

**Submission
No 180**

INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW

Organisation: Humane Society International

Date received: 21/10/2013



HUMANE SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL

Humane Society International Inc.

ABN 63 510 927 032

PO Box 439
Avalon NSW 2107
Australia

Telephone (612) 9973 1728
Facsimile (612) 9973 1729
Email admin@hsi.org.au

www.hsi.org.au

Board of Directors:

Verna Simpson
Michael Kennedy
Peter Woolley
Elizabeth Willis-Smith
Dr Andrew N Rowan
Jean Irwin

US Office:

Washington DC

Regional Offices:

UK / Europe
Canada
Latin America / Costa Rica

RECEIVED

21 OCT 2013

The Director
Select Committee on Greyhound Racing in NSW
Legislative Council
Parliament of New South Wales
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

By email: greyhoundracing@parliament.nsw.gov.au

18th October, 2013

To The Director,

HSI Submission on the Inquiry into Greyhound Racing in New South Wales

On behalf of our 60,000 Australian supporters, Humane Society International (HSI) appreciates the opportunity to make a submission to the Select Committee on the inquiry into greyhound racing in New South Wales. HSI offers the comments below which we trust will be considered and will contribute towards improved animal welfare measures.

HSI feels strongly that the use of greyhounds for racing is inhumane and supports a ban of the sport, particularly due to the inappropriate standards of care that these animals receive and the fact that thousands of dogs are killed each year as a result of injury, from being unprofitable, or simply being unwanted. HSI believes that the greyhound industry puts financial considerations before of the welfare of the dogs. HSI is supportive of the parliamentary inquiry into greyhound racing in NSW, and our view is that the primary issues that should be addressed involve the welfare of the greyhounds. We also have several other concerns about this 'sport' and our views and recommendations are outlined below.

SUMMARY OF THE GREYHOUND RACING INDUSTRY

Australia represents the 3rd largest greyhound racing industry in the world, predominantly in New South Wales where 34 of the 77 national race tracks are located. In 2011 there were an estimated 1,595 greyhound trainers in NSW, and approximately 2,330 owners/trainers¹.

Thousands of greyhounds are killed as a result of the 'sport', either because they are underperforming or from injuries sustained during racing. Although exact numbers are unknown due to a lack of proper monitoring, an estimated 17,000 greyhounds are believed to be killed in Australia each year – it would follow that NSW, being the predominant state for greyhound racing, would account for at least 8,000 of these deaths. Injuries sustained from racing may include broken legs, paralysis, head trauma, or cardiac arrest from the exertion. The welfare conditions are questionable and it is widely reported that dogs are confined in small pens and underfed to maintain their racing weight.

The industry has also been under scrutiny for allegations of the use of performance enhancing drugs, as well as links to motorcycle clubs and associated criminal activity.

¹ Greyhounds Australasia – www.galtd.org.au – Webpage on 'Australian Racing Statistics'

ANIMAL WELFARE CONCERNS

GRNSW state on their website at www.thedogs.com.au that they consider “that the welfare of all animals must be a primary consideration for all participants in the greyhound racing industry.” In July 2011 they introduced a mandatory *Code of Practice for Greyhounds in Training*², outlining the minimum standards required in NSW. However, as a result of the profit-driven over-breeding of several thousands of dogs each year, thousands of greyhounds are euthanised annually as they are not fast enough, have suffered an injury, or have reached the end of their racing ‘career’. The *Code of Practice* specifies in part 12 that, “When necessary, the method of humane and painless death for any greyhound is a rapid intravenous injection of concentrated barbiturate solution. Such methods of euthanasia must be performed by a veterinarian.” GRNSW claim that “All greyhound racing participants in NSW are bound by GRNSW’s Code of Practice and the Greyhound Racing Rules which outline animal welfare standards, as well as strict management and care practices that are appropriate to the physical and behavioural needs of greyhounds.” However, without close regulation and heavy penalties it is clear that GRNSW’s *Code of Practice* is largely ignored given the fact that accounts of greyhounds being killed inhumanely are widely reported.

It was stated in the media late last year that a leading Sydney greyhound vet, Ted Humphries, puts down an average of four greyhounds a week and although he hates doing it, he said if he doesn’t humanely euthanise them, then they will be inhumanely euthanised.³ In another article⁴, Mr Humphries explained that if he was not willing to euthanize these dogs humanely, there is a distinct possibility that they would meet a more brutal end: shot, killed by hanging, drowning, gassed, or even hit over the head with a hammer. To allow a professional such as Mr Humphries to bear such a heavy moral burden is surely a clear indication that serious welfare issues cloud the greyhound racing industry. The pain, suffering and routine killing which is deemed acceptable by this industry far exceeds any human benefit and demonstrates just how out of step they are with community values.

It is important to note that the definition of “euthanasia” describes the act or practice of painlessly ending the life of an animal or a willing individual who has a terminal illness or incurable condition, as by giving a lethal drug. However, in the case of greyhounds, a number of these are perfectly healthy animals, so these are in fact convenience killings as the dogs are no longer deemed profitable. The greyhound racing industry takes no responsibility for the welfare of these animals, purely using them until they have served their purpose, wasting valuable lives for profit. HSI believes that at the very least the industry should be held accountable for these animals for the duration of their lives, drastically reducing the numbers bred for racing and guaranteeing them a home at the end of their careers.

HSI is concerned that the welfare of racing greyhounds is the sole responsibility of GRNSW, whose focus is to promote and expand the industry. The fact that no government department has any involvement is disturbing. The two most obvious positions would be the Minister for Agriculture who administers the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act*, and the Minister for Racing, but currently they have no involvement. HSI believes that a separate and independent government body should oversee these issues, such as an Independent Office of Animal Welfare. During the training of greyhounds there are still reports of live animals being used as bait, such as rabbits, cats and chickens, but with no independent monitoring of the industry how will these inhumane practices ever be stamped out?

HSI is strongly opposed to the over-breeding and mass killing of greyhounds each year in Australia, and believes that no animal should die in the name of sport or

² ‘Code of Practice for Greyhounds in Training’ – GRNSW (April 2011)

³ ‘Greyhound racing euthanasia rates slammed’ – ABC News (10 November 2012)

⁴ ‘The unbearable lightness of being a greyhound’ – The Conversation (2 December 2012)

entertainment. No industry that routinely kills the majority of the animals purpose-bred, and healthy, simply because they get injured or cannot run fast enough should be deemed acceptable, by any community. HSI recommends that a percentage of the funds collected from betting should be allocated to animal welfare, going towards the costs of re-homing greyhounds.

In terms of re-homing, HSI understands that since 2009 there have only been approximately 300 greyhounds progressed through the GRNSW greyhound adoption program known as *Greyhounds As Pets (GAP)*⁵. This success rate is also reflected in Victoria where adoption 'saves the lives' of around 4-5% of the total number of animals in need of re-homing⁶. To demonstrate the level of importance that GRNSW places on their re-homing program, their 2011-2012 Annual Report shows us that they contributed less than half of one per cent of their turnover of almost \$50m to the *GAP program* and *Greenhounds (Muzzle Exemption Program)* combined⁷ (0.43%). Furthermore, GRNSW closed their accounts for that financial year with a total of more than \$5m surplus, yet they only contributed around \$200,000 to the GAP and Greenhounds programs. HSI believes this is a highly unsatisfactory effort, particularly when they state on their website that the welfare of all animals must be a primary consideration.

Also, the vast surplus of dogs available has fuelled the use of greyhounds in research, for teaching in veterinary schools, and as a live export 'commodity'. This raises further concerns since most greyhounds exported from Australia are sent to Macau in China which is renowned for its poor welfare standards and high death rates, and where the Canidrome racing track does not allow any dogs to be adopted as they are considered to have behavioural problems. In 2012, 309 of the 729 greyhounds exported from Australia ended up in Macau. According to Dr Choi U Fai, head of the Macau government's animal-control department, the plight of greyhounds is "terrible" and every dog imported from Australia was dead within three years.⁸ A media report in the South China Morning Post in January last year claimed that "Greyhounds are suffering potentially life-threatening injuries at the rate of more than 10 dogs every race day at Macau's Canidrome."⁹ HSI firmly objects to greyhounds being exported to countries with inadequate welfare regulations.

Greyhounds can reach top speeds of 64km/h. Injuries sustained from racing may include broken legs, paralysis, head trauma, or cardiac arrest from the exertion of the race. In April 2013 three greyhounds were put down at one race meeting, at the Dapto race track – one suffered a broken back, another broke its neck, and the third broke its offside hock. This is a shocking outcome, particularly given that Dapto is said to be one of the safest tracks in the state. The most serious injuries and collisions occur on corners of the race track. Countries such as Denmark have overcome this danger by implementing straight tracks, resulting in far fewer injuries. Currently in NSW the only straight track is Appin. HSI recommends that GRNSW should phase out cornered tracks to immediately help reduce the injury toll.

Another area of serious concern is the alleged use of performance enhancing drugs. According to GRNSW's own figures, positive drug swabs rose 82 per cent from 2010-11 to 2011-12. There have also been reports of the use of Erythropoietin, more commonly known as EPO, the drug that cyclist Lance Armstrong was accused of using. It acts by increasing the number of red blood cells whose role it is to carry oxygen to the muscles. When vet Ted Humphries

⁵ Answers to questions on notice lodged by MP for Sydney Alex Greenwich, 23 May 2013

⁶ "The welfare of greyhounds in Australian racing: has the industry run its course?" by Alexandra McEwan and Krishna Skandakumar, Australian Animal Protection Law Journal Dec 2011: 15 July 2013 version.

⁷ Greyhound Racing NSW 2011-2012 Annual Report, pages 35 and 46

⁸ 'Call to ban export of greyhounds to Macau' – The Age (6 March 2012)

⁹ "10 dogs injured' at every Canidrome race meeting' – South China Morning Post (15 January 2012)

was asked how often he thought EPO was used, he answered, *"Well, not infrequently. I would probably think we'd see a case a month where that would be the only likely... most likely explanation of the dog's condition."*

The ABC's 7.30 Report broadcast their investigations into allegations of widespread doping, animal cruelty and collusion on 15th October 2013¹⁰. They reported that more than 10 years ago, an inquiry into NSW exposed rampant drug use, fraudulent testing and bribery and there was supposed to have been a clean-up, but they revealed this multi-billion-dollar industry is still far from clean. Their investigations showed that drugs ranging from cocaine to Viagra are used, and Sydney trainer Christos Arletos who's raced greyhounds for 25 years told them that 80% of trainers are looking for something to dope their dogs. The report discovered that cocaine is very popular as it's difficult to detect, and will make a greyhound do its utmost to win. Dogs also test positive to amphetamines, caffeine, anabolic steroids, and even Viagra.

Going to the other extreme, ABC Radio National¹¹ reported that, *"Ted Humphries says he's seen at least 20 dogs over the past six months that appear to have been fed rat poison in an attempt to slow them down on race day. It's very rarely fatal to a greyhound, but it makes them lethargic and in some cases they'll be seriously ill for several months. Sydney trainer Patrick Valentine suspects other trainers could be behind an attempt to poison his dog, Eldorado Gold. He says two men fed poison-laced meat to his dog in its backyard kennel."*

Corrupt practices seem widespread throughout the greyhound racing industry. Despite GRNSW tightening the rules on drug swabbing, taking swabs from every winner, vet Ted Humphries who previously sat on the NSW Greyhounds' veterinary advisory committee told ABC's 7.30 program that during one meeting a lab analyst openly offered to falsify test results, saying, *"You tell us which swabs you want made negative and we're happy to make them negative."* Also, in 2000 a corruption inquiry exposed evidence that the state's then chief steward, Rodney Potter, had switched dog urine samples in exchange for tens of thousands of dollars in bribes, replacing it with a drug-free sample.

GRNSW seemed desperate to justify themselves following the ABC's 7.30 Report which revealed widespread corruption and cruelty allegations. They released a media announcement which opened with the statement, *"GRNSW today received confirmation from RSPCA NSW that there is no evidence to suggest acts of animal cruelty are occurring in the greyhound racing industry in NSW."* This seems highly contradictory given the evidence presented on the program, including comments from RSPCA's Dr Jade Norris about the estimated number of dogs euthanised in NSW, *"...the problem is there is a real lack of national published data so we don't have the exact euthanasia figures to draw from and that's another problem with the industry: this lack of transparency. But we do have enough evidence to know that the euthanasia problems are very serious. The high euthanasia rates are unacceptable and urgent action needs to be taken to reduce them."* The program concluded with the statement, *"After years of scandal and ongoing evidence of entrenched drug use, many believe it's now time for a major overhaul of the industry. There's bound to be resistance because there's so much at stake."*

If the government continues to deem greyhound racing 'necessary' then they should ensure accurate reporting on the facts concerning the greyhounds that are bred and destroyed for the sport. This data should be made publicly available, but it seems this remains a grey area. All dogs bred for the purpose of racing need to be tracked, recording the number that are injured, the number euthanased and for what reason, the number of dogs exported and to which countries, and the numbers re-homed. Currently, this information is either unknown or hidden from

¹⁰ *'Doping, cruelty and collusion claims dog greyhound racing industry'* – ABC's 7.30 Report (15 October 2013)

¹¹ *'The quick and the dead'* – Background Briefing, ABC Radio National (11 November 2012)

public view, and largely relies on breeders and owners self-reporting to GRNSW. The RSPCA are known to euthanase many of the dogs, but blame their limited resources for being unable to produce any accurate reporting on how many they kill. Improving industry transparency is a crucial area that needs work, and remains the responsibility of GRNSW who allow far too many to be bred in the first place.

In Australia, the *Companion Animals 2008 Regulation* requires all greyhounds whelped after 1 January 2011 to be micro-chipped. However, according to the NSW Government¹², greyhounds registered in accordance with the rules under the *Greyhound Racing Act 2009* ("registered racing greyhounds") are exempt from the identification and lifetime registration requirements of the *Companion Animals Act 1998*. The micro-chipping of registered racing greyhounds is therefore considered to be 'voluntary'. If a greyhound is, for example, rehomed through an adoption program, it ceases to be a registered racing greyhound and automatically loses its exemption – in such a situation the rules in NSW require trainers to notify their local council when they transfer the ownership to new owner. HSI recommends that the exemption be removed so that all racing greyhounds are registered with councils and micro-chipped. This requirement must be strictly enforced. Lack of compliance aids the racing industry in its lack of transparency in the eyes of the public.

CONCERNS OVER GOVERNANCE

The greyhound racing industry in NSW is governed by GRNSW and there is no form of independent oversight. The integrity auditor is appointed by GRNSW itself creating a clear conflict of interest. The responsibilities of the integrity officer include overseeing stewards, drug testing, and control and registration. It is believed that David Landa, former greyhound racing industry auditor, resigned from his position last year as he was unable to facilitate public inquiries into the problems within the industry. This demonstrates that there is a clear need for independent oversight so these issues can be addressed.

Looking at the GRNSW Annual Report for 2010-2011, we notice that the Independent Auditor who signed it was Mr Stuart Cameron of KS Black & Co. It is also interesting to note that just two months later, investigations by ASIC (*Australian Securities & Investments Commission*) led to concerns that Mr Stuart Cameron was "not a fit and proper person to remain registered as an auditor."¹³ ASIC accepted an enforceable undertaking from Mr Cameron where it was agreed that ASIC would cancel his registration as an auditor, and he could not re-apply for five years. During that time Mr Cameron can not perform as a registered company auditor. HSI is concerned by the fact that Mr Cameron acted as the Auditor for GRNSW from 2008 until 2011.

REPORTS OF LINKS TO ORGANISED CRIME

The Sydney Morning Herald reported that "*Allegations of race-fixing, drug use, money laundering and bikie group infiltration are rife in NSW's \$50 million-a-year greyhound racing industry, despite reforms aimed at cleaning up the sport.*"¹⁴ The article describes how organised groups of criminals are involved in breeding and selling greyhounds and laundering money through the tracks. In 2000, the corrupt practices led to an inquiry into the sport by the *Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC)* resulting in six people being charged and the jailing of the

¹² Division of Local Government (NSW) – Website reference to 'Microchipping' and 'Registration' - http://www.dlg.nsw.gov.au/dlg/dlghome/dlg_InformationIndex.asp?mi=9&ml=1&areaindex=CA&index=313

¹³ 'ASIC accepts enforceable undertaking from North Parramatta auditor' – ASIC Media Centre (2 November 2011)

¹⁴ 'Going to the dogs – bikies, dopers and fraudsters' – SMH (12 August 2012)

former chief steward Rodney Potter. However, as the industry is now self-regulating, any further actions are out of ICAC's control.

CONTROVERSY OVER FUNDING DISTRIBUTION

In 1998 a 99-year Inter-code Agreement was signed which determined the distribution of funds from the TAB (*Totalisator Agency Board*) back to the three racing codes, namely the thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing bodies. All three codes and TAB signed off on the agreement which dictated that the greyhound industry (GRNSW) receives only 13 per cent of funding from TAB turnover back to codes, despite claiming to generate around 21 per cent of the betting revenue. Thoroughbred racing receives 70 per cent, and harness racing 17 per cent. GRNSW claim that the agreement has cost its code \$125 million since it was signed in 1998, and further controversy has arisen as greyhound owners, handlers and trainers have criticised the management of the Inter-code agreement by GRNSW. They initiated a boycott of greyhound race meetings in 2012 forcing the cancellation of eight race meetings¹⁵.

The *Greyhound Action Group (GAG)* is currently lobbying for a higher percentage to be awarded to greyhound racing. They believe that reforming the current TAB funding model is critical to the economic viability of the sport in NSW as the current arrangement does not reward efficiency, innovation or growth. According to Mr Brent Hogan, chief executive of GRNSW, the shortfall between TAB takings from the sport and the distributions back to the organisations equates to about \$16 million each year¹⁶. Mr Hogan confirmed that this would have a serious impact on their ability to invest in further improvements in many areas, including animal welfare. HSI believes that there is an urgent need for investments into improving animal welfare in the industry, and these comments do not hold much hope that any such action will be taken.

CONCLUSION

To summarise, HSI is strongly opposed to the continuation of greyhound racing in NSW for the following reasons:

- ❖ High rates of over-breeding and large-scale killing of greyhounds
- ❖ Industry's acceptance of high level of greyhound 'wastage'
- ❖ High rates of injuries sustained during racing, often fatal
- ❖ Reports of the use of performance enhancing drugs on the animals
- ❖ Reports of inhumane methods of killing, often to healthy animals
- ❖ Reports of links to organised crime
- ❖ Insufficient commitment by GRNSW for the welfare of the animals
- ❖ Lack of funds means no animal welfare improvements planned
- ❖ Insufficient regulation and monitoring of animal welfare by GRNSW
- ❖ Lack of close regulation of GRNSW's *Code of Practice*
- ❖ Insufficient penalties awarded for breaching animal welfare standards
- ❖ Ineffective re-homing program adopted by GRNSW
- ❖ Greyhounds exported to countries with inadequate welfare regulations
- ❖ Distinct lack of importance awarded to the welfare of the animals

Also, the fact that the sport is largely 'restricted to a relatively small band of devotees' further strengthens the argument to ban greyhound racing altogether.¹⁷

¹⁵ 'Greyhound trainers take action over TAB takings' – ABC News (5 December 2012)

¹⁶ 'Greyhounds killed, starved, drugged: MP' – Herald Sun (28 August 2013)

¹⁷ "The welfare of greyhounds in Australian racing: has the industry run its course?" by Alexandra McEwan and Krishna Skandakumar, *Australian Animal Protection Law Journal* Dec 2011: 16 June 2012 version.

In the instance that greyhound racing is not banned, HSI offers the following recommendations that would go towards greatly improving the welfare of greyhounds in NSW, if implemented:

- ❖ Significant increase in GRNSW funds allocated to improve animal welfare
- ❖ No incentives awarded which encourage over-breeding of greyhounds
- ❖ Close regulation of GRNSW's *Code of Practice*
- ❖ Heavy penalties for those who fail to abide by GRNSW's *Code of Practice*
- ❖ Accurate data collection by GRNSW on greyhound statistics
- ❖ Data on the greyhound industry to be made available to the public domain
- ❖ Increased funding allocated to greyhound re-homing programs
- ❖ Percentage of betting funds used for animal welfare & re-homing programs
- ❖ Independent government body to oversee welfare of racing greyhounds
- ❖ Introduce more stringent monitoring on illegal drug use
- ❖ All greyhounds to be registered with councils and micro-chipped
- ❖ Phase out the use of cornered tracks to reduce injury toll
- ❖ Offer rewards to those who report inhumane killing methods
- ❖ Offer rewards to those who report use of live baits during training
- ❖ Ban the killing of healthy greyhounds
- ❖ Ban export of greyhounds to countries with inadequate welfare regulations
- ❖ Ban the use of ex-greyhounds in research or for use in veterinary schools

HSI appreciates the opportunity to make this submission, providing comment on the inquiry into greyhound racing in New South Wales.

Yours sincerely

HUMANE SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL