

**Submission
No 580**

INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW

Name: Mrs Susan Tofful

Date received: 6/11/2013

SUBMISSION TO STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

ENQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW

This submission is made by an ordinary citizen; I am not an “activist” or a “vegan tree hugging greenie”, or even an “anti” - although in the last few years I have been called all of these. Too often people that inhabit the greyhound racing industry resort to name calling when they feel threatened by the truth of their livelihood. I have heard many people in this industry say they love their dogs and treat them better than they treat their children. I beg to differ.

I own two “failed” racing greyhounds. They are my 4 year old daughter’s beloved companions. Both dogs come from NSW and both were taken in by Greyhound Rescue NSW. They were both almost 3 years old. One, formerly known as Winfrey, now Lucy, was dumped at a Sydney Pound. The other, formerly known as Willie’s Train, now Marcus, was handed over to Greyhound Rescue with a promise of a donation to assist the cost of de-sexing, vaccinating, and re-homing. This donation never came.

Until recently when ABC’s Radio National and 7.30 programs highlighted the hidden facts about racing, it was a little talked about fact that the Greyhound racing industry in Australia is responsible for thousands of healthy dogs being put down every year. The wastage is huge. It goes deeper than what to do with retirees, and it is estimated that only 1 in 10 dogs bred for racing even make it to the track with thousands of healthy young greyhounds routinely euthanized or shot/drowned every year. It is especially sad as greyhounds have a gentle nature and a long history of being great family pets. It is estimated that only around 5% of greyhounds bred for racing are re-homed when they cease or fail to start.

The fact these figures must be estimated is the first major problem with the industry. Lack of transparency with figures- real litter numbers, dogs named, dogs euthanized, dogs killed at tracks due to injury. These figures are incredibly hard to come by unless you are willing to study stewards’ reports and multiple greyhound data websites. Even then the numbers vary. They shouldn’t. Greyhound racing is a business and all businesses must be required to report all their statistics- financial or otherwise. Why is this not required by law? It should be. If it were, the number of dogs killed annually would be so shocking it would be on the front page. Remembering that a horse has one foal while a bitch has 8 – 10 pups (let’s be honest 6 is a ridiculous average to use). Graham Bate from Victoria (recently banned for use of testosterone) states he has 60 breeding bitches. This is just one owner/breeder/trainer with 60 females pumping out litters of 8 or so each time. And of those, perhaps 1 from each litter might make it to the age of 3 years old.

The second issue therefore is breeding numbers. Breeding a winner is always going to be a numbers game and of course the more dogs you breed the more chance you have at breeding that illusive winner. But it also means more dogs thrown away. Marcus (Willie’s Train) has Brett Lee in his blood line, as do thousands of dogs by now, but despite this he was a “failure”. Of his litter of 8 only one dog has raced with any “success”. I will always wonder which of his litter mates is still alive. Were they lucky enough to be re homed, as they are all 6 years old now, well past racing age?

This brings me to the GAP program. It is well known that GAP is Greyhound racing's PR arm. Only a lucky few reach GAP because the waiting list is so long (around 6 months) many owners/trainers "cannot" or "will not" keep unsuccessful greyhounds til GAP can take them. This problem is Australia wide. I short look on the Greyhound data forums will show you the frustration racing folk have for that initiative. When a trainer is told by an owner to "get rid of" a dog, they shoot them, pay someone else to do so or have them euthanized. The odd one will ring a private rescue like Amazing Greys in Victoria or Greyhound Rescue in NSW. If GAP really wanted to make a difference into the appalling death sentence of a racing greyhound they would employ more staff to handle more enquiries with efficiency and professionalism so they could re home more hounds. If one private rescue can re home over 100 greyhounds in a year using donated funds only, an industry funded re homing program should be required to re home a minimum of 1000 given they have paid staff, funds to advertise and pay for vet care, kennels and the ability to award the coveted GAP green collar.

Their homing rate however, given their funding, is simply embarrassing. Private rescues: good people simply trying to help a few more unwanted souls live, spend their own money and time away from their families to save as many greyhounds from death as possible, as they feel there is a real moral need to do so. The simple fact is what they do is not enough and never will be. Too many greyhounds are bred, too many are killed, and all in the name of gambling. That's right. If there was no money to be made in greyhound racing no one would work in it or bet on it. And greyhounds would simply be man and woman's best friend like any other breed. Racing dogs for money must end. The cost socially in relation to gambling is huge: the neglect of children and domestic violence related to addiction to gambling is well documented. In addition it is obvious there is a problem with dogs being drugged- not only is this dishonest it is also very cruel to the dogs and causes long term health issues such as kidney disease.

Now that the media has highlighted the hidden killing fields, eventually people will start using their vote to ensure our governments do not prop up an industry which uses animals for money making purposes, drugs its athletes, kills its failures and asks its followers to gamble money they probably should use to feed their families. I hope this enquiry will find that for these reasons the "sport" should be banned and if not serious changes must be made to the industry to ensure animal welfare, not profit, is paramount.