland, tall grass or bracken, the fear of snakes was not an issue. She would disappear for a second in such silence, you would turn and wonder where she could've gone. And

then you'd see something flung high into the air with a cracking sound - a snake, instantly killed with its back being broken. Sometimes they were king browns – size not being any problem for Mango.

And finally, *her* daughter *Smidgen*, was the last of the line for me to live through. Being the runt of a litter, *Smidgen* was not the star of the family, but she was very good at jumping hurdles. She tucked her front feet up with such grace and skill she looked like a deer. Maybe she had thoughts of flight because she also had an obsession with aeroplanes. Whenever the sound of one was in the sky she would stop and stare, even if the sun was making this difficult. She would blink and squint but the eyes would remain on the machine until it was out of sight.

Seeing *Smidgen* being buried years later was enough. All three had the same fate in their later years, osteosarcoma, which seems to occur in greyhounds and other long boned breeds of dogs. Every vet made a home visit to put the dog down which minimised stress to all. Dogs stay to become part of your life, but suddenly leave way too soon. And so there ended all three generations of the girls, but what they taught and gave me lasts forever.

Victoria Torazzi