

INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW

Name: Miss Catherine Heyne

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To the members of the Greyhound Racing in NSW enquiry committee,

I am writing to express my concerns and opinions on the state of the greyhound racing industry. While I understand that greyhound racing is a lucrative industry and many jobs and income rely on it, I feel that the industry, in its current state, is not being run fairly or effectively, not only to the animals who suffer at the hands of these trainers, but also to the trainers who do the right thing.

One of my biggest concerns is the overbreeding and euthanasia of animals unfit for racing. I fear that there is no easy solution to this, but I would suggest some strict guidelines to permitting greyhound owners to breed. Some sort of registry system, not unlike the breeding of exotic birds and tracking their heritage, might be worth looking at, and desexing I think should be enforced. Known registered trainers and breeders should be subject to inspections into their properties and facilities, to ensure that all dogs are being treated in a humane and respectable way. After all, if they plan to make money off of them, it is only fair and decent that these animals be ensured a quality of life that is exemplary of the Australian community's fairness and respect.

Another issue is the doping of animals. This presents a huge challenge and disadvantage to prospective 'fair' trainers, and encourages this further. I would suggest greater distance between the lab analysts and the trainers, and anonymity of laboratories; otherwise, specialised analyst equipment be on site and monitored and tested immediately. Also I feel that individuals from within the RSPCA, animal welfare or veterinarians should be encouraged to undertake such tasks if they do not already, as the likelihood (I would hope) of them being persuaded to hide such an animal abuse would be lesser. Ideally financial benefits of working in this position to maintain integrity of the industry and discourage bribery should be significant, as well as punishments for dishonesty be severe.

One point that I feel goes across the board of animal welfare is punishments for animal abuse. It is a known precursor to potentially violent behaviour towards other humans, which is a major offence. Stricter punishments, MUCH stricter punishments for all forms of known animal abuse should be used to reinforce owners and trainers to treat their animals with respect and dignity, and evidence of cruelty and at-home euthanasia should be dealt with much more severely. After all, people are less likely to do something of cruelty if there is a large financial burden, jail time and lifetime eviction from the industry at stake. Also this is potentially another area where at-home inspectors could be handy, perhaps with their own K-9 versions of sniffer dogs to hunt down any signs of decomposing litters, unlawfully pregnant bitches or any other such cruelty, such as animals in fear.

While I understand that it is a very difficult issue as many people's livelihoods depend on this industry, I think it is important to point out that as a nation, it is important that we set the standard of animal rights, not only in our exports, but at home in our own backyards. It is of my opinion that animal cruelty is unaustralian, and excusing it on an industrial level is sickening. I would also remind you that there have been many times in our history where big shutdowns have impacted Australians, but we are Australians; it should be our integrity of kindness and fairness that dictate our choices as a nation, not the financial gain.

Yours truly,

Catherine Heyne