

**Submission
No 750**

INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW

Organisation: Animals Australia

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

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

Animals Australia comments on the Greyhound Racing in New South Wales Inquiry

Animals Australia is a peak animal protection organisation and represents over 40 other animal welfare organisations and thousands of individual supporters. We welcome this inquiry into the greyhound racing industry in New South Wales and we are pleased to take this opportunity to contribute.

Position statement:

Animals Australia is opposed to commercial greyhound racing as it inherently places financial considerations ahead of the welfare of animals. While racing continues, Animals Australia remains deeply concerned about the treatment of greyhounds in the industry and maintains that the current regulations are inadequate to protect the welfare of greyhounds.

General Comments:

The Australian greyhound racing industry by its commercial and competitive nature leads to serious animal welfare issues. One primary issue of concern is the over-breeding of dogs, with 'wastage' estimates as high as the destruction of some 17,000 (healthy) dogs per year¹. CEO of Greyhound Racing NSW, Brent Hogan, last year stated that some 3,000 dogs are euthanized every year in NSW alone²; this figure is likely to be a conservative estimate and may not take into account those greyhounds that are abandoned to pounds and shelters or killed by their owners.

According to the RSPCA, around 40% of greyhounds bred will never actually make it onto the racetrack³. Reports in the past have indicated that greyhounds may be killed by methods as crude as bludgeoning, drowning and gassing; others may be shot and those more 'fortunate' receive a lethal injection from a veterinarian. Of those greyhounds that are chosen to race, many endure high physical and psychological stress during racing and training. These dogs may be administered drugs or substances to directly or indirectly improve their performance; these may include painkillers, cocaine, caffeine, anabolic steroids - even Viagra.

¹ McEwan, A. & K. Skandakumar, 'The welfare of greyhounds in Australian racing: has the industry run its course?', [Australian Animal Protection Law Journal](#), December 2011; 15 July 2013 version.

² 'Greyhound racing euthanasia rates slammed', ABC News, 10 November 2012.

³ Dr Jade Norris (RSPCA), interviewed by ABC 7.30 for its report, [Doping, cruelty and collusion claims dog greyhound racing industry](#), 15 October 2013.

During the races themselves, the greyhounds are put at significant risk of sustaining injuries such as broken bones, spinal trauma, torn muscles, ligament injury and head trauma. These injuries are often of such serious nature that dogs are unlikely to ever return to racing – and there is little incentive for them to be rehabilitated when a surplus of dogs are readily available as a replacement.

When ill-health, age, or simply a lack of form (speed) prevents a racing greyhound from winning races and providing financial income to their owners, racing dogs are often either killed, passed on to veterinary science facilities for experimentation and training, or dumped. The average age at which a greyhound retires from racing is 4 years⁴; in contrast, the natural lifespan of a greyhound is 12 to 14 years. According to information compiled by animal advocates, some 270 dogs were reported in steward reports as having died or being killed at greyhound racing tracks around Australia and nearly 8,000 injuries were reported. It should be noted that these figures are not complete due to the failure to report all injuries and deaths.

Animals Australia is being provided with consistent information from credible and well-informed sources within the greyhound racing industry that, despite the practice being illegal in all states, some trainers are still using live animals (rabbits, chickens, kittens, possums, piglets) to train greyhounds to chase and kill as part of their racing training; a practice called 'bleeding'. As a 'reward' for catching the 'lures', the dogs are allowed to rip apart and kill the live animal. Reports are also provided at times that young greyhound pups are put into enclosures with small living animals at an early age to 'blood' them. Despite these reports, and the efforts of enforcement agencies (including the police and RSPCA), these activities take place on private property and are difficult to expose and curtail.

Further, Animals Australia strongly opposes the export of racing dogs from Australia. Hundreds of greyhounds are exported every year and most go to racing facilities in Macau, China and Hong Kong where there are no laws to protect animals from cruelty. Further, of these destinations, greyhound racing is only legal in Macau; thus the fate of greyhounds being exported to China and Hong Kong is of even greater concern as there is no oversight by authorities. According to a recent Freedom of Information request made by Animals Australia to the federal Department of Agriculture, some 309 animals were sent to Macau in 2012 alone; a further 60 animals were sent in the first half of this year.

The ongoing work of lobby groups including Grey2K USA continues to reveal the serious welfare concerns for dogs exported to race in Macau – many who disappear without a trace. Unfortunately, Macau offers no re-homing program for retired greyhounds and the head of the Macau government's animal control department has stated that every dog imported to the country from Australia is dead within around three years⁵; in 2010 some 383 dogs were killed at the track.

We oppose any further export of greyhounds to such countries.

Responses to the Terms of Reference:

(a) *The economic viability of the greyhound racing industry in New South Wales*

Animals Australia has no specific input to this TOR. However, we are of the view that while greyhound racing continues, the economic viability of the industry in New South Wales must be considered secondary to the ability to ensure sound welfare for the animals involved.

⁴ NSW Parliament – Questions on notice, '[2507—Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing—GREYHOUND RACING](#)', answer received 20 December 2012.

⁵ [The Dogs Who Run For Their Lives](#), Irish Daily Mail, Special Investigation by Simon Parry, 7 May 2011,

(i) The incidence of drug administration and doping in the industry and the efficacy of Greyhound Racing NSW's control and testing processes

Animals Australia has no specific further information or input to this TOR. We were alarmed by the recent report on ABC's 7.30 program which revealed serious allegations of the 'doping' of dogs involved in the greyhound racing industry. If the doping of dogs is as prevalent as the program reported, it is clear that greater control and oversight of testing processes is needed. Such practices significantly increase the welfare risks to the dogs involved.

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

(See comments above) There is a dire need for better management of the sale and over-breeding of greyhounds. Animals Australia believes that greyhound owners and trainers should be compelled to register with the State or national greyhound associations and to comply with strict regulations. Further, we recommend that all greyhounds be identified with a microchip (and recorded on a national database) to enable tracing and to deter or prevent the cruel disposal of unwanted animals.

(k) The welfare of animals in the industry and the role of Greyhound Racing NSW in establishing and enforcing standards of treatment of animals

Animals Australia holds serious concerns about the welfare of animals in the industry. We believe that the current system of regulation is ineffective and there is an inherent conflict of interest represented by Greyhound Racing NSW's role in being responsible for both establishing and enforcing standards for the treatment of animals in the industry, at the same time as promoting greyhound racing. Independent Government oversight in regard to enforcement is required. Of relevance, we note in this regard that in February 2013, the NSW Government commissioned a review into the governance of the similarly-configured NSW Game Council, to be undertaken by Mr Steve Dunn. This report (in July) found the NSW Game Council had an:

'inherent conflict associated with its functions to both represent the interests of hunters, and to regulate their activities' (Governance Review of the Game Council of NSW).

The current system has not worked in the animals' favour and requires immediate review. As a starting point, it is imperative that appropriate sanctions be put in place for those individuals who attempt to circumvent animal welfare standards. These sanctions must include withdrawal of licences and thus the ability to own or train greyhounds. Further, where animal cruelty is detected, mandatory reporting of offenders to welfare authorities must occur to ensure they are prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

(l) Financial incentives for reducing euthanasia and prosecutions for animal mistreatment

Animals Australia supports the introduction of strong measures (as indicated above) including financial incentives to reduce the high number of greyhounds killed each year. A standard procedure for dealing with reports of animal mistreatment must be developed and enforced to ensure authorities are alerted and investigations proceed. Greyhound Racing NSW (and the national industry body) must ensure a high level of education and leadership to ensure the culture within the industry is compatible with the community views on the welfare of greyhounds, including the ethical aspect of the current high 'wastage' rates.

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

Animals Australia believes it is crucial that there is greater transparency and rigour in the collection of industry data. The number of deaths recorded is believed to be conservative and not representative of the true level of dog mortality. It should not fall upon animal advocacy groups to monitor the number of deaths and rate of injury resulting from racing; rather, this information should be collated and published by the responsible industry representative body. To ensure the credibility of such data there must be independent 3rd party auditing (paid for by industry). These figures should be provided in an annual report to the NSW Parliament.

(n) Any other related matter

As indicated above, Animals Australia holds additional concerns about the greyhound racing industry that are not directly addressed in the terms of reference, and we submit these additional issues for the committee's consideration: the export of greyhounds to countries where there are no animal cruelty laws to protect them; and the (illegal) training of greyhounds to race after live animals, resulting in these small animals suffering great fear before experiencing a terribly painful death.

In summary, these are the main points that Animals Australia believes should be considered by the Committee:

- The need for better management of the sale and over-breeding of greyhounds
- The need for measures, such as financial incentives, to reduce the high numbers of greyhounds euthanized each year
- Allegations regarding the 'doping' of dogs (as seen on ABC's 7.30 program)
- The conflict of interest represented by Greyhound Racing NSW's role in being responsible for establishing and enforcing standards for the treatment of animals in the industry whilst also promoting the sport
- Closer monitoring of animal welfare and the need for mandatory reporting and investigation by authorities where animal cruelty is found
- The inadequacy and questionable integrity of data collection in the industry, including the number of pups born, the number of dogs euthanized and injury rates
- The ongoing export of greyhounds to countries where there are effectively no animal cruelty laws to protect them, and
- Enforcement of the law prohibiting the use of live animals as lures in greyhound training

Animals Australia appreciates this opportunity to provide input into this important inquiry into greyhound racing. We urge you to fully consider the comments and recommendations made in this submission and welcome your intention to address the treatment of animals involved in this industry.

Please contact me if you require clarification of the points made or require the references relied upon.

Yours sincerely,

Glenys Oogjes
Executive Director