

Submission
No 555

INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 6/11/2013

Partially Confidential

Date: 6th November 2013

This submission primarily addresses the following terms of reference:

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

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

Introduction: Luisa's Story

In August 2012, my husband and I adopted a former racing greyhound, Luisa (formerly Lady), through Greyhound Rescue in Sydney.

As Wongawilli Bugle, she had raced only twice that we could trace. Her first race was on the 13th August 2011 at Goulburn; she ran 1st, winning \$300 for her trainer/owner Douglas Moxey. In her second race, on 10th September 2011, she ran last by a significant margin.¹

We have been unable to locate the steward's report for that last race, and so can only speculate as to what may have caused her to put in such a poor performance. In any case, she was clearly deemed to be of no further use to her trainer and owner. About two months later, in November 2011 at approximately 18 months of age, she was surrendered to Blacktown Pound along with 2 kennel mates. One of these dogs didn't pass the pound's temperament test and was euthanised. The remaining two, including Luisa, were fortunate enough to be rescued by Greyhound Rescue, who subsequently found homes for them both.

Luisa's story might seem trivial, but I wish to share it as one example of an occurrence that is repeated on a weekly basis across NSW (and across Australia). Luisa was a surplus greyhound; at only 18 months of age her career was declared over as soon as it had begun, and she was discarded like a piece of rubbish for others to deal with. In some ways she was lucky; she was left at the pound where there was at least a chance, however slim, of her staying alive.

Greyhound racing industry stakeholders and participants continue to deny the existence of an animal welfare problem in their industry, traditionally refuting any claims with the old adage that trainers 'love their dogs'. As illustrated in the case of Luisa and her kennel mates, however, this definition of 'love', does not appear to include responsible breeding, or taking responsibility for a dog throughout its lifetime-not just while it continues to be profitable. Considering that the CEO of GRNSW himself admits that the number of greyhounds euthanized each year in NSW is 'too high' (and this judgement was based on a very conservative estimate of the euthanasia rate),² it is puzzling that industry participants continue to insist on downplaying animal welfare concerns that surround the industry.

For the past 5 years, an average of 8900 greyhounds were born each year in NSW ; however, an average of approximately 5800 were named each year for racing.³ This would suggest that 3100 'wastage' dogs are bred per year, the majority of whom remain unaccounted for (see discussion below).

¹ <https://fasttrack.grv.org.au/dog/details/-626967>

² <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/backgroundbriefing/2012-11-11/4355398>

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

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Greyhounds, if they remain uninjured or do not perish, generally have a two year racing career⁴, beginning at around 14 months and ending at around 4 years of age. After this time, there are large numbers of greyhounds that are no longer wanted by their owners or trainers. They may be injured, deemed too slow to race, or are not desired for breeding purposes. According to figures provided by GRNSW, over 3,000 greyhounds are put down in NSW alone each year because they are “too slow”, have been injured racing or training, or have reached the end of their racing career.⁵

This is likely to be a conservative estimate of the true number of greyhounds killed each year. From 2003 to 2011 there were 80,133 greyhounds born in NSW.⁶ In 2012 there were 2,552 greyhounds registered as pets and 6150 greyhounds registered as racing greyhounds. Greyhounds live 10 to 12 years, so in 2012 there should more than 80,133 greyhounds alive. Thus it seems that 71,431 greyhounds are unaccounted for.⁷

It is unclear whether GRNSW is failing to collect data on the fate of greyhounds or they are not making it publically available. Either scenario is unacceptable in accounting for the welfare of dogs in the greyhound racing industry.⁸

Rehoming of greyhounds discarded from the racing industry provides an alternative to the premature euthanasia of otherwise healthy dogs. Some greyhounds are re-homed through the industry run program ‘Greyhounds as Pets’, or through independent greyhound rescue groups.

GRNSW does not publically disclose the number of greyhounds adopted through the ‘Greyhounds as Pets’ program, however it has been revealed that just 300 dogs have been rehomed since 2009 under this program.⁹ This is a very small percentage of the greyhounds born in NSW. Thus the majority of greyhounds born in NSW are disposed of or die at a young age, and their fate is largely unknown.

That being dumped at a high-kill pound should be considered a relatively favourable outcome says much about the treatment of dogs by the NSW greyhound racing industry. Indeed, in light of the above figures, it would seem that any greyhound that leaves the industry alive and unharmed is very fortunate, considering that ‘the viability of the Australian greyhound racing industry requires the large-scale killing of greyhounds each year, either as pups, as a result of injuries sustained on the race track, or as surplus dogs at the end of their racing ‘careers... The over-breeding and large-scale killing of greyhounds can be construed as gratuitous killing for sport or entertainment’.¹⁰

⁴ James Cockington, *This is no slumdog*, SMH 20 June 2012

⁵ ‘Greyhound racing euthanasia rates slammed’, 10 November 2012, ABC News.

⁶ This figure does not include puppies discarded from unplanned litters. Answers to questions on notice lodged by MP for Sydney Alex Greenwich 23 May 2013. Full text of questions and answers available at <http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/la/qala.nsf/18101dc36b638302ca257146007ee41a/73129441ba2b6f30ca257b750000790d?>

⁷ Greyhound Freedom, <<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Greyhound-Freedom/341841249187362?fref=ts>>

⁸ ²¹ John Kaye, 8 October 2013, *Have your say on greyhound racing in NSW*, <<http://johnkaye.org.au/have-your-say-on-greyhound-racing-in-nsw/>>

⁹ Answers to questions on notice lodged by MP for Sydney Alex Greenwich 23 May 2013. John Kaye, 8 October 2013, *Have your say on greyhound racing in NSW*, <<http://johnkaye.org.au/have-your-say-on-greyhound-racing-in-nsw/>>

¹⁰ “The welfare of greyhounds in Australian racing: has the industry run its course?” Alexandra McEwan and Krishna Skandakumar, *Australian Animal Protection Law Journal* Dec 2011: 15 July 2013 version.