

**Submission
No 324**

INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW

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To: Legislative Council Select Committee on Greyhound Racing in NSW

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Submission heading: Inter-code agreement, track closures and cronyism

Relevance / Terms of Reference: (a) economic viability, (b) financial performance, (d) effectiveness of current industry regulation, (e) board selection process, (f) board effectiveness and accountability, (h) capability and performance, (k) animal welfare and (n) any other related matter (namely the inter-code agreement).

Dear Committee,

Firstly I would like to thank all involved in bringing about this inquiry into greyhound racing, which is currently spiralling out of control. I have been an owner/trainer for 35 years. My family and I love our dogs. They eat extremely well, they see a vet every time they race or are injured, they're de-flea'd, wormed, bathed and exercised regularly. One wonders how many domestic dogs get the same love and attention. We find homes for our retired dogs because we love them. It's not a business to us.

What I would like to see happen in the wake of this inquiry:

- * Abolish the biased inter-code TAB agreement between horse, trotting and greyhound racing. And identify who it was who signed this agreement and why.
- * Carry out a complete audit of all three main bodies; Greyhound Racing NSW, GBOTA and the defunct NCA.
- * Find out the true extent of how much money was spent/wasted on The Gardens.
- * Reinstate Cessnock and Wyong to the racing calendar.
- * Put someone in charge with the passion and knowledge to promote greyhounds in a way that preserves its history, doesn't consign it to sand-only tracks and puts animal welfare before self interest.

Recently, as you may be aware, 90 per cent of trainers boycotted nominating their dogs for 14 days to protest not only the diabolical inter-code agreement but also the direction the head body is taking. I believe the current direction is totally detrimental to the welfare and the sport of greyhound racing and has been since Percy Allen started the ball rolling all those years ago.

With no basic knowledge of the racing greyhound, he obviously decided to go with whatever the now defunct NCA advised with their only agenda being self-interest and a dream of owning their own track, The Gardens.

From day one they set about closing tracks by using a flawed and biased selection process irrespective of history, safety, the need for training and education, logistics and alternatives.

Dogs are not machines. The current situation is they have closed two straight grass tracks at Appin and Wyong and two long one-bend grass tracks at Cessnock and Singleton. They have until recently stopped 300m racing at most TAB tracks and stopped qualifying trials, so if your dog has poor form it can't get a run.

It is no wonder owner/trainer numbers are down 70 per cent. Under the current situation any dogs that don't like tight, turning loam tracks with sand getting kicked in their face, can't run over 400m or get around a bend are considered surplus.

Unfortunately, their intention is to close more tracks and do away with the small trainers who love their dogs and promote bigger kennels, who race solely as a business. I am not saying the dogs they keep aren't looked after, if they weren't they wouldn't win anything, but it is at the expense of small trainers who have been the lifeblood of the sport since time immemorial.

The now defunct NCA was until recently a closed shop of 300 members hand-picked by a committee. It was instrumental in getting rid of Wyong to secure racing dates for The Gardens and Tony Drew, Wyong racing manager got a great deal out of it - 52 fewer meetings a year at the same pay.

As a result greyhound trainers lost a track with the best amenities, a safe long grass straight, which was invaluable for training and educating young pups. Through a lack of maintenance and promotion they made out it was unviable. Protests fell on deaf ears.

As we were to find out, GRNSW and the NCA were, and remain to be, unaccountable. Answerable to no one, they also run the Greyhound Recorder, which suppresses any negative press. Not only does the NCA as an organisation seem to be a protected species, so to is its staff. I urge this inquiry to delve into allegations the _____ has misappropriated thousands of dollars and the only reason he hasn't faced charges is he would have taken other staff down with him. Is this true?

Once they built The Gardens they systematically set about eliminating the competition in the form of Cessnock, the safest most profitable one-turn grass track in NSW. A track that had also been given a large grant to renovate the kennel block, which was completed just prior to being shut down. Who was accountable for this glaring waste of money? Support was garnered from the GBOTA through a not so subtle ultimatum - one independent track had to go and it was either their's at Maitland or Cessnock.

Cessnock took GRNSW to court and won. But GRNSW after spending a load of money on an appeal no one in the industry wanted, persuaded three judges that there was no bias towards the NCA and The Gardens. GRNSW has since bought 70 per cent of The Gardens and with the aid of GBOTA have been propping it up for years. I wonder, given the benefit of hindsight, how those judges feel now.

I am a frustrated member of the GBOTA. The head of the organisation, B. Scott is on a contract unless seven of the 12 directors opt to sack him. This wont be happening anytime soon because of all the junkets. The latest being four nights at a Melbourne casino at \$280 a night plus expenses. ~~ONE~~ manager is currently operating three tracks which is affecting their maintenance, promotion and viability.

The three main industry bodies were all involved in the decision to sign off on the ludicrous inter-code agreement for 90 years at a lower percentage of return than greyhound racing was generating. Now we find the only way we can exist is if the horse and trots, which are the beneficiaries of the existing agreement, agree to changing it. Now after 10-15 years of losing out on up to a reported \$1.8 million a month the approach is to get rid of more greyhound tracks to cover the shortfall. Their attitude: "oh well".

During the 14-day protest GRNSW inflamed the situation by pitting trainer against trainer with their arrogant and insensitive press releases and by offering over generous prize money to trainers boycott the protest. Greyhound welfare went out the window when they put on 280m races for maidens and transferred the Richmond races to Wentworth Park to make up the numbers to put on a meeting.

Maiden dogs that had probably never seen the track racing for \$4000, all hitting the bend at speed and not knowing where to go ... carnage. But it was all done with the same attitude "oh well". I wonder how many dogs got hurt.

There must be a lot of nervous people in the three main governing bodies as they have gone out of their way to victimise _____ for his role in organising the protest and instigating this inquiry. He has been on the receiving end of snap kennel inspections by a vet and stewards, convenient cruelty issue complaints, and fined for scratching a dog he owns but doesn't train at a boycotted meeting. Other trainers were not fined.

He has also been suspended on a trumped up charge for a year by the GBOTA, has had his trial track vandalised and received death threats currently being investigated by the police.

There are obviously some people within the greyhound racing industry nervous about the findings of this inquiry and I wish it every success.

Keith David Jarvis