

**Submission
No 397**

INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW

Name: Mr Richard Bligh

Date received: 4/11/2013

Submission from Richard Bligh. re. Inquiry into Greyhound Racing in NSW.

[a] Economic viability of Greyhound Racing in NSW.

The Greyhound Industry must get its Fair Share of turnover to survive.
Some issues for the committee to look into are,

1. How the greyhounds were signed up to a secret agreement [intercode agreement] for 99 years without participants being able to see this contract. At the time we were told it would be reviewed after 15 years but were lied to as it is a farcial review about new money and the committee should ask what is happening with this Review?
2. Maxmillions was a linked Poker machine game that was to make the racing industry a lot of money, and the arrangements, of its running and its sell off needs to be looked into.
3. The Cameron Report said the intercode funding issue should change but it would seem the Minister at the time wasn't interested in doing this and now is involved in the horse racing industry and I believe that the Inquiry should ask him and his advisers the reasons for not following all of its recommendations.
4. Corporate Bookmakers must be made to pay their Fair Share and the government should legislate for this to happen.
5. The Government has given the TAB concessions to allow it to purchase the thoroughbred share of Trackside and this Inquiry should ask if this deal was in the best interests of the other codes of racing or the State itself.

[b] Financial performance and conduct of the industry and of GRNSW

I believe that GRNSW has been run by people with none or very limited business experience and so see that money is wasted by buying equipment, employing people and using contractors without putting out tenders or advertising in mainstream media and then publishing the results of who has tendered and the reasons why certain people were successful. I also don't believe there is a backup system where GRNSW staff could check on work that is done at tracks and so this may be open to corruption. If the costs and jobs were put on there website then every one could see it was transparent. With the large number of staff they have and the new computer system it should not be to difficult.

Another example of waste I believe was GRNSW donating \$65,000 of industry money to the 65 Roses Campaign [Cystic Fibrosis], and then telling the industry that unless funding improved prize money may be cut. Greyhound clubs in the past have run there own fund raising events.

The Inquiry needs to ask questions about the process whereby GRNSW spent \$2.6 million to buy, and fit out there office at Auburn and then agreed to a half share the Trotting building at Bankstown with a dubious valuation, move the regulatory side of greyhound racing there and when this wasn't successful have now moved to the Rhodes building and are now paying over \$265,000/ year rent. It seems to be a monumental disaster and to rub salt in the wounds I believe that Richmond have said they have plenty of land for GRNSW to build there office but have been ignored. We need to know how much this has cost the industry and the reasons for this mess.

Another thing the Inquiry should ask questions about is the cost to the Industry re. the closing of Cessnock and the payments to consultants, TAB and Sky Channel etc.

I believe that the Greyhound Industry is not getting value for money from GRNSW.

[c] Government initiatives and assistance measures to support the industry.

I think the Government should get in touch with the Victorian Premier and he may be able to explain to them how to grow the Greyhound Industry which also then employs other people associated with it.

[d] Current effectiveness of current industry regulation.

The Industry we are told is self regulated and so if we have any issues with GRNSW and cant solve them we can go to the Industry Integrity Auditor, but as he is employed and funded by GRNSW then I believe this is ineffective.

[e] Selection process for the board of GRNSW.

The board of GRNSW had a board which comprised of club representatives with only one participant representative and people asked for an independent board [no NCA, GBOTA Dapto etc] on it and instead of hiring an independent group to review the applicants the minister put 2 past board members and a 3rd person for the process and couldn't believe whom the board selected. Two new highly qualified people went on it and two existing people and a past staff member were appointed. As I have been told a number of very qualified people were not even given interviews, I think the Inquiry should ask for their names and qualifications and look into it.

I believe that participants should elect the five positions on GRNSW.

[f] Effectiveness and accountability of the board of GRNSW.

An example of the effectiveness and accountability of GRNSW is the Gardens Issue. Not until copies of the NCA Annual reports were given to a member of the GRNSW board and it was explained that they were technically insolvent was any thing done, and if the present and past members of GRNSW couldn't see this, or never sought to look into this by asking for their annual reports, then not only the NCA but also GRNSW should be held accountable for industry funds that went into this project. I believe that misappropriation of some monies at the NCA needs to be looked into by this Inquiry.

Many participants signed a petition asking for a forum with GRNSW and were brushed aside and are annoyed now, because all of a sudden this Inquiry was announced and then they decide to have one.

[g]. Effectiveness of the current arrangements and role of the Integrity Auditor.

The Integrity Auditor cannot be employed by or be a friend or acquaintance of anyone involved with GRNSW. The Auditor should be selected by the Government and not even the Racing Minister should have any thing to do with this appointment.

[h] Capability and performance of GRNSW and governance of the industry.

The capability and performance of GRNSW is substandard. On the 10/10/2013 I got in contact with GRNSW to tell them that on their website a dog was racing, in a Dapto to W/Park final race and the GRNSW form said it was yet to win a race. I was then told by GRNSW that it had won 5 races in New Zealand and so was OK. to run in that race. On looking on the NZ. Website that night I saw that it had won 15 races and so in NSW it was a 4th grade dog and should not be able to start. I contacted GRNSW by email and explained this and said I would be grateful for a reply. The next day [race day] at 12pm it still hadn't been scratched and the trainer then phoned the Dapto club and they said they new nothing about this and would look into it. It was later scratched. I remember that in 2004 I had a complaint about the grading of a race and the reply came back that it was the computer and the system would be fixed soon???. It shouldn't be up to participants to find all these mistakes and I believe there are many every week.

Another issue is that when a trainer receives a suspension he or she just transfers the racing dogs into there partners name and so except for a fine there is no deterrent and so it is perceived that these people have got away with it.

People also cannot believe that some GRNSW inquiries have been going for more than 12 months and these people who have issues continue to keep racing and receiving prize money till they are suspended.

I also believe that GRNSW Senior staff should not be allowed to Gamble on the races and think that betting records from the Tab and Corporate Bookmakers should be checked to see if this is an issue.

In NSW we had a swabbing system where not only the stewards could swab dogs for performance changes etc. but also had a marble system that after a race the winner spun the marbles and if the red marble came out was also swabbed. I believe this was a great deterrent as it took away the doubt that someone was a friend of the steward and so believe it should be returned.

The Greyhound Racing Act 2009 should be amended to ensure that processes are in place to ensure that regulatory practices are transparent and not open to corruption in accordance with the findings of the ICAC investigation

[i] Incidence of drug administration and efficacy of GRNSW.

I believe if you look at the figures you will see that the percentages of positive swabs are small and I believe that the repeat offenders should be put out of the sport. As said above, changes have to be made.

[j] Sale and breeding of Greyhounds.

The market conditions will mean that unless we get more prize money, then people will not breed. The success of the sport is that people will bet more on the better greyhound races and so if that happens then more people will get involved and more money will be turned over and more money will be payed in taxes.

[k] Welfare of animals in the industry and role of GRNSW.

Greyhounds are fed, housed and looked after a lot better than most dogs, The breeder knows that the better and healthier the dog is, the more chance of winning more races.[They are fed and housed better than a lot of people in the world.]

[l] Financial incentives for reducing euthanasia.

The Greyhound clubs are programming aged races, golden oldies races and bitches only races to cater for different types of dogs and I believe that GRNSW should combine with the country clubs to make more use for these types of greyhounds. The Greyhound industry has no problems with the prosecution for animal mistreatment and are amused at some people who complain about the greyhounds when we see cruelty to sheep and cattle going overseas and believe that they should concentrate on helping them.

[m] Adequacy and integrity of data collection in the industry.

Data collection for all pets, show cats and working dogs as well as race horses and trotters should be collected and then a proper study with precise figures can be done for all animals.

[n] Any other related matter.

I would like the Inquiry to ask questions regarding why greyhound race fields are not being shown in newspapers because we were told this was one part of the deal when the intercode agreement was signed and believe that this reduces turnover.

On Sky Channel our race time is cut short to show trotters walking around in circles before a race or race horses standing about behind the barriers or parading and believe by doing this the Tab and Sky Channel is costing the greyhound industry betting turnover and believe that GRNSW or the government should do something to fix this problem.

The Greyhound media have stayed silent through the discussions leading up to the Upper House Inquiry and believe that pressure has been applied to silence the people trying to get some change to make the industry viable. In other words they worry more about their jobs than the poor participants who breed, train and own greyhounds which supplies the product which people bet on so they can get paid.

The Inquiry should ask questions to the racing industry about the costs of the TVN dispute when the thoroughbreds were not shown on Sky Channel and so cost the racing industry millions of dollars, and also the greyhounds were not compensated re. the Equine Influenza outbreak where we lost money through lack of turnover.

When this Inquiry was being set up it was to be about the Financial Viability of the Greyhound Industry and I believe that if the Inquiry fails to deliver on this then people will stop breeding in NSW and if they do breed, it will be so as to send their dogs interstate. I believe participants want safe tracks to race their greyhounds on and an industry which is financially viable.

Regards,
Richard Bligh.