

**Submission
No 499**

INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW

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Submission to the NSW Inquiry into Greyhound Racing

I do not live in NSW, however I am putting in this submission as I have two companion greyhounds which were both born in NSW, I foster for a greyhound adoption group and a number of those greyhounds were also born in NSW. In addition I have a background in dog training and behavioural therapy.

1. **Personal experience with welfare issues** :

- a. **My First dog Devo** was adopted through a greyhound adoption organisation. We have had him for 3 years and he has NSW racing ear tattoos. We were told he raced, but had injuries and had to stop. Over this time we have had to seek treatment for his injuries on a number of occasions, it has required pain medication and the expertise of a cranio-sacral therapy vet to assist with his skeletal and muscular problems. My vet Toni Lynch has informed me that the majority of his pain and issues are consistent with dogs that have raced and he also has arthritis as a result. The pain killers, anti-inflammatory medication and arthritis injections have amounted to a considerable amount of money (I stopped counting at \$1000). What is more concerning that the pain he has had to endure at time. At times, before we could get to a vet, he has been crying pain.

- b. **My second dog Bronte** was on death row at Blacktown Pound in Sydney. Along with her sister, a few friends and I helped save them from death. We kept Bronte, and her sister has also been adopted by a loving home. Bronte came to us in the following condition – she was underweight, her coat and skin were in a bad condition, and her teeth were in poor condition. She has a few scars on her body including a large one on her shoulder. Her behaviour was timid and fearful. She was particularly scared of loud noises, raising your voice; raising your hand (she ducked which is consistent behaviour with dogs who have been hit). She would avoid eye contact, look at the ground, be unwilling to come to you and she would cringe when you touched her. Her behaviour was consistent with an abused dog. She was also scared of medium to large dogs. In addition, her behaviour around food was of concern she was absolutely eat as quick as she could and gorge it down. I have trained well nearly 1000 dogs over the years, many we need to teach their manners around food and I have never seen a dog eat as quick as she did. She was clearly desperate for her food and had scarcity behaviour. Since we saved Bronte she has require socialisation and a little obedience training. Her first few months were tough (for her), but she has turned around from a scared, untrusting greyhound to the most amazing, well behaved gorgeous companion dog. She helps in the rehabilitation of our foster dogs by teaching them to play and have fun in life. See her photo below.

- c. **Foster dogs**. I have fostered 8 greyhounds over the last 2.5 years with my partner. Some short term, others longer term. All except one dog came in poor condition with poor teeth, poor coat, most of them underweight and some fear based issues. One dog in particular I would describe as “frozen”. He was so fearful he would not even move. Who knows what he had been through, but clearly he was not going to make a racer and that is why he was dumped at the vet clinic to be killed. I use the word killed, because, euthanasia should only be used for killing animals that are in pain or very poor health. You do this to as them of pain and suffering. Anyway, this particular dog required, love and support and gentleness. It surprised me that only after a month of good food, supplements and love he was already a healthy, happy dog. He continues to have fears of certain

things, but given he was quite traumatised when he first came to us he turned around in a relatively short time, is quite remarkable. One of the best things for dogs to learn their new life is watching the behaviour of other and interaction with dog. My dogs have made a great contribution to the helping rescued greyhounds learn their new life.

All the foster dogs I have had have required teaching the most basic things – stairs, jump into cars, what other dog breeds are, what things like bikes, skate boards, kids, traffic, the beach and the list goes on. It is clear that the previous owners have made no attempt to socialise these dogs and prepare them for their new life.

d. Other greyhounds.

Since adopting a greyhound I have made many friends with greyhound and have met many on the street. The majority of them have had horrible stories. They all have physical scars and many emotional scars to overcome as well.

e. Welfare of racing greyhounds is an oxymoron

I have heard a number of times from Brent Hogan from GRNSW in the media that the welfare of the dogs is the number one priority.

The behaviour and condition of the dogs that I have come across are not inconsistent with this position. Not only is it not consistent it is the polar opposite. The dogs that have come into my care have all had some minor or major emotional issues to overcome and physical issues.

If welfare was the number one priority – why would you put your dog at risk and harm's way by racing? The concept of racing and animal welfare is a contradiction. The very act of making a dog race is causing it to endure physical limits and injury every time it races. The pain and suffering of Devo is a testament to this. Who in the industry takes responsibility for this long term suffering and pain? These dogs are used for financial gain and discarded by the industry when they are of no financial benefit. The values of a modern, caring, compassionate society are inconsistent with the very act of making greyhounds race beyond their limits for financial gain.

2. Other issues of concern -

a. The large number of greyhounds killed. Brent Hogan admits that 3000 are killed per year, but it is clearly much higher than this. With 80 133 greyhounds being born in NSW from 2003- 2011 and there are currently 8702 greyhounds accounted for in NSW in 2013. 2552 registered at councils and 6150 registered as racing greyhounds. So where are the other greyhounds? All greyhound that are born to industry participants, including accidental matings and discarded puppies need to be accounted for.

b. That insularity of Greyhound Racing NSW. GRNSW are a body unto themselves and should not be responsible for greyhound welfare.

c. The lack of data on deaths, injuries, re-homing and greyhounds being killed. They also need to be collected for all tracks regardless of whether they are TAB tracks or not.

d. The drugs in the sport. The inability for the industry to test for EPO and the lack of any interest or initiative to help greyhounds that suffer from the effects of prohibited and illegal substances. The focus is always on the trainer/ owner and what happens to them. Well what happens to the dog?

e. The greyhounds sent to countries with no animal welfare laws.

f. The continued allegations of live baiting and shooting.

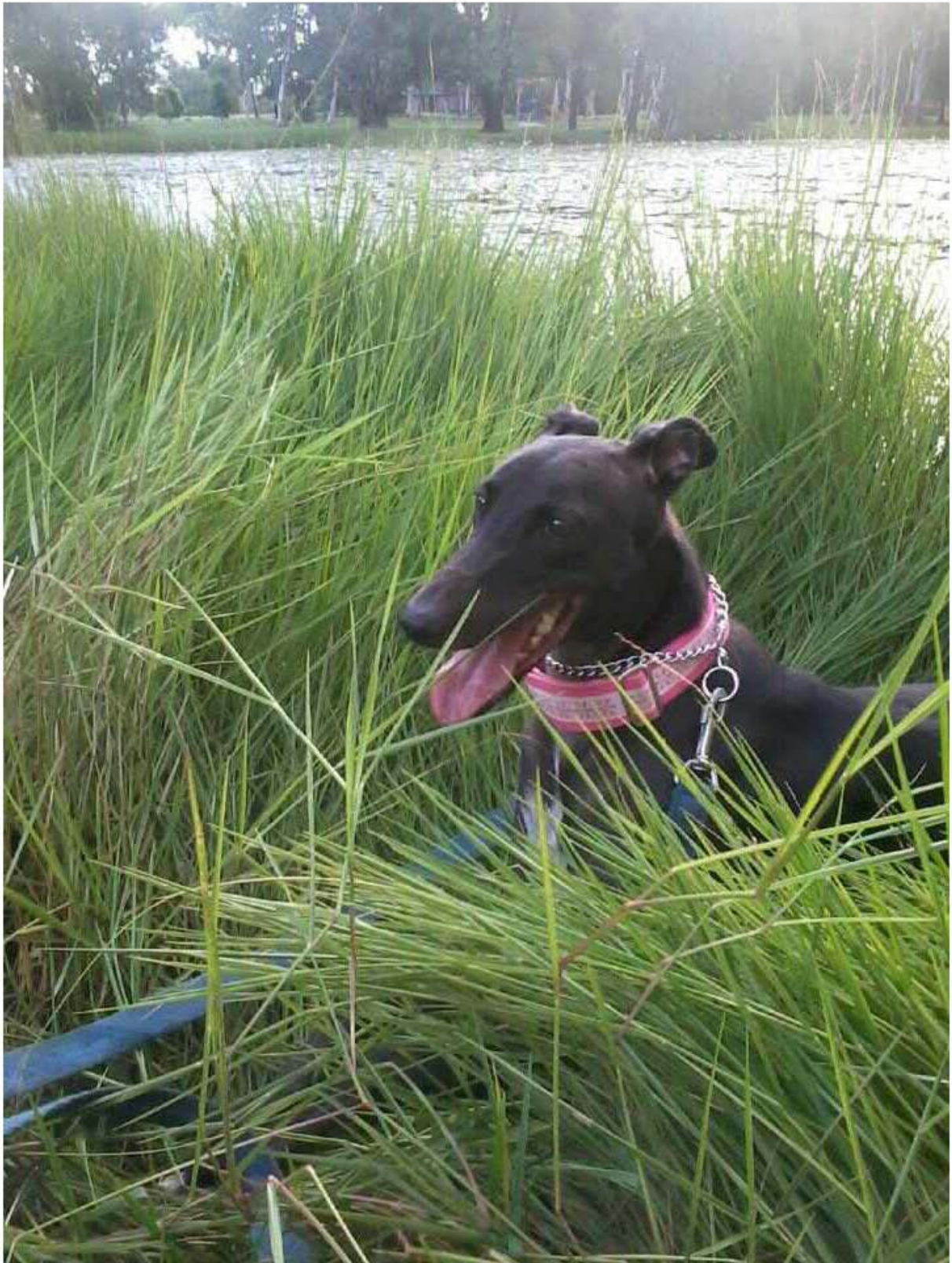
g. The techniques used to train and break greyhounds in.

3. Recommendations:

- All statistics on births, deaths, re-homing, injuries should be collected and made public. Including greyhounds sent to Universities, research centres, drug companies and vets for blood testing.
- The welfare unit should be a separate body from GRNSW. This unit should be responsible for property inspections and breaking in/ training facilities. This unit should actively investigate live baiting and shooting of greyhounds.
- If welfare of animals is the first concern of GRNSW then all greyhounds that have been given prohibited drugs be assessed whether they require further vet treatment for long term effects and given treatment as required. Participants that give their greyhounds toxic substances be reported as a welfare issue, not simply as breaking a rule issue.
- The names of participants that used illegal drugs be passed on to the police.
- Ban the exporting of greyhounds to countries with no animal welfare laws.
- Have a limit on the number of greyhounds bred.
- A fund should be established that is contributed by every GRNSW participant and the NSW government from the taxes collected from racing that is used to help finance the rehabilitation and re-homing of all greyhounds. Greyhounds not suitable for a home life should live in a government funded sanctuary. This money should be accessible for approved greyhound adoption groups, not just GRNSW/ GAP. If this government is not prepared to create this welfare initiative, then stop taking money from the greyhound racing industry and stop racing greyhounds.
- Ban all exportation of greyhounds to countries with no animal welfare laws.

Conclusion.

The economics of an industry that makes money from racing greyhounds means that welfare will always be the last priority. The values of our society are changing in particular the way we treat animals. If the average person on the street knew what was going on in this industry, it would be banned. Insisting that this information is made public I believe will eventuate in the stopping of commercial greyhound racing. Essentially it is a dog killing industry. Breeding an animal to race, so humans can bet and then kill it is inconsistent with the values of a modern, compassionate, civilized society. The United States has banned greyhound racing in 39 states. I look forward to when Australia does it as well.



This is Bronte a year after being saved from Blacktown pound.