

Submission  
No 536

## INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW

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Partially Confidential

It is my opinion that greyhound racing should be phased out in Australia.

It is banned in most parts of the United States and is on the decline in the UK.

While most countries in the civilised world are shunning this poor excuse for a 'sport', Australia is wasting funds on trying to boost an out-dated industry that is rife with corruption and is responsible for the over-breeding and mass wastage of Greyhounds, thus creating an enormous mess for the socially conscientious few to deal with while the industry itself does so little to assist in the re-homing of the dogs it spits out.

If Australia insists on the continuation of Greyhound racing, then at the very least there needs to be tighter regulations and much more industry accountability. If this is not a feasible possibility due to costs and cutting into profit margins, then the future of Greyhound racing should be strongly reconsidered.

The 'bleeding' of Greyhounds (using live rabbits, cats, possums and other small animals) to encourage prey-drive is another major concern. It might be illegal, but it is no secret that this practice is alive and well within the industry.

Anyone who has any experience with Greyhounds knows that they are generally very placid, gentle dogs. It takes a concerted amount of brutality to get them track-ready. It is extremely ignorant to pretend that bleeding does not go on. It absolutely does, and there should be some sort of independent (but industry-funded) authoritative body to police it.

A greyhound raised from puppyhood in an ordinary domestic environment would most certainly not need muzzling, nor do many of the greyhounds rejected from racing for lack of enthusiasm in chasing prey (as well as many racing champions who have been rehabilitated through rescue programs). This is a strong indicator of what is being done to encourage greyhounds to race and chase. It is a learned behaviour far more than it is instinctive. The muzzling laws applying to rescued or retired hounds in certain states are ridiculous. However, it serves the industry well to perpetuate the myth that Greyhounds are a naturally dangerous breed. It helps keep the public outcry minimal.

Trainers may argue that they treat their dogs well during their racing lives, but most trainers have little time for an under-performing dog and are quick to dispense with them in whatever way is most convenient.

Having formerly worked in a vet clinic and knowing many other vet nurses and vets, I am well aware of the high euthanasia rates amongst racing Greyhounds. The ones that make it to universities to be dissected, or vet clinics to be drained of their blood until death, are luckier than many others who face a far worse fate when they are no longer winning races or not fast enough to begin.

What happens to these dogs is another factor that needs serious intervention and policing. If there was greater industry accountability then it would not be as easy for trainers to dispose of these dogs in ways that are most concerning. Numbers must be recorded, inconsistencies need to be investigated and offenders should be punished. The industry must be forced to take responsibility for this. Self regulation is not acceptable and has proven to be ineffective. External action is needed to make the racing industry legally responsible for their actions or inaction.

Trainers say their dogs are treated well and are given the best of everything despite the fact that hounds are usually housed in a kennel situation with little socialisation. For the last five years I have worked in a pet supplies store (which does not sell animals but re-homes rescued cats & dogs non-profit) and I know plenty of trainers in the area. They are the ones who come in asking for our cheapest bulk dog food (rarely purchased as we don't stock poor quality, cheap food) & they always opt for the least expensive choice when it comes to flea & tick control. They may treat their dogs for intestinal worms, but most don't bother with preventing heart worm (or taking measures to prevent future dental problems) as most trainers have no intention of still having the hounds beyond the few short years they hope to race them. I've been told this very blatantly.

I've also been asked by Greyhound trainers to order in various performance enhancing stimulants or 'supplements'. (A request I have always refused.)

Racing greyhounds are just a commodity to trainers. I can't see this ever changing, so at the very least keeping an accurate record the births, deaths and ages of destroyed dogs should be a mandatory industry requirement.

I'm absolutely certain that the number of animals passing through abattoirs each year is recorded, yet we only have ballpark figures on the number of Greyhounds slaughtered on an annual basis. This is not good enough.

Very few trainers (if any) can or will keep all of the dogs they've raced, let alone the ones that never made it to the track. Moreover, it is generally up to rescue groups to step in & take responsibility/find homes for the unwanted ones. Occasionally rescue groups may be able to work directly with trainers, but it is usually up to vet nurses or vets to contact these groups when the hounds are brought into clinics for euthanasia. I've been told by trainers that they choose to have their ex-racers or non-racers destroyed because they object to paying a \$50 surrender fee (which barely makes a dent in the operational costs of not-for-profit, volunteer-run rescue groups that survive on donations and fund-raising).

I do not accept that there is much of an attempt made by the industry to see Greyhounds live potentially full lives post racing career. The various industry-run programs like GAP are woeful. I understand that it is not regarded as a criminal offence to destroy spent Greyhounds. It is, however, a national disgrace.

Lack of industry transparency is a major player in keeping Greyhound racing alive. It should be independently regulated, with all puppies born and all dogs destroyed before, during, or after their racing career recorded and publicly reported.

On-track injuries result in death in almost every instance, even for something as simple as a broken toe. This usually dictates the end of a racing career which renders the injured dog next to useless in the eyes of trainers/owners.

Then there's the drug deaths; those reacting badly to a performance enhancing drugs, having heart attacks mid-race or collapsing soon after (sometimes this is because of heat exhaustion too, from running on very hot days). I've known of hounds who have died from drug-related causes even years after they've been lucky enough to be rescued and adopted out to loving homes.

I constantly hear the argument from trainers that greyhounds were 'bred to race' and that they love the track experience. That 'their eyes light up' and 'their tails wag'. I don't disagree that Greyhounds -like most dogs- enjoy a good exercise session. My family's rescued hound, Hannah, is testament to this.

However, they are not naturally programmed to run in a pack where injuries are commonplace. Hannah, who was discarded early because she wasn't interested in chasing (despite her amazing athletic ability!) appreciates a nice sprint on the beach and enjoys socialising with all the other dogs (as opposed to ignoring others and chasing a target they've been brow-beaten into focusing on).

As for the lit up eyes and wagging tails in response to being at the track, greyhounds will do that. They're lovely, happy dogs. They also wag their tails & smile when they're being dumped at a vet clinic, or looking down the barrel of a gun.

Hannah is just another example of a young hound (approx 16 months old) left at a vet clinic for euthanasia. Had it not been for the clinic staff making phone calls and Friends of the Hound rescue group becoming involved then she would have been another (unofficial and unrecorded) statistic.

It's time to force a greedy industry to put its money where its mouth is and change the way it operates. That, or abolish Greyhound racing altogether.