

**Submission  
No 533**

## **INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW**

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Submission to the NSW inquiry into greyhound racing

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## Introduction.

I write not from Australia, but New Zealand. Our entire greyhound racing industry is 10-20% of the size of that of New South Wales. While its scale is significantly smaller, the animal welfare shortcomings of the New Zealand industry has led to the establishment of the Greyhound Protection League of New Zealand. Our role is to advocate for racing greyhounds, in a welfare and protection capacity.

What happens in Australian dog-racing, effects what happens in New Zealand considerably.

Many Australian owners race dogs in New Zealand, dogs coming from Australia are adding to the adoption and rehoming burden here, and the drugs that slip through detection in Australia are frequently alleged to be in use here in New Zealand.

There are a number of industry trend indicators identified in New Zealand, that are likely accurate in Australia. The problems are the similar, and the outcomes to greyhounds are often sadly similar. The attitudes differ very little, and these parallels can give insights into the Australian scene, where information not available to Australia can be modelled based on what is known in New Zealand.

This document aims to clarify some of the issues that greyhounds face, regardless of where they are because the issues are universal.

I have some concerns about this investigation. In particular comments by the appointed chair, Robert Borsak. On 25th September in this article, Mr Borsak stated:

*I wouldn't be putting too much of an emphasis on the animal welfare side.*

<http://www.australianracinggreyhound.com/australian-greyhound-racing/new-south-wales-greyhound-racing/borsak-addresses-the-true-aims-of-the-parliamentary-inquiry/43523>

Why not Mr Borsak?

I would like to ask Mr Borsak to explain what leads him to believe he has sufficient insight into this industry and into greyhound welfare and rescue he has, in order to make such a statement, because no-one else has a clear view of the big picture. Another statement from the same article:

*"Why should people fixate on the animal welfare part when 90% of the inquiry is in relation to the real problems and where the industry is going?"*

*"People should not be fixating on the animal welfare side of things. What they should be doing is trying to come up with any way they can put submissions in that will help their cause. It is not just the number of submissions but the quality of submissions you get. This inquiry is definitely not about animal welfare- that is definitely the case".*

I think its really important that the committee understand, that animal welfare should most certainly be a key priority in this investigation. We have a rare opportunity here to asses the effectiveness of existing welfare practices in a very high use animals-for-entertainment industry. I personally have seen evidence of more than enough individual Australian welfare cases to see the need for a thorough as possible inquiry.

Here in New Zealand the industry is currently experiencing considerable reform in context to is tracking, injury record keeping and overall attitude towards animal welfare. I believe wider Australia needs to follow suit.

In context to wider animal welfare related issues, this image below posted on facebook caught my attention. Now put simply I think its fair to say that Mr Borsak and myself may have differing values on animal welfare so in the personal context of myself being a experienced greyhound welfare advocate, I respectfully ask if Mr Borsak would please allow Dr. Kaye to chair the inquiry during the research into animal welfare related matters.

If Mr Borsak wants to focus on the intercode agreement, then do so but please let Dr. Kaye handle the animal welfare component and Mr Borsak please give him your full support, so he can do his job.

Lets not have another systemic failure like the integrity auditor who in frustration resigned due to obstruction. (David Landa).

Part one:

Addressing the Intercode Agreement, with Mr Borsak as preferred chair.

An agreement is an agreement, if the racing industry is outgrowing this agreement, then stakeholders need to concede that:

A: The agreement is a commitment that ought to be honored for integrities' sake, and those involved in horse racing may suffer unduly from loss of earnings due to the breaking of this contract.

B: Breaking this contract will undermine wider confidence in the racing industries ability to maintain its contractual commitments, which will destabilise business strategies in breeding and rearing horses.

C: That due to the controversial nature of greyhound racing in a societal values sense, the racing industry needs to recognise the strength of the now years old groundswell against greyhound racing for ethical reasons. Even if dog-racing is earning extra now, that is absolutely no indicator as to how well it will in the future.

Its important to be completely clear that dogracings key attraction is money. This drive for money creates an often brutal business model that requires large turnover of animals that many of us consider to be part of the family. Racing doesn't better society, it doesn't teach people respect and kindness, it teaches exploitation, and I question the merit of that.

There are instances where sometimes instead of funding greyhound adoption, fostering, housing and necessary end-of-career vetcare for greyhounds, the industry instead gives the money to charities in order to try and sell the legitimate image of racing. This is purely a public relations exercise and risks damaging the reputations of these charities. The McGrath Foundation are one such victim of this association and the cystic fibrosis charity has also suffered a reputation scandal due to taking greyhound racing money. The racing industry is well-known for trying to cloak itself with the legitimacy of respectable organisations, and it threatens to undermine those organisations in the long run. Recipients of racing money face criticism and rightly so. Its dirty money.

Those charitable donations, and the profits made are a burden placed on the backs of these gentle loving dogs. They are slaves of exploitation to a needy industry that routinely costs them their lives.

I assert that the Intercode Agreement should not be changed. Dog racing needs to be scaled to fit within the existing funding distribution model.

## Part Two

The Animal Welfare inquiry with preferred chair Dr John Kaye.

### Overview.

Greyhound racing and its flow on effects create a range of animal welfare issues, and it is the inevitable combination of these that render this industry questionable in terms of ethical merit.

Even if the industry were to sort out its greatest issue, that being the widespread culling of greyhounds unsuitable for racing, it would still be undermined by more difficult issues such as drug abuse in greyhounds and serious racing injuries (for example).

The Australian industry is further undermined by its export practices to countries with no animal welfare protection laws, and there are the issues of criminal involvement, long travel distances, extended periods of kenneling, instances of racing in extreme heat, live baiting, general welfare neglect and mistreatment, and so on.

The key welfare issues include:

- A lack of transparency, likely due to absent or poor record keeping and rule enforcement
- Overbreeding of greyhounds for racing
- Mass culling of greyhounds unsuitable for racing
- Track injuries due to the extreme nature of this activity
- Drug abuse in greyhounds
- Prolonged lockup times
- Prolonged travel times, including long travel distances with injuries
- Registration inclusion and compliance\* (see below)
- Export to countries with lacking animal welfare protection laws or end-of-career retirement plans
- Typical animal welfare neglect issues
- Occasional animal abuse issues including live baiting

There are other issues, such as

Criminal activity

Gambling addiction related issues

Tax compliance shortcomings

Tax breaks and undue benefits attained from public tax monies

I'm not going to go into those much, but if you require or permit supplementary evidence I can provide you with more information about those non animal-welfare related matters.

\*I assert that greyhounds both in and out of racing should be subject to the same registration laws that other dogs are. The racing industry is a commercial entity and should be paying its way fairly. Registration checks also provide another layer of oversight in an indirect animal welfare capacity, by animal control authorities.

*1. It is my recommendation that the inquiry should evaluate the availability and forthcomingness of the racing industry and quality of its information in terms of the following:*

- Number of greyhounds bred annually (as opposed to the number *named* for racing)
- The number of greyhounds euthanased due to being unsuitable for racing
- The number of greyhounds adopted into retirement homes
- The number of greyhounds retained as brood bitches and sires, and what their end of career outcomes are
- The number of greyhounds exported annually and to where and what their end of career outcomes are
- The nature and types of injuries that occur during official races and on country tracks, and in race training

In this area we can offer some modelling based on very recent New Zealand data. Greyhound Racing New Zealand commissioned an \$160,000 inquiry into animal welfare performance very recently. This is the same type of inquiry that GRNSW needs to conduct. Its dubbed the WHK report and its available here:

<http://www.thedogs.co.nz/News.aspx?NewsID=875>

This is the New Zealand industry website and the 56 page review that took 6 months and cost \$160,000 is available by clicking the red link on the page above. It is extensive surveying of NZ racing participants and provides an insight to the figures as the NZ racing industry claim them to be. From this document, the Greyhounds Australasia website, and official information supplied from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and trade we now know that every year in New Zealand:

There are 768 greyhounds named on average this is 65% of those born. **The total number born is 1180** (av) (average attained over an 8 year period. Source: greyhounds Australasia website. Attrition rate: WHK report)

DFAT tell us **the number imported to NZ from Aus is 301** on average (average attained over a two year period)

**Total bred and imported annually in New Zealand: = 1481**

According to WHK report which samples slightly different 3 year periods, the following is true, according to voluntary accounts given from racing participants. At the end of their careers:

278 are kept by owner trainers

403 are retired through GAP

165 are retained for breeding (their long term outcomes are unknown)

So if we divide these three year sample periods by three, we get an average for each year:

93 kept by owner trainers

134 Adopted through the GAP program

55 are retained for breeding

A handful on average are rehomed through other agencies.

**Which gives us 282 accounted for and 1,199 dogs unaccounted for in New Zealand annually**

So my advice to the committee is to use this as a potential model that can be upscaled to handle numbers input that are those for NSW rather than NZ, from the greyhounds Australasia page :

<http://www.galtd.org.au/GreyhoundsAustralasia/index.php?q=node/111>

Second table from bottom. Start by calculating an average of named dogs, and apply the attrition rate to get actual bred numbers.



I would do this myself but unfortunately an illness has taken all my time over the last week and upon the eve of the inquiry submission deadline, I'm going to have to settle for recommending this modelling technique to the inquiry committee as one option for identifying the numbers rehomed and unaccounted for at the end of their careers. Simply scale up the input number to suit NSW breeding and see where the other numbers fall, also accounting for an active greyhound live export component also (who's figures may be attained via DFAT for countries other than New Zealand)

I believe other submitters will provide more on export data but a fresh request from DFAT would be in order.

*2. It is my recommendation that the inquiry evaluate the accuracy and detail of injury reports and where required, ask the racing industry to improve or establish reporting regimes that are transparent and auditable.*

A common theme in the WHK report is that record keeping in New Zealand has been poor and where rules do exist requiring record keeping, they are often not adequately enforced. Transparency and accountability are key to winning public confidence and a lack of public confidence in dog-racing is indicative of poor animal welfare, so this is not something that can or should be ignored. Transparency is an absolute must.

As a result of greyhound protection campaigning in New Zealand, our Racing Integrity Unit (RIU) has curtailed the injury information that it makes public, so rather than become more transparent, they have now become less transparent in context of injuries and raceday deaths. I hope this is a temporary occurrence until they tighten up the accuracy of their monitoring and reporting, however we do have some historical data from years before reporting was curtailed. As reported by the industry for the year 2011 we had (for our "named greyhounds" count of 782 introduced)

- 38 Greyhounds euthanased on our tracks on raceday due to serious injuries
- 19 were scratched because they had suddenly become deceased (these are separate from the previous 38)
- 41 suffered fractures with outcomes unknown
- 58 suffered torn muscles or ligaments or in some cases foot webbing (we used a generic "torn" search when evaluating racing stewards reports to attain this value)

So again, in the absence of available data, the option exists to instead, apply this ratio data to NSW "named greyhounds" rather than NZ ones as defined on the Greyhounds Australasia website:

<http://www.galtd.org.au/GreyhoundsAustralasia/index.php?q=node/111>

(2nd from bottom table, you could also try remodelling data by instead measuring the difference between number of races, or number of race starters, as seen in other tables)

Please note, in both the previous sections, outcomes and injuries, some of our NZ information has been supplied voluntarily by industry enthusiasts, so it is not only untampered with by greyhound welfare advocates, but it is also probably somewhat "optimistic" overall in an industry sense. That said, we're taking racing enthusiasts claims at face value and that information is grim enough. And for NSW the scale is considerably higher so you need to at least create a transparent environment where we're not debating the accuracy of data but rather are acting from agreed upon data.

There is an essential need for accuracy and transparency if this industry is to retain public credibility.

You may note that the number Australia exports to New Zealand annually in the previous section, is twice what our adoption groups can handle, without even considering NZ bred dogs. Just like the dogs exported to Macau, greyhounds are being exported to New Zealand only to be killed when they no longer earn. Its not right.

3: Issues like drug abuse are even harder to remedy than the mass culling, and the detail is technical and secretive, with plenty of rumors with typically few ways of following them up. Drug testing may need reviewed so that blood testing is undertaken the day after and perhaps a few days before racing to detect for EPO type drugs, that boost red blood cell count but leave no trace in urine-only testing. I think the ways in which testing is done should be analysed and evaluated as to their suitability and effectiveness.

In closing:

When Captain Cook first sailed into this part of the world, his botanist brought with him two greyhounds. They are a deep part of both our cultures beyond racing and they are very lovable dogs. They deserve protection from industries and people who would seek to do them harm for any reason including economic and entertainment. We call them mans best friend. For many, dogs are part of our families.

Animal rights begins with mans best friend, and I assert that greyhounds should have the right to live free of the extreme exploitation that comes with greyhound racing. The price paid undermines all our morality.

The racing industry must seek transparency with regard to record keeping and operations in all matters animal welfare including breeding, retirement ratios, and injuries.

Aaron Cross

Co-Founder of the Greyhound Protection League of New Zealand

