

Submission
No 199

INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 22/10/2013

Partially Confidential

THE DIRECTOR,
SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY ON GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW,
PARLIAMENT HOUSE,
SYDNEY, NSW.

I am forwarding this submission as a hobby owner / trainer. Ninety seven per cent of participants in the Greyhound Industry are hobbyists. I have been involved in the industry since 1969.

INDUSTRY FUNDING:

Most participants agree that there must be a change in the Inter Code Agreement that only gives greyhound racing 13% of distribution when the industry supplies 19.6% of turnover. (GRNSW latest figures, 2011/12).

My recollection of the dealings when the TAB was being privatised in 1997 was that there were significantly less number of twilight meetings as there are now. Our fore fathers signed off on 13% which may have been a more relevant figure at that time.

GRNSW has indicated to race clubs that TAB turnover has levelled out, so funding for racing is decreasing. As the greyhound industry supplies \$21million to the NSW state coffers annually, the Government then must revisit the Cameron Report on the Inter code agreement that will improve the percentage of industry funding.

GOVERNANCE BY GRNSW:

Whilst I applaud some of the initiatives by GRNSW in the areas of Animal Welfare, Integrity, Scheme of Distribution for clubs and increased prize money, I do question the reason why GRNSW has not been more frugal in their spending knowing that funding is diminishing.

It seems that GRNSW want to match Victoria in many aspects knowing that we have a different structure. Greyhound Racing Victoria is funded with less outright taxation, and monies from poker machine tax. In a much smaller state all tracks are TAB, but in NSW we have longer distances to drive, and many non TAB tracks that help support rural communities

A new scheme of distribution announced recently by GRNSW for country clubs reduced their funding and money for track maintenance, the number of meetings they can run at reasonable prize money, and veterinary allowance. GRNSW wanted to close these tracks because they brought no income to them. The Minister said no, so are they are doing it by stealth?

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE BY GRNSW:

As commented on above GRNSW does not seem to handle finances with any restraint.

I would like to ask about...

1. The Gardens complex at Newcastle. The industry was told that this "state of the art" track would cost \$1.5m to \$2m. Why has it now cost upward of \$10m? Loans were arranged by and for the National Coursing Association to build the complex. A licensed club was at the track to help income, but everyone knew small clubs were closing down all over the state. Most of the executive of the NCA had resigned after a short time, the licensed club was closed, GRNSW forgave the NCA a debt of \$2.1m and then GRNSW bought 75%. Is GRNSW now a landlord? Why couldn't they move their offices to a property they 75% own to save rental costs?
2. Cessnock. Why was this track closed in favour for the Gardens when new sky channel infrastructure and new kennel block recently completed. Cessnock had the room to accommodate all racing in the Hunter.
3. Tweed Heads. Why was a multi million dollar site offered to Queensland? What other assets will be offered to other states?
4. Starting Boxes. Why was a South Australian company given the order for TAB track starting boxes, when a NSW manufacturer could make them at half the cost?
5. Staffing Levels. How many employees have GRNSW compared to its Victorian counterpart? Why are there up to nine form analysts doing work for 'the dogs' website when there are only 18,000 members?
6. Integrity. Whilst I appreciate the work here and its value, why are we swabbing 5562 dogs, mostly winners. I wonder why on most occasions only the winners are swabbed. Some poorer performers in races are vetted, but rarely swabbed. This can lead to manipulation of trifecta, first four and quadrella pools. Only 1.27% of swabs reveal abnormalities, and in recent times these have been to drugs to keep bitches off season. The old Lotto barrel as used on country tracks and stewards discretion seemed an adequate tool. Statistics show the greater majority of trainers are not cheats.
7. Oz Chase. A tool for participants to nominate and receive prize money. Has the cost of this tool doubled since its approval? Why was a Western Australian company granted the licence? Why did Victoria opt out? Have they a better system?
8. Stewards Control Room. Again at what cost to the industry. Was it needed? Has the cost doubled? Why are some TAB tracks not connected? Why have other states not initiated such an innovative system? Incidents back in the field that are not on the screen are being missed.
9. Over 17% of GRNSW's income is spent on Administration. How does this compare with Victoria and other states?

It seems that in difficult financial times when TAB turnover has levelled and money is tight GRNSW continue to initiate new systems that blow out in costs. It is noted that GRNSW has allotted \$1.23 million for Animal Welfare since this Inquiry was announced. Perhaps GRNSW should look inward for cost savings.

GOVERNMENT REGULATION:

The Government should have an overseer of the three racing codes. Since GRNSW has been "independent" they seem more arrogant towards their stake holders, i.e. clubs and participants.

Could this arrogance have led to the Greyhound Racing Ombudsman finding his position untenable?

The Government should again visit the Cameron Report on a fair share of distribution for the greyhound industry.

BOARD SELECTION PROCESS:

The Board of GRNSW should at all times have a representative of the participants. He / she should not be aligned with any club or organization.

I will make no further comment other than I have noted that one board member has resigned since this inquiry has been announced.

WELFARE :

Again I applaud all of GRNSW's initiatives since taking over the welfare of the greyhound from the government in 12009. Greenhounds, Greyhounds as Pets, Hot Weather Policy and new breeding procedures have been a plus for the industry.

I do feel though there should be better programming for the longevity of the racing greyhound. Some ideas are as follows.

1. Programming races for veterans (greyhounds say over 3 ½ years) at regular intervals and at all tracks
2. Grading of certain races to winning times previously run. Say races for greyhounds at Wentworth Park that have not run faster than 30.40, Dapto the same etc.etc.
3. Limited number of wins series, over all distances, say 1 – 4 wins. These races do not have to be at every meeting but must be programmed regularly to increase the racing life of greyhounds.

From the latest GRNSW figures, In 2007/8 there were 14316 races conducted in the state. In 2011/2 there were 13916, a reduction of 400 races and 1801 starters. Yet in 2007/8 there were 6054 greyhounds named and in 2011/2 6141. More greyhound named but less races in which to participate. With GRNSW's obsession to close non TAB tracks in country NSW. There could be further less opportunity for greyhound longevity.

Instead of throwing more money at initiatives that are already in place, GRNSW should look at trying to house greyhounds in areas that are short in numbers, such as Moree, Coonamble and Broken Hill. GRNSW should purchase, at a small cost, greyhounds that are no longer competitive in certain areas,

and ship them to where they can prolong their racing life. Cairns, Darwin and South Australia could be included in the mix.

In a position I held I visited well over 100 kennels and properties. There was no sign in animal neglect or mistreatment, all animals were more than adequately looked after. Only on two occasions did I have to make comment to participants, and that was to newcomers about security.

I am sure that the majority of participants were appalled at the ABC recent 7.30 Report programme that alleged wide spread doping and cruelty. GRNSW's inability to respond on air to the allegations left many stunned. Replying on their website and writing to all participants did nothing to allay the doubts in the minds of the general public.

SUMMARY:

I feel that GRNSW has done a fair job in managing the Industry in this state, but I do question its ability to control its finances. If the government looks favourably on this Inquiry and grants the Industry a fair share of the Inter Code agreement, I would hope the increased monies would go directly into prize money and not to GRNSW's extravagance.