

INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

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Introduction

I have had greyhounds as pets for the past eight years, my first coming to me from the RSPCA. Since then I have come to realise what an amazing animal they are. I have also come to understand what is going on in every State of this country in relation to the welfare of greyhounds and what I like to call "Australia's Dirty Little Secret". Why do I call it this? Because the majority of Australians have no idea what is really happening to these animals and the cruelty that is being inflicted upon them by breeders/trainers/owners, hunters and vets. Following are just *some* of the issues that the majority of Australians are blissfully unaware of (for now). However, awareness is growing rapidly.

- The vast numbers of greyhounds that remain "unaccounted for" each year (*refer submission by Greyhound Freedom*)
- The vast numbers that require rehoming
- The various state-based RSPCA's see greyhound welfare as something for the "too hard" basket, evidenced by their lack of interest in being involved in rehoming the extraordinary numbers of greyhound bred and discarded in this country
- The likes of the RSPCA believing the various industry-based Greyhound Adoption Programs around Australia have it covered under their jurisdiction. However, in reality the numbers being "saved" by the various GAPs are insignificant in terms of the whole number of dogs discarded (or politely referred to as "wastage" by the industry)
- There is no bigger puppy farm breeder in this country than the greyhound racing industry
- Contrary to what the industry will say, live baiting is still happening in this country. Variety of prey includes: kittens, cats, possums, chickens, guinea pigs, rabbits. I have been told "anything that squeals will do". Possums will have their teeth and claws removed to prevent damage to dogs. It will only be a matter of time before live footage is captured and shared with the appropriate media outlets
- The vets across Australia are "bleeding out" greyhounds in exchange for their blood and free "euthanizing" for the breeders/trainers/owners. The dirty little side-business conducted by vets of on-selling greyhound blood to their customers, when transfusions are required, for anywhere from \$250 to \$400 a bag.

It was not until April this year that I started personally rescuing greyhounds. I have only rescued and rehomed 25 greyhounds since April, which is incredibly insignificant in comparison to the overall "wastage" numbers in Australia. However, in the process I have learnt a great deal about the disgraceful way greyhounds are being treated and abused in this country.

Gumtree and free adverts

In April this year, I came across an advert in Gumtree, the free online advertising vehicle. It was placed by a greyhound breeder/trainer/owner in regional Victoria advertising three female greyhounds aged eight and nine years old to "Give away to good home". I made contact with the breeder/trainer/owner, and then sought out somewhere safe to re-home these three "brood bitches" who had given so much of their lives by providing continual litters to these people. All three thankfully were taken in by Greyhound Rescue in NSW.

Thus began months of scouring Gumtree for "Give Away to Good Home" adverts for greyhounds. Many of these adverts appear in the regional areas of Australia. Typically the more established, privately run greyhound rescue groups are in the capital cities and are being "fed" the greyhounds for rehoming via vets and trainers closer to their locations. The regional tracks obviously attract breeders/trainers/owners closer to those regional locations and for those very, very, insignificant few that do want to rehome their dogs, Gumtree is often the only or most popular choice, together with giving them directly to hunters (see below).

Similarly, there is a significant issue occurring in regional NSW in relation to greyhounds and hunters.

Hunters

What became apparent to me once I started investigating was that hunters in regional Australia like to use Gumtree as a means of picking up free greyhounds for hunting – particularly rabbits and wild pig.

They particularly like to pick up the "Free to a Good Home" bitches from Gumtree, with a view to breeding the females with bull mastiff males, believing this will give them the size and speed they need to chase down a pig.

Greyhound bitches can often still become pregnant up until 10-11 years old, so there is nothing stopping a hunter using a dog this age to breed - and it does not stop them. Irrespective of age, the physiology of a greyhound giving birth to pups that are 50% bull mastiff, brings with it significant complications including vaginal tearing and sometimes death of the greyhound mother.

Some hunters will use the pure bred greyhounds to chase down pigs. The fragility of greyhounds' skin/coat does not protect them from a wild boar easily tearing them to shreds.

In October this year, two greyhounds were dumped at Wagga Pound, left in the deposit pens while the pound was closed. The condition of these dogs was nothing short of shocking. The Wagga Council's Supervisor of Regulatory Services, Greg Minehane, made an unusual decision for a regional council. He decided to give these dogs a chance and had his rangers deliver them to a local vet for treatment, rather than euthanizing them. Mr Minehane's reason for saving them? Because "they have already been through too much". Both dogs are believed to have been given to hunters.

The female was particularly emaciated (see *Exhibit 1(a) and 1(b) "Audrey"*) and was an in-patient with the vets for three weeks. I had her collected and placed into foster care last Friday 1 November. The male (see *Exhibit 2(a) and 2(b) "Big Ted"*) was also an in-patient and treated for two weeks, released to me and also put into foster care. Both these photos were taken three weeks after the dogs had been found. The female, "Audrey", had *gained* four kilograms when these photos were taken.

Both these dogs were given to a hunter by two separate "owners". We know by the ear brands that both these dogs are effectively still "owned" by their last breeders/trainers/owners in the eyes of Greyhound Racing NSW. Yes, they are still registered to breeders/trainers/owners on Greyhound Racing NSW's database. These breeders/trainers/owners are giving away dogs without accepting the outcome of where they are destined and for what.

Additionally, what becomes of the breeders/trainers/owners who put these dogs in this position? There is so little confidence in the RSPCA, the Department of Primary Industries and least of all, Greyhound Racing NSW, in pursuing appropriate outcomes for those breeders/trainers/owners responsible, that I am certain we will not even waste our time lodging a complaint with any of these three bodies.

It is a very sorry state indeed when history (years and years) speaks for itself in terms of the distinct lack of welfare concern shown toward these animals by the industry, government and welfare bodies meant to protect them.

My rescue costs

I have spent over \$6,000 of my own money this year rescuing greyhounds from pounds, Gumtree and when breeders/trainers/owners have contacted me directly because they have heard about me from their racing counterparts. The costs have included:-

- Pound release fees
- Transport fees to foster careers

- Vet work including micro chipping, worming, vaccination, desexing, teeth descaling/extraction
- Food
- Temporary kennelling

Typically there is no discount from vets, kennels or transport companies. Additionally it is very, very rare that a trainer will offer to cover *any* of these associated costs.

I even paid \$100 to an owner to release a dog to me that was clearly starving (see *Exhibit 3 – “Stormy”*). Yet another Gumtree dog.

Private Rescue Groups: Our costs and Greyhound Racing NSW

Private greyhound rescue groups continue to pick up the cost of the Greyhound racing industry’s “waste”. We are given nothing by the industry towards alleviating our costs, and yet the various State Governments continue to throw money at them, propping them up.

My question is this: *What other business or industry expects the public to volunteer to pick up costs generated by them, without compensating the public for it?*

I actually had a trainer say to me just recently “If it wasn’t for us, you wouldn’t have your pet greyhound”.

Regional NSW

- **Casino**

It is an indictment on the racing industry and vets, that a vet in Casino felt compelled to commence offering a special “\$20 Thursday - Euthanize Your Greyhound Day” two years ago because breeders/owners/trainers were found to be shooting the dogs in the head, cutting their ears off to avoid identification of ownership and dumping them in the bush so they were untraceable. Unfortunately some dogs were still found to be alive and had to be destroyed.

- **Tamworth**

Tamworth Council for years offered breeders/trainers/owners free “euthanizing” of their greyhounds. They would take them to the pound, leave them in an outside run and next day they would be gone - courtesy of the council. Approximately four greyhounds per week would be destroyed. As has been the on-going policy for all other dog types, if an owner wants a dog “euthanized” by council it costs \$70.

Two months ago council changed the policy and now breeders/owners/trainers have to pay \$70 - the same as everyone else, to have their greyhounds destroyed.

And surprise, surprise! Guess what? Greyhounds have not been seen at Tamworth pound for two months. Where have the greyhounds gone and "how" have they gone?

I believe these 2 regional areas are just an example or microcosm of the greater area of NSW.

Summary

I have 2 questions for the committee:-

1. *Where have all the greyhounds gone and why is it deemed acceptable by Greyhound Racing NSW and ultimately, the NSW Government, that the missing can be unaccounted for, to such a phenomenal degree (refer statistics provided in submission by Greyhound Freedom).*
2. *Why does the NSW Government allow this industry to self-regulate and be closed to public scrutiny? Nothing I have seen or heard supports it. As an organisation they are immature, incapable and irresponsible. Just ask former Greyhound Racing NSW Integrity Auditor, David Landa.*

Finally, to quote the Chairman of this Inquiry:-

"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"

Well, Mr Borsak, I beg to differ. This Inquiry is very definitely about animal welfare. The Australian public are tiring of the lack of accountability and transparency by organisations such as Greyhound Racing NSW in terms of animal welfare. This, together with inaction, is an absolute blight on the NSW Government.

Exhibit 1(a) “Audrey”



Exhibit 1(b) “Audrey”



Exhibit 2(a) “Big Ted”



Exhibit 2(b) “Big Ted”



Exhibit 3 “Stormy”

