

**Submission  
No 338**

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

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**Date received:** 3/11/2013

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## **SUBMISSION TO PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRY IN RELATION TO GREYHOUND RACING**

I write as the surviving family member of a father and son team which has been involved in greyhound racing for some 30 years. Over the years my late father Angelo and I, raced numerous greyhounds in all areas of the industry from the the non TAB country circuits at Forbes, Muswellbrook and other locations , to provincial and metropolitan TAB tracks throughout the state.

In recent years economics, my father's health problems and personal work commitments resulted in us primarily concentrating on ownership and backyard breeding activities.

It is my strong belief that the strength of the NSW industry is the existence of a hybrid industry involving everyone from the full time, large scale breeders and trainers through to the myriad of backyard participants who participate for the beauty and enjoyment of the hobby.

For the reasons outlined above, our greyhound population comprises many fashionable and unfashionable bloodlines. One only has to look through the historical records to understand the enormity of the achievements of backyard breeders involved in the sector.

Great greyhounds like Rapid Journey are testament to the success that came the way of initially smaller participants in the industry like John and Jane Carruthers after Miss Courtney was mated with Amerigo Man.

### **Viability of the Industry**

The viability of the industry is the key to its continued strength. Rising costs and the elimination of a number of metropolitan education facilities mean that trainers located in city areas often need to travel to the country to prepare greyhounds for their engagements. Whilst TAB racing has diversified to some country areas in recent years the reverse is often true for country trainers in that they still must compete for the better prize money on provincial and metropolitan tracks and therefore the high cost of fuel in particular has the potential to restrict travel and participation in higher standards of racing.

Irrespective of whether a participant is city, provincial or country based, there can be no doubt that the decision to sign a 99 year deal in relation to industry funding was short sighted and foolish. What body in modern day times would strike such a binding deal which was not easily open to review after a lesser period of time?

Our current controlling body, which unfortunately inherited this funding decision, makes song and dance about the fact that prize money distributed to owners and trainers has grown by 47% over the past five years. However it must be noted that this is a prize money increase from \$15.3m in 2008 to \$22.5m in 2013. The fact remains that the state of Victoria puts our funding arrangements to shame.

Through new deals struck with Tabcorp, the Victorian industry has increased its prize money from \$24.3m in 2008/09 to a massive \$39.6m for the current financial year. This represents a 63% in funding, on a level already higher than NSW in 2008 and permits the Victorian industry to pay travel fees to trainers of \$70 per greyhound. In NSW trainers receive \$100 for the highest grade races in the metropolitan area, whilst only \$50 per dog is the common payment. Provincial greyhound meetings pay \$40 per dog and TAB C meetings only \$20 per greyhound. There are few if any country tracks that can afford to pay travel expenses or unplaced money to each greyhound.

For pure economic reasons, a number of trainers have moved interstate and many owners with promising greyhounds have made personal decisions to transfer their greyhounds to Victorian trainers because of the improved financial prospects in that state. This activity does nothing to benefit the racing and breeding industries in regard to greyhound racing in NSW.

The revenues distributed to NSW greyhound industry come from a fixed share of 13 % of the distribution. Yet it is well known that the contribution of greyhound betting within the state of NSW approximates 20%. How much better off would the NSW greyhound industry be with a decent market share of the distribution scheme?

The wagering scene has also changed dramatically since signing of the agreement. In September 1998 Sky Racing and home telecasts of races began. Since then we have had premium thoroughbred channels, Sky2, a concerted movement by TAB Limited since being taken over by Tabcorp to move to fixed odds operations, significant growth of sports betting, the facilitation of international wagering on Australian events and hosted pools and the ability of TAB to adjust commission rates in accordance with the Totalizator Rules. Many of these occurrences could not have been foreseen by our former administrators, yet this tired and outdated agreement still exists. Surely these facts raise questions in regard to the fairness of the current funding arrangements which remain secret to senior racing administrators only.

### Management of the Sport

Management of the sport of greyhound racing has also undergone many changes in this state. However, how accountable is our current body to participants?

Whilst swabbing budgets have been significantly increased there are no published figures to suggest or verify increased gains in integrity. What are the performance indicators and where are published statistics to prove outcomes?

The imposition of Operational Standards has certainly improved the administration of most greyhound clubs and those which don't come up to scratch certainly find survival almost impossible. Above everything else this must be applauded by all participants.

Whilst Greyhound Racing NSW has introduced its own veterinary surgeons, and an animal welfare person, we have also witnessed the loss of highly regarded specialist veterinary surgeons who previously attended tracks regularly and knew many greyhounds intimately, only to be unceremoniously dumped.

Another consideration is the move to centralised stewarding by Greyhound Racing NSW. Despite the use of modern technology in relation to wagering, nothing can replace the level of intelligence that can be gained by a steward in conversing with participants and keeping an ear to the greyhound to racetrack rumours and discussions. One only has to refer back to the Rodney Potter ICAC case and the fact that participants played a vital role in blowing the whistle on the corrupt practices by contacting government officers and other stewards.

Whilst these changes have occurred participants are still left uninformed about what Key Performance Indicators have been set and where is the report card?

### Conclusion

The continuance of a strong greyhound racing within NSW is reliant upon owners and trainers being able to afford their involvement by the receipt of fair and appropriate funding.

Action must be taken to provide extra funding and the Minister must use his powers reputed to be provided by section 117B of the Totalizator Act 1997, to order a review of the current financial arrangements.