

**Submission
No 14**

INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW

Name: Ms Susan Absalom

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SUBMISSION TO SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRING INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN
NEW SOUTH WALES

This submission is made by Susan Absalom

Terms of Reference (e)

“The selection process for the board of Greyhound Racing NSW”

I was an unsuccessful applicant for the board of Greyhound Racing NSW. This submission is not about being unsuccessful but rather the process. As I see it there were several problems with the process.

The first is that the board was to be an independent board. I have attached a copy of the press release dated 29/11/11 advising of the selection panel appointment. When the names of the new board members were announced there were two people who had been on the representative board who were selected for the independent board. One of these had been the National Coursing Association (NCA) representative and the other person had been the participant representative, the same position she held on the GRA board. When I sought feedback on what I needed to do to improve my chances of gaining board selection in the future I was told that the Minister wanted continuity from the representative board to the independent board. This fact was never publicly announced neither when applications were called for nor in the press release announcing the successful applicants. I consider that it was a very big change because, in my view, the new board became a transitional board rather than an independent board. It seems that it was not a merit selection process.

The second issue relates to _____, the probity officer. _____ was in the room while I was being interviewed. At the completion of the interview before I had left the room and while the selection panel were still in the room _____ questioned me as to whether I was happy with the process. I felt that put me in a difficult position because the selection committee was still in the room and I did not want to jeopardise my chances. It would have been better if _____ had accompanied me out of the room and asked me the question outside.

The third issue was the choice of some of the members of the selection committee. One was the outgoing chairman of the GRNSW board. Two of the successful applicants were on the board with the chairman and a third was the CEO of GRNSW at the time this person was chairman. Perceptions are important and there could be a perception that these three people may have had an advantage in view of their association with that member of the selection committee.

The second person on the selection committee I believe should be noted was a former president of the NCA and NCA representative on the GRNSW board. He was succeeded both as president of the NCA and NCA representative on the GRNSW board by one of the successful candidates for the independent board. The NCA was at one time one of two clubs to run metropolitan racing in New South Wales. The other club is the Greyhound Breeders, Owners and Trainers Association (GBOTA). There had been rivalry between the two clubs over the years. The GBOTA is now the sole provider of metropolitan racing in New South Wales.

I am not saying there was anything untoward in the selection other than as previously indicated it was not on merit but on keeping continuity with the outgoing board. The fact that a previous NCA president was on the selection committee and his successor at the NCA was a successful candidate may give rise to a perception of favouritism. After all, the GBOTA was not represented on either the selection committee or among the successful candidates. I have attached a copy of the press release announcing the new board. I note the information on David Clarkson could mislead people into thinking that he worked for the GBOTA. In fact he undertook one modelling exercise for the GBOTA. He could not, therefore, be considered a GBOTA appointee to the board.

I should also bring to the notice of the committee members that participants were concerned about the selection of the previous CEO to the GRNSW board. I don't propose to go into a long spiel about him but instead will give two examples to show why participants had concerns. The first was at an open board meeting of GRNSW where it was revealed that he had exceeded his delegation in relation to legal expenses. The second was at a meeting of participants where he was asked why he had not responded to all of the motions that were sent to him. His reply was to the effect that he would throw them in the bin if he thought they were mischievous etc. A number of these motions had to deal with expenditure on the Gardens project.

Lastly, I know of several people who have been involved in successful businesses either as employees or shareholder/directors and who have extensive knowledge of the greyhound industry that applied for the board but were not given interviews.

I conclude by saying that I believe the selection process was flawed and did not deliver a truly independent board as we were led to believe. I make no statement in this submission as to what type of board I prefer.

I thank you for giving me an opportunity to put my views to the select committee.

Mrs Susan Absalom

20 September 2013