

**Submission
No 360**

INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW

Organisation: The Greens
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Select Committee on Greyhound Racing in New South Wales

Parliament House

Macquarie St

Sydney NSW 2000

To the Select Committee on Greyhound Racing in NSW:

Thank you for providing the opportunity to make a submission.

As Greens NSW Animal Welfare Spokesperson, I write with respect to the following points in the Terms of Reference of the Inquiry into Greyhound Racing in New South Wales:

- j) Sale and breeding of greyhounds including the market conditions and welfare of 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
- m) The adequacy and integrity of data collection in the industry, including the number of pups born, the number of dogs euthanised and injury rates

I wish to make the following points for the Committee to consider.

1. Inadequate data collection or reporting

Greyhound Racing NSW does not have a central reporting system on animal welfare statistics, including number of pups born, number of dogs euthanised, or injury rates which can be accessed in the public domain. There is no data to substantiate that there is adequate monitoring of the Industry's Rules and Codes with regards to animal welfare. It is unclear whether this suggests that this data is not collected, or if it is, it is the reporting which is inadequate. This raises the serious issue of accountability for the overall welfare of animals bred for use in this industry and leaves the industry wide open to speculation when it cannot produce data to ensure its integrity.

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Anecdotal evidence suggests there is a significant animal welfare problem in the industry. As identified under the *Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS)*¹, this is an 'industry' in which humans use animals for work, recreation, entertainment and display albeit within the context of the gambling industry. Greyhounds then become subject not only to the competitiveness of the racing industry but the competitiveness of the high stakes gambling industry where the interests of winning trump the interests of welfare.

Recommendation: The committee investigate the true nature of these allegations and call for the industry to develop a transparent and accountable system.

2. Euthanasia rates and injury

According to figures provided to the ABC² by Greyhound Racing NSW CEO Brent Hogan, "3000 greyhounds are euthanised each year in the state" because they are considered unfit for racing. Of course, this use of the word euthanasia is a misnomer, as accepted definitions of euthanasia refer to the practice of putting a suffering creature to death to prevent further suffering. Some dogs may have injuries, but significantly more often they are simply considered too slow to be profitable and are put down.

Further, an ABC Radio National Background Briefing³ report into greyhound racing in NSW revealed that "more than 120 dogs had suffered fractures during a race" during 2012. Nationally it has been estimated that 17,000 greyhounds are killed in Australia each year⁴. Injuries and illnesses suffered by dogs in the greyhound racing industry include broken legs, paralysis, head trauma and cardiac arrests from over exertion. In April 2013 three dogs died at the one meeting at the Dapto track; one broke its neck in race eight while another broke its back in race two; a third dog was destroyed after breaking its offside hock.⁵

¹ Commonwealth of Australia, *Australian Animal Welfare Strategy and National Implementation Plan 2010-14*, (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, 2011) 8.

² <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-11-09/greyhound-racing-euthanasia-rates-slammed/4362442>

³ <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/backgroundbriefing/2012-11-11/4355398>

⁴ "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: http://www.animallaw.info/nonus/articles/art_pdf/McEwan_Skandakumar_AAPLJ_Greyhound_2013.pdf

⁵ 'Outrage over greyhound deaths', ABC News, 18 April 2013: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-04-18/outrage-at-greyhound-deaths/4636300>

Recommendation: The committee to determine the real extent of euthanasia and killing of unprofitable dogs, including whether it conforms to community expectations, animal welfare standards as well as the law.

3. Reducing unnecessary dog deaths through adoption

The Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing has confirmed that just 300 dogs were re-homed through Greyhound Racing NSW's 'Greyhound's As Pets' program since 2009. There are a number of greyhound adoption programs separate to Greyhound Racing NSW, but adoption rates are unknown. Current figures from Victoria estimate that adoption 'saves the lives' of around 4-5% of the total number of animals in need of re-homing.⁶ While the introduction of these programs endeavour to improve public perception of the industry, it has also highlighted the gap in knowledge regarding the provision of post-racing welfare for these animals. Given that thousands of greyhounds are put down every year, it is clear that these adoption programs are insufficient in preventing unnecessary deaths.

Recommendation: The committee to consider whether Greyhound Racing NSW is taking sufficient responsibility to re-home dogs and consider regulation to ensure that Greyhound Racing NSW takes responsibility for the welfare of all dogs involved in the sport.

4. Doping in greyhound racing

There have been numerous allegations that greyhound racing in NSW is subject to a doping problem. There are also allegations that dogs are being fed and injected with performance enhancing drugs. In a report on ABC's 7:30 program⁷ it was revealed that "in the past year, 70 greyhounds have tested positive to banned substances, with half of those in NSW".

⁶ Covering Letter to Honourable Rob Hulls MP, Minister for Racing, Victoria 1 August 2008 in Judge G D Lewis AM, *A Report on Integrity Assurance in Victoria's Racing Industry* (2008), 5; Greyhound Adoption Programs; Victoria (www.gap.grv.org.au), New South Wales (www.gapnsw.org.au), Queensland (www.greyhoundpets.org.au), Tasmania (www.gaptas.org.au), Western Australia (www.greyhoundsaspets.com.au), South Australia (www.gapsa.org.au), Australian Capital Territory (www.communitiesonline.org.au/group.php?id=386)

⁷ <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2013/s3869813.htm>

The same report revealed greyhounds in NSW had been doped with cocaine, EPO, amphetamines, caffeine, and Viagra. While Greyhound Racing NSW suggest they have increased drug testing activities, the report revealed that much of the greyhound racing industry in NSW is “a backyard industry, with a lot of hobby trainers”⁸ with peak bodies finding it difficult to undertake regular monitoring or enforce its Rules and Codes. This situation allows for poor governance and clear animal welfare breaches.

In conclusion, I urge the committee to prioritise and consider the significant animal welfare issues and lack of transparency in the greyhound industry in NSW.

Regards,

Dr Mehreen Faruqi MLC
Greens NSW Animal Welfare spokesperson

⁸ <http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2013/10/16/3870191.htm>