

**Submission  
No 406**

## **INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW**

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**Date received:** 5/11/2013

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Christine Cooper

5<sup>th</sup> November, 2013.

The Director  
Select Committee on Greyhound Racing in NSW  
Legislative Council  
Parliament of New South Wales  
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**SUBMISSION ON THE ENQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW  
ADDRESSING ANIMAL WELFARE ISSUES**

The impact of the greyhound racing industry on the welfare of racing greyhounds, and those who have ceased to have value as racers, mostly is unregulated, unmonitored and treated as insignificant. I wish to address terms of reference (j) and (k) in particular.

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

The racing industry creates an enormous wastage of healthy dogs. Whilst I would not want to grant any 'right to life' to healthy adult dogs, and I acknowledge an owner's legal right to dispose of his or her dog, I think that the people of NSW are generally appalled when confronted with the statistics relating to the killing of healthy three and four year old greyhounds.

On average over the last 5 years, 8900 greyhounds were born each year in NSW. GRNSW acknowledges that more than 3000 greyhounds are killed in NSW each year, because they are not good racers, have been injured during racing or training, or have reached the end of their racing career.<sup>1</sup> Either this is a very conservative estimate or an attempt to cover up the true figures.

From 2003 to 2011 there were 80,133 greyhounds born in NSW.<sup>2</sup> In 2012 there were 2552 greyhounds registered as pets and 6150 as racing greyhounds. Greyhounds live 10 to 12 years, so in 2012 there should be more than 80133 alive. On these figures around 71,431 greyhounds are unaccounted for.<sup>3</sup> Close to 9000 greyhounds per year have died or been killed.

<sup>1</sup> 'Greyhound racing euthanasia rates slammed', 10 November, 2012, ABC News.

<sup>2</sup> Answers to questions on notice lodged by MP for Sydney Alex Greenwich 23 May 2013. Full text of questions and answers available at:

<http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/la/qala.nsf/18101dc36b638302ca257146007ee41a/73129441ba2b6f30ca257b750000790d?>

<sup>3</sup> Greyhound Freedom, <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Greyhound-Freedom/341841249187362?fref=ts>

It is unacceptable that GRNSW is not providing accurate figures, regardless of the cause or motivation. Most greyhounds cease to race by the age of four, so the majority of these dogs are killed at this age. Let us not refer to the painless killing of these dogs by a veterinarian, if that is what occurs, as 'euthanasia'. Euthanasia is a term reserved for killing when the one who is killed no longer has a life worth living and will be relieved of suffering. The majority of these dogs are healthy, and those that come into a rescue organisation go on to live long and happy lives. Unfortunately, the greyhounds rehomed as a pet number in the hundreds rather than the thousands each year.

These figures do not include puppies that are killed prior to 12 weeks of age. No records are required prior to 12 weeks so those are not included in any statistics.

It is contrary to the culture of the people of NSW to find the killing of more than 8000 young healthy dogs a year acceptable.

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

The primary concern in greyhound racing appears to be for fairness to punters and there is inadequate concern for greyhound welfare. There is no independent monitoring of how, and whether, the dogs are cared for, while the actual act of racing represents a huge risk of injury to the dog.

It seems that the racing industry in NSW has primary responsibility for greyhound welfare.<sup>4</sup> There are policies, rules and regulations which are directed at concern for fairness to punters rather than concern for the pain and suffering of the dogs.

Rule 37 requires competing dogs to be examined by a veterinarian to determine fitness to race. If the dog is judged unfit then it is withdrawn, and its condition is not considered or monitored further.<sup>5</sup>

Rule 73 relates to injuries sustained while racing and is focused on ensuring that racing dogs are injury free. An injured dog is suspended until determined fit by an officiating veterinarian. There is no rule to ensure appropriate treatment of injuries.

Rule 86 sets out offences. The welfare of greyhounds is not mentioned here.

Rule 106 sets out a nice list of welfare requirements however breaches are not linked to any offence listed in Rule 86. Stewards can administer fines for failures in animal welfare, or in extreme cases, expulsion from the industry. However, there is no further action. The dog is not seized and proper care is not instigated or monitored.<sup>6</sup> The industry appears to aspire to concern for animal welfare but does not police it.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.thedogs.com.au/DPage.aspx?spid+116&id+3>

<sup>5</sup> Letter to the editor, Animal Welfare issues in the Greyhound Industry (2013) 9 AAPLJ at 108.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

The RSPCA has authority to investigate and prosecute for cruelty, neglect, harm or mistreatment of animals in NSW. However, it seems that the RSPCA does not intervene in greyhound racing. Under Rule 28 permission of the stewards is required to enter the kennel area at a race meeting. Inspectors do not attend races and do not investigate the care of dogs injured during racing, nor do they monitor the care of greyhounds by breeders and trainers. The condition of some of the greyhounds surrendered to council pounds warrants prosecution, yet it seems that no action is taken.

My experience as a volunteer at Greyhound Rescue Inc has provided examples of the lack of care shown for greyhounds that no longer have potential to win races. In the six months that I have been involved I have seen several dogs come to our particular rescue suffering malnutrition, one with a damaged eye having been hit with a belt buckle, one lame as a result of an unset break having healed incorrectly, just to name a few examples. Many of the dogs are terrified of humans, suggesting that they have not been treated with respect in the past. However, these dogs respond well to care and respect and make delightful pets. Greyhounds should be treated like all other NSW dogs under the law and the law should be enforced. There needs to be independent monitoring of greyhound welfare and prosecutions when reasonable standards are not met.

The act of racing is dangerous for greyhounds. Some statistics are provided by *Greyhound Freedom* for racing Australia-wide at TAB tracks: between January 2012 and September 2013 there were 324 greyhounds that died at the track and 532 greyhounds fractured a bone during a race. As well, during this time 31,186 greyhounds were scratched from races due to injuries. There are 20 non-TAB tracks in NSW where the injury and death figures are unavailable to the public and thereby not included in the above statistics. These figures constitute a lot of suffering for dogs.

The dogs do not *choose* to race. Whilst we would not want to ban Rugby League because players suffer injuries we need to remember that league players choose to play. These dogs are in our care and it is hard to justify exposing them to risk of injury and death each time they go to the race track.

Proper standards of care are not enforced and the racing industry appears to have a lack of real concern for the welfare of racing and ex-racing dogs.

### **Conclusion:**

It is unlikely that the parliament would act to end the cruelty by banning greyhound racing, as it earns income through TAB gambling. However, a ban is required to secure greyhound welfare.

If greyhound racing cannot be banned then there needs to be **independent** monitoring and strict attention paid to the level of care that racing dogs, and those who fail at racing, receive. There needs to be regular inspections of breeding and training facilities as well as attendance at race meetings to ensure standards of care. The racing industry must be forced to accept monitoring from outside its own ranks. Prosecutions for failure to comply with reasonable standards must occur.

The number of greyhounds bred for racing and then abandoned at 3 or 4 years of age is outrageous. The industry needs to be forced to take responsibility, at the very least financial responsibility, for the healthy 3 and 4 year old dogs that are surplus to racing.

It is contrary to the culture of the general public of NSW to permit the exposure of healthy dogs to unreasonable risk of injury, to permit vast numbers of dogs to be kept in facilities without any monitoring of welfare, and possibly without proper care and attention, and to permit the killing of many thousands of healthy 3 and 4 year old dogs each year. The parliament should act to remedy these aspects of greyhound racing.

Christine Cooper