

**Submission
No 344**

INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW

Name: Mr Stephen Southwell

Date received: 5/11/2013

RECEIVED

To: Legislative Council Select Committee on Greyhound Racing in NSW

05 NOV 2013

Date: 3rd November 2013

SELECT COMMITTEE

Submission Heading – Viability of Greyhound racing in NSW and the associated affects on the welfare of racing greyhounds.

Relevant Terms of reference – (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), (g), (h), (i), (j), (k), (l), (m)

My Submission/Comments:

Terms (a), (b) & (c)

As a participant for over 25 years as both a breeder and owner of racing greyhounds my perception is that the industry is in crisis. My reasons for this perception is that despite growth in industry revenue there has not been real growth in prize money at race meetings of lower than Metropolitan grade (i.e. Wentworth Park). Prize Money at non-TAB meetings is barely sufficient to encourage trainers to drive long distances to compete. Twenty years ago it was not uncommon to see top trainers take good class dogs to country tracks but now it's a rarity. Petrol costs make the travel unviable.

At TAB level we now have 2 classes Tab B and Tab C which alternate at the same tracks but have vastly different prize money allocations. The introduction of Tab C meetings has greatly increased the number of races which means industry funding has to be stretched further. My understanding is that the greyhound industry through GRNSW is contracted to supply 600 odd meetings per year but currently supplies in excess of 900. For this reason the industry is supplying product well in excess of the 13% share of Tab distribution the industry receives.

The extra meetings increase administrative costs but do not bring real extra revenue that gives a fair share back to the greyhound industry.

On another level the tax take by the NSW Government out of each dollar wagered is much higher than that taken out by the government of our largest industry competitor, Victoria. In recent times the Victorian Government cut it's take and gave the difference between it's old tax rate and it's new tax rate to the racing industry in Victoria.

Because of these things greyhound racing and indeed it could be said all racing in NSW is falling further behind Victoria in event staging and attraction of racing tourists.

Terms (d), (e), (f), (g), (h) & (i)

GRNSW is autonomous to the extreme of having no watchdog. By this I find it unacceptable that concerns can not be taken to ICAC and from

comments made by persons who have said they have taken concerns to the Minister, the Minister has declined to act as GRNSW is not a government body but it's Directors are appointed by the Minister.

The Integrity Auditor is the person to take such concerns to but it appears that he/she is paid by GRNSW and subject to direction by the CEO of GRNSW.

As a former senior Tax Investigator with the ATO I am astounded by this circumstance as appeals against my decisions could have been referred either to the courts or the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

It appears GRNSW has a strong swabbing process but it recently abandoned a process whereby the trainer of every winner had to spin a cage holding several marbles one of which was red. This was done in a public viewing area and if the red marble dropped then a swab was done, even if there was not a discretionary swab ordered by the Steward. At a meeting of NSW GBOTA Metropolitan Delegates several years ago Mr. Bill Fanning, GRNSW Integrity Manager advised he cancelled this process as peers in other states were "laughing" at NSW Stewards. This process had been brought in after an ICAC recommendation following the "Rodney Potter Affair".

In my opinion the Red Marble process added that extra level of confidence for honest participants and punters as it created uncertainty in the minds of those tempted to suborn Stewards into not swabbing. The extra cost of the swabs from this process is worth the confidence generated by the process.

It is not that I distrust GRNSW Stewards but I know that with the vast sums to be made in some big prize money races, plus from gambling, people can be tempted to do the wrong thing.

Terms (j), (k), (l) & (m)

My experience of breeding has been small scale, one or two brood bitches with 6 to 12 pups at any given time, it was limited to ensure optimum conditions for the health and welfare of the brood bitch and the pups. Another factor was the cost of providing quality food and if needed vet services. I bred in partnership with a friend who had acreage and did this for nearly 20 years until he lost his sight. We still have retired greyhounds on the property that we care for.

Three years ago I purchased another greyhound after quite some time without a racing greyhound. The cost was not insignificant but I was happy to pay it as I knew the breeder personally and knew that like me they loved their greyhounds and looked after them extremely well.

I have not witnessed any acts of animal cruelty by greyhound industry participants in all the years I have been involved in the industry. I am aware from comments made to me that on one occasion an industry participant visited a property and found under nourished greyhounds and calls were made to the Greyhound Racing Authority and other industry participants who came to rescue the animals. My experience is most people in the industry would miss a meal themselves rather than not feed their dogs.

In respect of injury rates at race tracks more data to identify high risk tracks and places on tracks that cause injuries is needed so that tracks can be modified to improve safety for racing greyhounds.

Yours Sincerely

Stephen W. Southwell