

Submission
No 134

**INQUIRY INTO ANIMAL CRUELTY LAWS IN NEW SOUTH
WALES**

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 7 December 2019

Partially
Confidential

This submission is from a rescue organisation that does not wish to be named.

We've asked for this because we have years of experience which suggest that the owners/trainers of racing greyhounds will kill the hounds rather than hand them over if they suspect we have provided the following information.

This submission relates to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 (POCTAA) as per the inquiry's terms of reference.

Firstly, we want to advise that we have reported cruelty cases as we routinely receive hounds which have suffered what would be defined by POCTAA as cruelty.

This cruelty falls into three main categories.

1. General neglect - we often have to rehabilitate hounds which arrive under a healthy weight, with general poor skin condition (due to poor feeding) and which have not been desexed.¹

2. Profound neglect - we have to raise funds every year to have:

- recent fractures treated,
- longstanding and untreated injuries treated and
- birth deformities corrected (which the animal has suffered with for a long time and in some cases, some years), and
- unexplained amputations of tails, ear/s or partial limbs treated.

3. Lack of socialization² (which we believe is part of every hound's right under the five domains of animal welfare recognised by POCTAA) - we often have to keep greyhounds with us for extended periods of time, in some cases for years, until they have:

- become socialised due to excessive and pronounced timidity,
- learned not to exhibit aggression when fearful,
- reduced their severe anxiety levels when left without a human minder present (which can mean it takes a long time to find these dogs with the ideal home, i.e., with only those who work from home or are retired and largely homebodies).

Category 3 hounds routinely fail behavioural testing by the NSW industry rehomer and would be euthanized if non-industry rescue groups did not exist.

¹ It remains to be seen whether the new requirements from December 1 this year will address the large number of dogs which arrive for rehoming without having been desexed.

² While the new 30 day cool down period will also begin from this date, industry players are not required to ensure greyhounds' socialization skills improve during this time, so this problem is unlikely to change.

Not surprisingly, many hounds we take in have either failed this test or their owners (based on their industry experience) knew they would fail the test.

Other hounds we receive come via pounds or we are telephoned by owners/trainers who use emotional blackmail. That is, they will advise they are 'getting rid' of several hounds and if we want them, we have to pick them up by a given deadline. Given the thousands of hounds that routinely 'disappear' in NSW, this is hardly surprising.

This is not intended as an indirect criticism of those organisations under POCTAA charged with pursuing animal cruelty cases, but is simply a bitter Catch 22 which arises from the nature of the racing industry.

Secondly, we want to advise that despite these ongoing challenges, our group like so many other rescues, has never been unable to rehome a greyhound.

- As so many experts have noted in prior greyhound-related inquiries, these hounds have a generally gentle and easy-going disposition.
- It is a simple fact that rehabilitation of these hounds can take time which the NSW industry rehomer is unwilling to give these dogs.
- Both the greyhound racing industry and even the legislation which underpins the NSW GWIC (Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission), imply there will always be greyhounds which cannot be rehomed.
- In our group's experience, this is an implication which is not based on fact.

Thirdly, we want to advise that if the Government wants to ensure the humane treatment of ex-racing dogs under POCTAA, there must be true whole of life tracking and monitoring.

The current situation does not meet taxpayer expectations. Why?

- POCTAA as it currently stands does not give relevant authorities the power to enter premises which are owned/run/rented by people who don't meet the definition of being 'agents' of the racing industry under GWIC's legislation.
- It can't check on small operators like this (of which there are many) who are not a registered industry participant - www.centralwesterndaily.com.au/story/6492814/malnourished-greyhounds-left-for-dead-investigator-intimidated/?cs=12
- This means racing greyhound owners/trainers can 'hand off' their dogs to people they know who will 'disappear' them. This is easily achieved via this GWIC form - www.gwic.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/284095/01_01_Retirement-of-Greyhound-Notification.pdf ensure the humane treatment of ex-racing dogs

- This form says - *Please be aware that when a greyhound ceases to be registered with GWIC it must be registered with the relevant local council in accordance with the Companion Animals Act 1998.* However, the person retiring the dog does not have to attach proof to the form that they have done so. Why not simply require this?
- True implementation of whole of life tracking and monitoring would ensure that every greyhound is registered on either the Greyhound Racing Register or the NSW Companion Animals Register at all times in their life cycle.
- Such a system must be put in place, whether under POCTAA or in some other manner, if the Government wishes to avoid further incidences of mass greyhound graves, cruelty to greyhounds and public ire.

Fourthly and lastly, the cruelty of owners/trainers 'legally' killing greyhounds by getting two signatures for this GWIC form³ must end. It does not satisfy the intent of POCTAA.

The new requirement from December 1 this year simply adds another minor hurdle for industry players, i.e., a second test with the industry rehomer.⁴

This current system means the unscrupulous owner/trainer is:

- not penalised for failing to socialise the hound (which arises when the NSW industry rehoming test is failed) – they could instead be required to pay for rehabilitation training,
- allowed to kill the dog when a NSW non-industry rehomer doesn't have room to take a hound (which is routine due to limited space), and
- more likely to use the retirement/transfer form⁵ because of the new requirement for a second test with the industry rehomer.

This GWIC process does not meet the premises outlined in POCTAA's preamble, i.e., reasons for and purpose of POCTAA.

We recognise that GWIC as a regulator can only perform its functions as per the powers given to it by the NSW Government.

At the moment, it is our view that the NSW Government is failing its responsibilities under POCTAA regarding greyhound welfare by making it so easy for unscrupulous industry agents to kill greyhounds via euthanasia or 'disappear' them via the retirement/transfer form.

³ www.gwic.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0015/284100/01_03_Notification-of-Intent-to-Euthanase-Greyhound.pdf

⁴ www.gwic.nsw.gov.au/integrity/rulesandpolicies/re-homing-policy

⁵ www.gwic.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/284095/01_01_Retirement-of-Greyhound-Notification.pdf ensure the humane treatment of ex-racing dogs

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on these incredibly important matters.
