

INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW

Organisation: Auburn-Lidcombe Branch GBOTA

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SUBMISSION TO SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRING INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

This submission is made by the Auburn-Lidcombe Branch of the NSW GBOTA

Terms of Reference

- (a) The economic viability of the Greyhound racing industry in NSW
- (h) The capability and performance of Greyhound Racing NSW and governance of the industry,
- (i) the incidence of drug administration and doping in the industry and the efficacy of Greyhound Racing NSW's control and testing processes,

At its meeting on Sunday 13th October 2013 the members of the branch discussed the terms of reference for the Parliamentary Inquiry into Greyhound Racing. These are the points the members would like to make to the inquiry.

Funding

The members feel that the current arrangement with the inter code agreement is not fair. At the time of privatisation those members who were around thought they would get no less than 15% and were surprised that the percentage agreed to for the greyhounds was 13.2%. The members were lead to believe that the amount would be reviewed after 15 years. It came to pass sometime later that the agreement was for 99 years and the 15 year review only related to new money. The members were also told that there would be millions from poker machines. This has not eventuated.

The issue of the 13.2% is that extra greyhound product is being put on for the other two codes of racing. The greyhounds do not get the benefit of growth. It costs the industry money to put on the races but the returns are not there. We now have the ludicrous situation where we are racing for half prize money at what are termed TAB C meetings while the TAB, Government and peak body receive full entitlements.

During the Equine Influenza crisis the greyhounds raced for less prize money to assist the other two codes. The thoroughbred and harness codes then received the lion's share of government assistance even though they were receiving income from TAB without putting on product. We, the members, believe it is a disgrace and discriminatory that we have been treated in this way.

Recommendation

That the Cameron recommendations be adopted to change to the inter code agreement to better reflect the performance of each code.

Economic Management

The members of the branch want to bring to the attention of the select committee what they believe to be economic mismanagement by GRNSW. The example to be given is the venue known as the Gardens and the club NCA. All aspects of the project should be examined by the Select Committee. Our branch is one of a number that asked questions of GRNSW about the funding for the project. Questions raised concerned the valuation, where funds were spent, track safety, the amount of funds put in by the industry, the number of tracks that closed to allow the project to be undertaken, the financial management of the NCA and of course the conflict of interest created when GRNSW acquired a share of the venue.

Of course the branch members believe there are other areas of economic mismanagement such as the top heavy staff structure, the high number of staff, the expensive office accommodation in an out of the way location for greyhound participants and the selling of the administrative building to fund a computer system that does not seem to be as good as what we had previously.

Recommendation

That a financial audit be undertaken to determine where wastage has occurred and recommendations be made to introduce a more cost effective organisation.

Computer Inaccuracies and Human Errors

The members of the branch are appalled at what appear to be too many computer and human errors. The numbers of races that are required to be redrawn are unacceptable. There are too many grading errors by the employees of GRNSW. It seems that they have no pride in their work. There are too

many mistakes in the stewards' reports. You could be forgiven for thinking the stewards had not even seen the race. There are inconsistencies in the different calendars on the dogs' website. An example was a blue paws 600m maiden at Richmond recently. The race was advertised on the Blue Paws calendar but not the main calendar. Surely a quality control issue. Of course we have not even mentioned the graders not being able to understand the grading policy.

Recommendation

That the computer system be reviewed to ensure the programs are operating to an acceptable standard with minimal errors.

That the employees be required to undergo training to understand their own policies and procedures.

That the employees have built into their performance agreements clauses relating to how many errors they are allowed to make before they can be disciplined and in extreme cases dismissed.

Rule Changes

The members of the branch believe that it is impossible to keep up with the rule changes. The problems are that they come about haphazardly, they are put out on the website as press releases, sometimes underneath a current press release making it easy to miss and sometimes there is no indication at all of the rule changes. Two examples of this are the time standards for performance trials and the change to the points system for greyhounds competing in semi-finals and finals of races where heats are for maidens. No press releases have issued for these two changes.

Greyhound participants are a diverse group of people. Therefore there is a section of the industry that does not use computers. These people are left behind when rules are changed and only find out either by word of mouth or when they have breached the new rules. It is not good enough. If people are required to follow rules then the peak body must have a system in place to ensure that all registered participants receive the rule changes.

The practice of changing rules at any time is an issue in that participants cannot even be prepared to look for any changes. At least if there were set times of the year that changes were to come into operation then participants would actually look for them. GRNSW seems to be unstructured and operates in a haphazard manner.

Recommendation

That GRNSW be required to publicise all rule changes.

That GRNSW have a system in place to ensure all registered participants are aware of any rule changes.

That GRNSW have set times during the year for bringing in rule changes.

Wentworth Park Move from Friday to Thursday

The members of the branch are unhappy with the Friday night racing at Wentworth Park. They are aware that the Monday meeting was moved because Monday is considered a bad night for racing. However, there are a number of reasons why Thursday is a better night than Friday.

Firstly we will look at the trainers. It is a nightmare to travel by car into Sydney on a Friday night. This is because many people go into the city for dining, shows etc. on a Friday because Saturday is traditionally not a work day. It takes much longer to travel into the city to be at Wentworth Park between approximately 6.00pm and 7.00pm than on other days. This means that the greyhound is also spending more time in the car than it would if the meeting was held on a Thursday.

Secondly, Thursday is traditionally a greyhound night on Sky. New South Wales is probably the only state that does not have a main meeting on a Thursday night. It makes sense then that New South Wales conform to the other states. It also brings consistency to the punter, particularly those who concentrate on the greyhounds.

Recommendation

That GRNSW change the racing dates so that Wentworth Park races a metropolitan meeting on Thursday nights in sequence with the other states in Australia.

Cost Effective Swabbing

The members of the branch support an industry free of performance enhancing drugs. However, they do not support industry money wasted on unnecessary swabbing. The members fully support the re-introduction of a random system such as the red marble.

It should be noted that it is still used in the Non TAB sector of the industry. The members feel that there is as great if not greater deterrent by going back to the previous system. They support drug testing for feature races, improved performance, poor performance, other targeted times and finally a random system for all other winners.

The system referred to in the previous paragraph gives confidence to participants. The random part of the system is still a deterrent in that trainers are silly to take the chance that they will not be swabbed and it takes away the steward's discretion with the opportunity for corruption to occur. The swabbing of all winners at a meeting is a waste of money. Statistics show that the majority of positive swabs over the last few years are from contaminated milk powder, contaminated meat, eye medication for pannus, and medication for oestrus suppression. Many of these were in such small amounts they could not be said to be performance enhancing and in fact thresholds have now been introduced for procaine and oestrus suppression medication.

Recommendation

That the swabbing procedures revert to the previous system of automatic swabs for feature races, stewards discretion for improved performance, poor performance and other targeted instances and the remaining winners be subject to a random system such as the red marble that is in use in the Non TAB sector.

Carly Absalom

Secretary Auburn-Lidcombe Branch NSW GBOTA