

**Submission
No 385**

INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW

Organisation: NSW National Coursing Association

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**The Director
Select Committee on Greyhound Racing in NSW (GRNSW)
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000**

5 November, 2013

My name is Kevin Gordon, I am the President of the NSW National Coursing Association Limited (NCA). I am also a breeder, major sponsor and owner of many greyhounds in NSW and am passionate about the sport in this state moving forward to where it should, be in align with other states.

OVERVIEW

The NSW NCA is Australia's oldest greyhound racing club and has had a proud history.

The NSW National Coursing Association was formed by the late Richard Coombes and his late brother Frank Coombes and has been firmly entrenched in the fabric of Australian greyhound racing ever since. The NSW NCA's major racing base was the famous Rooty Hill track where many of the country's finest greyhounds competed in the "coursing" events before the mechanical lure became the major form of racing. When the NCA's major complex Wentworth Park was enjoying its glory days in the 1950's, 60's, and 70's, crowds would often reach the 25,000 mark with yearly averages of more than 16,000 patrons per meeting.

In 1975, the NSW NCA finalised nine years of negotiations when it signed a 50 year lease for the use of the Wentworth Park complex. In 1987, the other major greyhound body in New South Wales, the Greyhound Breeders, Owners and Trainers, relocated its main racing base from Harold Park to enter into a shared arrangement with the NCA at Wentworth Park. In 2001 the NCA embarked on The Gardens project in Newcastle. Purchasing a site to develop a facility which would be owned by the industry to ensure longevity.

MY OBSERVATIONS OF GRNSW

My observations of GRNSW is that they're a law to themselves and see both race clubs and industry participants (owners & trainers) as an expense rather than an important component of the sport. The sport in NSW needs greater leadership where the interests of clubs and owners and trainers are the forefront of GRNSW's mindset.

An Example Of GRNSW And Their Abuse Of Power

In August 2013 the NCA had its racing license at The Gardens revoked at great expense to the industry. Only in February 2012 the NCA had sold 70% of the facility to GRNSW on the premise it would have a 99 year racing licence at the track. The cost of the NCA to conduct this process was around \$90k. This was done to make the NCA "debt free" and provide a stable foundation for the future.

Having had the benefit of being part of this process and taking all the information provided, both written and verbal into account, it only confirms to me that decisions are made and formed by GRNSW regardless of any independent advice sourced. In February 2013 the NCA was issued a "show-cause" notice due to concerns over its financial viability from its Annual report 13 months prior. After receipt of this the NCA board spent considerable money getting an independent assessment by Adrian Blackburn (Blackburns Business Advisers), providing GRNSW with the information required as per its "show-cause" requests. This report confirmed financial viability, the concern in GRNSW's show cause notice.

After tabling this information and comprehensive report to GRNSW, the NCA received a response saying it hadn't satisfied its requests. No explanation of exactly what it hadn't satisfied, just that it hadn't satisfied GRNSW.

Following this advice, in early April the NCA was advised by GRNSW that effective April 8 the NCA would be under administration by Deloitte. Again, no explanation as to why, just that it was as per the racing act. The NCA was advised by Deloitte they were there to offer help and generate a business plan for the future.

My understanding is this position wasn't consistent with the desires of GRNSW.

On finalization of the Deloitte report, at a cost of a reported \$500,000 (this hasn't been disclosed to the industry), scenarios were identified which displayed a clear way forward for the NCA. In fact one simulation had a 91% chance of the NCA displaying a healthy cash positive for the following year. If the GRNSW board wasn't planning on acting on Deloitte advice, why engage them in the first place? Through discussions with Deloitte it also became apparent the NCA wasn't given the full "Deloitte" report to respond on, with some elements of the report either redacted or left out. This sport is being run and governed with lies and deceit.

I am also concerned about a number of verbal assurances and undertakings I was given personally by [redacted] which never materialized. During the process I held multiple discussions and meetings with [redacted] where he made and broke many promises, he led me to believe we were all working towards the same outcome. Sadly, it's now very apparent, he was just telling me what I wanted to hear all along with his real desires on this process firmly set from the start. It didn't matter what the NCA or I did, [redacted] were always going to wield their power and arrive at this decision, regardless of the information Deloitte provided for consideration.

Events have occurred subsequent to this decision which to me, further confirm there is no accountability of GRNSW. In September 2013 the NCA was advised by GRNSW it was intending to call in Interest Free Internable Loans (IFILS) that were provided for The Gardens project. These items are still being used by GRNSW at the venue now, yet they decided it was appropriate to call them in, despite it was them that evicted the NCA in the first instance! In the real world this wouldn't get to first base but sadly in NSW greyhound racing there is just one judge and jury.

When they (GRNSW) closed Cessnock they didn't call them in? Where's the consistency in policy and decisions?

When I raised this as a concern via correspondence I simply received a response saying my claims were rejected. No explanation, that was it, rejected. In this correspondence I also asked to front the board regarding this decision and explain the NCA's position. I wasn't even provided the courtesy of a response to that request.

POINTS OF NOTE

1. The Deloitte report sent to the NCA from GRNSW was missing pages. When we queried this we were told we didn't need these pages.

2. GRNSW's decision to cancel the registration of the NCA as a greyhound racing club was based on -
The GRNSW board has formed an opinion that:

a) "the NCA is not or will not be financially viable in relation to participation in the greyhound racing industry and in any event"

b) it would be in the best interest of the greyhound racing industry to cancel the NCA's registration as a greyhound racing club.

3. GRNSW came to its conclusion given two independent reports (Blackburns Business Advisers and Deloitte) showed that the NCA is profitable now and had a 90% change of being profitable for the future.

4. GRNSW have elected to call in the IFIL's (INTEREST FREE LOANS) from the NCA while the items associated to these IFILs remain in full use and benefit to GRNSW at the venue on a daily basis when:-

a) GRNSW elected not to recall IFIL's from Cessnock GRC when they ceased to conduct racing at the venue.

b) GRNSW elected not to recall IFIL's from the NCA when it vacated Tamworth and ceased to conduct racing at that venue.

c) GRNSW have not recalled IFIL's from the NCA when it transferred from Singleton to The Gardens.

5. We believe there is a conflict of interest through GRNSW terminating the NCA's licence at The Gardens, endorsing the GBOTA to use the track facilities and venue improvements, and GRNSW's proposed position to call in the IFILs. When they (GRNSW) closed Cessnock they didn't call them in? Where's the consistency in policy and decisions?

WHAT ACTION DO I BELIEVE IS NEEDED

1) The Racing Minister looks into the reports from Blackburns Business Advisers and Delliotte and reviews the decision made by GRNSW based on facts not personal vendetors.

The Industry needs action with some level of accountability for GRNSW and a management team that see the participants in the sport outside of their head office as just important as everyone else. If not, people will just keep leaving in droves like they are at the moment.

My recent dealings are just an example of the way in which the sport in NSW is being governed.

Yours sincerely,

Kevin Gordon
NCA President