

**Submission
No 300**

INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW

Name: Mr Anthony Callaghan

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The Director
Select Committee on Greyhound Racing in New South Wales
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

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ENQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW

Chairman, The Hon. Robert Borsak, MLC, and fellow select committee members

Attached please find my submission.

I have been a greyhound breeder, owner and trainer for 30 years, and as such have good corporate history of where the industry was, where it is today, and what has gone wrong.

I appreciate your consideration of my submission.

Sincerely,

Anthony Callaghan

ANTHONY CALLAGHAN, SUBMISSION, INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUNDS, 2013

Our current and previous GRNSW boards may well have administration and management experience, but in many cases board members have been drawn from government and public service ranks.

However, their collective lack of knowledge of the greyhound racing industry has resulted in the degrading of NSW dominance of the industry.

Two decades ago, the NSW greyhound industry was far and away the leader and most envied of any state. In effect, all other states had their eye on our prizemoney and status, and regularly entered their very best greyhounds in our Group races.

How times have changed! Nowadays Victoria has been the industry leader for the past 15 years or so, and it is our dogs, breeders and trainers heading to that state. It was poor decision making in NSW, along with a lack of understanding, which brought about this turnaround.

A comparison of our two states is clear evidence.

I personally delivered a petition some 18 years ago signed by 350 local owners and trainers with a vision to introduce a GOBIS scheme in NSW to match that of Victoria, a scheme which had massive success in Victoria and reinvigorated their once declining industry. (The GOBIS scheme delivers additional financial benefits to encourage people to breed, thus increasing the number and quality of greyhounds racing.)

My representations fell on deaf ears and a similar scheme, Blue Paws, has only more recently been introduced in NSW, and in comparison, has had far less effect in NSW in relation to Victoria's GOBIS.

Over the same period, NSW tracks have been lost. Harold Park's closure, which was our second city track alongside Wentworth Park, had a dramatic effect on our Group racing and the general class of greyhounds. (Group racing = top performing dogs competing in high prizemoney races). Conversely, Victoria retained its two city tracks and both have had major improvements along with many more Group races with significantly more prizemoney than on offer in NSW, resulting in major owners as well as others sending their dogs to Victoria.

Other track closures at Wyong, Singleton and Cessnock have resulted in closing down a massive area of breeding, resulting in a lack of sufficient greyhounds to run a full program of 10 races ... which is occurring currently.

So, whilst the closures led to NSW having fewer tracks, the downturn in the industry caused by the loss of tracks meant we do not have the number of greyhounds in this specific region to run full programs . Cause and effect, indeed!

In times past, NSW had double the number of greyhounds registered than Victoria, that is no longer the case, we now have less.

Another factor in Victoria's success was the introduction of poker machines at all city and TAB tracks on a 50/50 profit arrangement with greyhound racing clubs. The introduction of poker machines here would similarly encourage track attendance and provide additional revenue for TAB, government and racing clubs.

NO 600 METRE RACING AT WENTWORTH PARK

Despite years of representations by senior owners and trainers to introduce 600 metre races at our only city track, such races still do not exist. NSW is the only state not having a city track with a 600 metre start.

As I write this submission, The Meadows (Victoria) has a Group 1 Hume Cup which has attracted six heats with \$75,000 prizemoney. In Victoria, there are many Group races of 600 metres, the reason being that they encourage trainers to retain their middle distance dogs as a lead up to attempting 700 metre races. In this way, Victoria has dominated distance races for decades.

WHY HAS GRNSW TAKEN A ONCE DOMINANT INDUSTRY TO THE BRINK?

I am advised GRNSW has increased its staff from 41 to 61 in administration. If this is correct, it is a typical example of the type of dynasty building often inherent in the public sector.

At the same time, Race Stewards have been reduced from 2 to 1 at TAB meetings and from 3 to 4 at City meetings down to 2, and there is a collection of stewards sitting in a remote office watching races on Sky and directing the lone steward at the track who to swab, who to send to the vet, etc.

This new set up may appear on paper to be cost cutting and/or more productive, if that was the intention. However, only by being at the track can anyone see the entire race field and what each dog's performance is, the length of the hare, the interference on or off the track, the state and condition of the track as the night goes on ... as well as watch betting action.

To have only 1 steward to oversee all of the above and to also find time to interview trainers, settle betting disputes and, in general, keep an eye on activities in order to maintain a fair and just meeting ... is impossible.

In the majority of businesses and industries, shareholders and stakeholders have a vote in selecting people they have confidence in ... to manage the business.

The racing industry provides the government with massive funds in betting turnover, so surely owners and trainers need to be given a similar voice to determine who sits on the GRNSW board, ensuring that our knowledge and input is included into all aspects of our industry, whether that be improvements and track maintenance, racing distances, how to grow the industry, and most importantly, what is in the best interests of our industry.