

**Submission
No 554**

INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW

Name: Mr Norm Becroft

Date received: 6/11/2013

Submission By Norm Becroft

Background:

My name is Norm Becroft, I am 43 years of age. My Wife and I have been involved in Greyhound racing since 2006 as an Owner, Owner Trainer, Breeder and now Public Trainer and Stud master. We have been heavily involved in the Greyhound Industry, investing upwards of 1 million dollars, buying a property, setting that property up correctly, buying and breeding puppies, training racing Greyhounds and undertaking Stud duties.

In 2011 our Kennel was ranked 4th on the NSW trainers Premiership with 79 wins for the year.

In 2012 our Kennel was ranked 4th on the NSW trainers Premiership with 81 wins for the year

In 2013 our Kennel Is ranked 6th on the NSW Trainers Premiership.

In 2012 Myself, My Wife and My Greyhounds won the NSW Country Challenge Series, where each weekend of the year we raced at a different NSW track accumulating points which at the end of the year contributed to the leading Greyhound being named Country Challenge Champion. "I visited and raced at a large percentage of tracks in NSW including Broken Hill.

Concerns:

I have some concerns in regards to the greyhound industry in NSW, the lack of genuine funding and the concern to provide the best possible practice, for the welfare of my Greyhounds, takes precedence.

1. NSW Tracks - The way they are prepared and how they impact upon our racing Greyhounds welfare.
2. NSW Prizemoney - The way prizemoney is distributed and the lack of it, and how that directly relates to the Greyhounds Welfare.

NSW TRACKS:

NSW Greyhound Racing encompasses a lot of racing tracks. The way each track is prepared for use, varies enormously and this impacts upon the Greyhound through injuries, which in turn limits a trainer's ability to earn prize money and care further for each Greyhound.

The problem is that even though Tracks are predominantly of a sand base, this sand over a short time compacts down to such a hardness that a person walking upon it doesn't leave a foot mark and is likened to concrete. When the track gets like this, the Greyhound can post very fast times, and at times track records are broken, however the Greyhound experiences increased forces upon its legs and body. Some Greyhounds cope better over time than others, however it is generally known in the industry that when the track is fast and hard that more Greyhounds experience injuries, from slight leg, wrist or muscle injuries to career ending serious leg, stopper bone, wrist or muscle injuries. Unfortunately we are in a time where a lot of tracks are being prepared hard and fast. If the injury is noticed at the track then it may very well be recorded in the stewards report, however sometimes the injury isn't noticed until the Greyhound leaves the track and cools down. From discussions with numerous trainers and owners over the years most injuries fall into this latter category, and go unreported.

There is research out there and I believe that some Victorian tracks have developed a printed standard to track sand, the type and hardness of the track, how the track should to be prepared by best practice to greatly minimize injuries to Greyhounds racing on the track. However in NSW there is no standard for best practice, no real tests, or checks and balances on the tracks, there appears only minimal to no funding to monitor each track and to educate the track maintenance staff. I do acknowledge that some tracks do go to great lengths within their budget, to prepare and monitor their tracks and this is applauded. I also know that the Richmond track have at great expense implemented a new track maintenance standard with a safety rail over the running rail and an extensive new watering system with new SOPs in relation to weight bearing vehicle etc being allowed on the track.

In NSW the person preparing each track is either employed by each track or a volunteer. However in the main, there is no formalized training or education, no standard to follow and no accountability on how each track is prepared.

As long as the stewards are happy with the surface when they check it before each meeting then the track is deemed acceptable. However a lot of tracks are not presented in the best possible way to minimize injuries.

Solution:

GRNSW heart is in the right place however they need further, increased funding to be able to implement something similar to the following:

- i. An industry standard identified, for best practices on preparing a sand track for use. A best practice measure on track hardness, softness, moisture levels etc and how to obtain them.
- ii. Education programs to track staff on how the track they prepare directly effects the injury rate and type of injury to our Greyhounds.
- iii. Licensed curators with industry acceptable trade qualifications and education.
- iv. There needs to be a system in place for the real accountability of each club preparing tracks.
- v. A system to monitor, record and analyze all injuries at each track, with real solutions proposed and acted upon when problems are identified, with real accountability measures installed.

With increased funding, one idea is that Perhaps GRNSW could employ, 2 or 3 qualified licensed green keepers or the like, with the correct knowledge, qualification and best practice standards at their disposal. They visit each track each week to test, monitor and advice on each track. They would have to chart and record each track surface and record measurements of hardness, moisture, texture etc. to ensure each track is prepared to new industry standards. They would then direct track staff or track management on what is required to have that track prepared to industry standard. This way accountability could be applied and monitored to each track. With GRNSW being able to identify and sanction poor prepared tracks that injure our Greyhounds needlessly. This is but only one way to deal with this problem and im sure more learned people may come up with other ideas, just as good or better. However the problem of track safety for our Greyhounds is a must.

Each time a Greyhound gets injured due to track conditions, not only does the greyhound get injured, but the time the greyhound is recuperating limits the ability of the trainer to earn prize money. The lack of prize money directly relates to how much money the trainer has available to provide the best care and best practice in injury management for that Greyhound. Further to earn prize money to pay other bills related to the Greyhound and Greyhound kennel, the trainer is required to have more Greyhounds in the kennels to race for prize money to assist in the bills. Take this one step further and this scenario directly relates to the number of puppies that are required to be bred to replace injured Greyhounds.

It would be absolutely essential that Greyhound Racing NSW received increased income, either through a change in the intercode agreement or increased Government funding or tax exemptions or other income streams above and beyond current levels to be able to implement these changes. Otherwise to fund this initiative from current revenue levels would decrease prize money levels and vastly decrease a trainers ability to provide for and care for the Greyhounds welfare in best practice ways.

2. Prizemoney Levels and the need for intercode agreement change or direct Government Support

Unfortunately the prizemoney in NSW Greyhound Racing doesn't support a trainer or owner in providing Best practice for the care and welfare of their Greyhounds. The level of prizemoney per TAB race and Non TAB Race doesn't come close to compensating an Owner or Trainer for the amount they invest. I along with many others have attempted to turn our Kennels into a profitable enterprise, however the prizemoney returns even with a good kennel such as ours dosnt come close to making a profit.

The costs of providing for Greyhounds far outweighs the income derived from Prizemoney.

At times my wife and I have attempted to employ staff to grow our Kennels, however the returns from prizemoney has not been able to cover the expense.

The Greyhound community literally run their kennels and enterprise on bare bones money, and considering the amount Greyhound racing is able to generate for the economy of NSW, it is staggering that for a TAB C meeting first prize is \$540, second prize is \$165 and Third prize is \$80...

Now consider your dog runs third, there has been over \$50,000 bet on the race via TAB, corporate bookmakers all over Australia and at times in other

countries, with the bookmaker on course, With TABs in other states. And all the Trainer wins is \$80 for third place which he must share half with the owner of the dog "under most racing agreements".

Now consider the cost of housing the dog for a week, feeding the dog for a week, taking the dog to the vet for his check, trialing the dog during the week, providing any medical care, extra nutrition minerals vitamins etc. The cost of petrol to and from all these places, the electricity Bills involved. Then you get to the track and the Trainer has to pay the club a general entry fee to the track just like a spectator, for the privilege of providing the Greyhound for racing, to generate massive amounts of money, which so many other stake holders take their share from and leave the trainer and owner to share in \$80 for running third in a TAB C race broadcast all over Australia and New Zealand. This hardly seems fair at all.

An urgent review of monies returned to owners and trainers is imperative for the industry to survive. To this end the Intercode Agreement between TAB, Thorough Bred Racing, Harness Racing and Greyhound Racing needs to be addressed ASAP, as well as Government assistance in relation to the taxation that is applied to Greyhound Racings revenues. Once this is addressed then our Great sport can begin to grow and re invest in itself and market itself even further knowing that what we generate in income and TAB revenue , we get to benefit from, instead of needlessly sponsoring Horse racing in NSW.

Norm Becroft

5.10.13