

Submission
No 19

**INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND WELFARE AND
INTEGRITY COMMISSION**

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Partially
Confidential

SUBMISSION TO

THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE
GREYHOUND WELFARE AND INTEGRITY
COMMISSION.

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Submitted by Deborah Lowe
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Firstly I would like to thank those Members of Parliament who organised and voted to make this inquiry possible and to all those who are willing to make time to take part in this inquiry.

To the members of this committee who support Greyhound racing, you have my sincere thanks and to those who are not supporters, I welcome your contribution because in a democracy, under the rule of law, I believe that free speech and the views of all are fundamental.

I was initially very excited about the idea that the welfare of greyhounds would be a much more serious concern. I will admit when I found that the mechanism for this was to create another large public service board, I did have some doubts, but I have watched, observed and researched the operation of GWIC with an open mind.

I did have the opportunity to meet John Keniry and what a wonderful experience that was- a highly intelligent man, with a wealth of experience who truly listened. I had high hopes. Initially I think GWIC was promising but as time has gone on it has become anything but an agency for the welfare of greyhounds.

Before making this submission I have spoken with approximately 50 greyhound trainers, quite a number of GWIC staff including vets and stewards, lawyers who represent trainers against charges and appeals and members of the public involved with private rehoming agencies, GRNSW staff and trainers who are also involved in the rehoming process.

I have assured all those I have spoken to that I will not name any individuals, nor will I name any GWIC staff member involved, who a trainer may or may not have a complaint about. I have not, nor am I entitled to ask a GWIC staff member - their version of events. All were more than happy for me to voice their concerns in a submission, many said that I could use their name but I am not looking to name or shame anyone- I am concerned about the welfare of the greyhounds and some of the patterns and practices of GWIC that are not best practice in my opinion.

I am also mindful of the limits of anecdotal evidence, nevertheless I have no reason to believe that the many people I spoke to, most of whom I have known for a long time were anything but honest in their view.

I have also read all final disciplinary decisions that GWIC have posted on their site since it's inception, all interim suspension reports in the last year, all annual reports put out by GWIC, The Greyhound Racing Rules, The Code of Practice and industry support documents relating to the Code of Conduct- (which have recently appeared on the GWIC site.) I regularly check just how long interim suspension and charges are on the site without resolution and charges being laid. I have read the Greyhound Racing Act 2017, The Animal Cruelty Act and researched some sections of the Biosecurity Act and The Security Act which I believe relate to the issues at hand.

I have read most, but not all decisions made by the Racing Tribunal that have been posted to the GWIC website.



“The Commission, established by the Greyhound Racing Act 2017 and has the principal objectives:

- To promote and protect the welfare of greyhounds.
- To safeguard the integrity of greyhound racing and betting.
- To maintain public confidence in the greyhound racing industry.

- **With regards the objective of promoting and protecting the welfare of**

GREYHOUNDS -I am disappointed with the so called achievements in this area.

GWIC has certainly done an outstanding job of looking after the welfare of the PEOPLE in their organisation. The escalation of the salary costs, superannuation costs and leave costs are testament to that. Company cars, travel allowances. Reports about work and safety of utmost important, gender balances with regards employment opportunities reported on, regularly, suspending trainers for longer periods for swearing at or around a Steward (sometimes longer penalties for swearing around a steward not actually at them - than for drugging a dog) Considerable costs spent on consultancy groups to help out with the work. Yes it appears no expense has been spared. Salaries for Stewards commensurate with Head teachers (who don't have company cars provided and have generally spent a number of years at university) yes the welfare of the humans working for GWIC is going really well. Commissioners being paid, for a part time position , a salary, that many Australians could only dream of.

Do I begrudge my fellow Australians a secure well paid job and superannuation - most certainly not, I am glad for them, however the purpose of the Commission was to protect and promote the welfare of the dogs not people. Not too many Australians are worried about the conditions and salaries of our public servants. There is however concern for our racing animals. Almost three years to come up with a Code of Practice which is in reality a very simple document and with the exception of kennel sizes is basically an outline of what the majority of greyhound trainers already do combined with GRNSW's -Code of Practice for the keeping of Greyhounds in Training. Not exactly “ rocket science”. The supporting documents have only recently appeared- an inquiry perhaps speeding along a few achievements?? Or did some one discover the GRV site?

- Strategic and forward planning (once again with consultants helping out) seems to be - “just how can we get enough money to keep this behemoth going when the government monies run out and we want our own money- not to be funded by GRNSW.” Plan appears to be the industry and industry participants can pay. Given all the anecdotal evidence I have heard I cannot see the participants being really keen about that idea. Not much of a mention about the dogs in any forward planning.
- GRNSW has made some real achievements with regards the welfare of greyhounds. The introduction of Masters races and Pathways races has extended the scope of those dogs who can participate and participants have clearly indicated that they are willing to keep older dogs and dogs with limited ability if there are races for them even with minimal prize money returns expected. The majority of greyhound trainers are hobby trainers. The majority of greyhounds are not likely to take part in the Million dollar race- but nevertheless those that are capable should be able to compete at this level.



- GRNSW are currently negotiating the purchase of a property for rehoming greyhounds, GRNSW promote GAP and provide staff to assist GAP and have in the past provided some private groups with equipment- which the trainers willing funded by taking less prize money in the shorter course races. GRNSW pay for the desexing of dogs, GRNSW contribute to veterinary bills for dogs who have been injured at the track, GRNSW has provided staff and the funds for rehoming centres to become available in regional areas. GRNSW instigated the water in kennels policy and at the track I attended carried out a small scientific study as well.

GWIC's contributions to rehoming seems to have been

- to make a rule change that greyhounds must be desexed before rehoming, but GRNSW pays the cost and of course creating another layer of paperwork and general confusion to the process, that crosses over two agencies with GWIC contributing very little in real terms to the welfare of greyhounds. This cross over despite the recommendation of separate bodies for welfare and integrity versus commercial activities.
- GWIC providing a table in their annual report (reporting on the efforts of others basically) that clearly shows the trainers keep or find homes for 56% of retired dogs and GAP which GRNSW is responsible for and staffed by volunteers and good people in the community who do this work without salaries, superannuation and company cars, finds homes for 17% and "private" rescue groups account for 27% also doing it out of the goodness of their hearts in most cases. Of course those people who do actually adopt a greyhound and feed them for years out of their own pocket deserve many thanks. So it is, the trainers and caring members of the community and GRNSW doing all the real work while GWIC "strengthen the rules". "Trainers must make two attempts to re-home dogs otherwise we will discipline them" The claims by GWIC that they have strengthened the rules and made OWNERS responsible for rehoming dogs- does not bear witness to what actually happens, it is the trainers who drive for hours to attend GAP assessment days, not the owners, if an owner refuses to take a dog back it is the trainer who bears responsibility for the dog. I have yet to see an owner ever questioned about the whereabouts of a dog- the information is demanded of the trainers.
- Yes I most certainly agree that nobody quite does "strengthening the rules" like GWIC - the number of changes to the Greyhound Racing Rules is most fascinating- and a significant number focused on registration and of course the fees.
- GWIC's contribution to the rehoming of greyhounds in real terms is minimal in my opinion.
- In annual reports, documents issued by the CEO, mission statements and frequently asked question sections- it is apparent that random anecdotal evidence is acceptable as far as GWIC senior staff are concerned as proof positive of their achievements. I now add some comments, for balance, made to me by people from private rescue groups-

"don't get me started on GWIC" (I did presume that a litany of praise was unlikely to follow that comment),

"while we give up our own time and money and drive around the countryside, doing our best to find homes for greyhounds, GWIC do nothing but up the paperwork" and another "rather than harass us about paperwork some money for food, for the dogs might be more helpful"



Objective number two

- **To safeguard the integrity of greyhound racing and betting.**
- Once again GRNSW has taken the initiative and provided information about an independent study on behalf of Racing and Wagering Western Australia (involving races in all states)- with regards the randomness of box draws. Box draws are very often the crucial factor in winning races.
- GWIC? Well so far all we have heard are innuendo and gossip about how someone allegedly appointed to take a look at betting patterns, has allegedly sent an inappropriate email accusing others within GWIC of allegedly conducting “rorts.” GWIC have responded in the public domain and said yes there was an inappropriate email but the allegations in it were not true and therefore their Code of conduct was not breached- and as yet have no idea how this email was leaked.

“The Commission has conducted an investigation in relation to an internal email that contained allegations of impropriety and/or ineptitude and was subsequently made public. How the email entered the public domain is presently unknown.”

The Commission’s investigation found that the allegations made in the email were not substantiated or supported by any evidence.

All Commission staff are subject to a strict Code of Ethics & Conduct, and the Commission is confident that its employees are serving the industry and community with the highest integrity.”(Report tabled in the public domain 13/10/2020)

Are we the participants and the general public and the taxpayers seriously expected to believe that a CEO with claims on “ Who We Are”

“X is a former senior executive of the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority (ASADA) with over thirty years’ experience in the public sector. X has held senior leadership roles in the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Crime Commission and the Australian Taxation Office.

X is highly experienced in the areas of complex compliance, regulatory matters, law enforcement, intelligence and national security. She also has extensive experience in leading and building organisational capability and implementing programs to prevent, detect and prosecute non-compliance in sport. She has an in-depth understanding of global and national sports integrity threats and risks, governing frameworks and legislation with a deep commitment to ethics in sport.

After reading the outline of this experience one could be forgiven for thinking maybe X could be headhunted by Mossad.



- A CEO with qualifications as outlined above and three Commissioners with wide experience in public service areas, in industry and one of whom must be a lawyer with at least seven years experience. Along with a team of investigators and lawyers who are supposedly highly experienced and been recruited by a professional agency - cannot find out how an email was leaked in a timely fashion??? This is just simply not believable and makes a joke of any claims of integrity or expertise in investigations either.

Further the suggestion that GWIC's code of conduct allows for its employees to make any type of allegation about other employees, but as long these allegations are unfounded or lies, that is okay and no ethics or standards have been breached and this is serving the public with the highest standards of integrity. This is preposterous. This is not integrity in any sense of its meaning.

While investigating one of their own, it is obvious that GWIC do understand concepts like "innocent until proven guilty", the damage done by publishing names in the public domain where evidence of wrong doing or allegations of wrong doing remain "forever" on a server somewhere. Comparing the investigation of one of their own to trainers - where some of the reports are bordering on voyeurism and "guilty on interim suspensions until we finally get around to finding you guilty and then we will graciously account for time served" - yes a stark contrast and one that does not suggest integrity at all. It suggests of course "over policing of the trainers" and an inability to deal with investigations in a timely manner. Some trainers have been charged and some have sat on interim suspensions for quite literally months- although I have noticed recently a flurry of activity on these issues and some "cleaning up and a bit of discretion regarding charges in what appear to be a few rewritten reports - could it be a parliamentary inquiry- already doing some good? - well done do our Honourable Members who voted for this.

GWIC can make as many claims as they like about not "over policing the trainers" but the problem is, the perception within the greyhound training community is that is exactly what they are doing while protecting their own.

Let's have the same standards for everyone- protection of people's reputations, innocent until proven guilty, following of the Greyhound Racing Act rather than an "ad hoc- if it suits us we may follow it otherwise we will do what we like and justify it as concern for greyhounds."

- Whilst I applaud the idea of moving government agencies to regional areas and furthering employment opportunities there and the opportunities for younger people to gain secure, well paid jobs with superannuation benefits- the Minister responsible for Greyhound racing did allude to inexperience being a problem.



If however - within a couple of years you are given the title and benefits of a Senior Legal officer position within GWIC then excuses for inexperience should be very limited. There are experienced lawyers and two of the Commissioners are lawyers. Where is the mentoring programme? Where is the supervision? Some of the statements I have seen submitted by one of these lawyers to racing tribunals was seriously disrespectful of both the legal process and its participants.

Comments from lawyers representing trainers and my own observations upon reading inquiry reports and findings by Judges (who it seems on the evidence presented make faultless decisions- no criticisms there.)

“ Dealing with the other racing bodies is a known procedure, dealing with GWIC is a nightmare of incompetence, inexperience and arrogance”

“ GWIC’s failure to meet deadlines with regards the presentation of evidence to racing tribunals is a problem, as is their “as late as possible” presentation of their information and charges to trainers and their representatives.

“ GWIC refuse to hand over body camera recordings”. “Requests are simply ignored.”

During procedures evidence from body camera recordings are either “ cherry picked” or because participants are not given a copy there could be accusations of “ cherry picking” evidence. Integrity should involve all parties having access to all evidence in a timely fashion. The claims that no trainer has asked for a copy of a body camera recording is incorrect. A number of trainers have asked for them and their requests have simply been ignored.

Worse, the excuse that nobody asks is simply not good enough. The Greyhound Racing Act 2017- Part 7 - Division4 - 80 (3) states “ **a copy of a record must be provided by the inspector to the person who is questioned as soon as practicable after it is made**”.

The decision to use body cameras is one area where the “ad hoc, we may or may not decide to follow legislation, we can justify it how we like attitude” of GWIC is very evident. Initially introduced by the CEO as “ something done by all good agencies” - very subjective. Later it was claimed, it was to protect GWIC staff from false allegations, despite later in this same document (“**True facts about GWIC**” (15th April 2020) a claim was made that no trainer had made any allegations, let alone a false one against GWIC staff and according to their survey participants were very happy with the service provided by GWIC.

Later it became “ a training tool for inspectors to improve their performance”. Still later it was to prove that any complaints that a trainer had made (despite constantly claiming the majority of participants are very happy with the performance of GWIC- were being used to prove that GWIC inspectors “were professional and polite” - what according to them?



Numerous trainers have suggested that the behaviour of some inspectors is anything but professional and polite. The use of body cameras is about intimidation and a gross invasion of privacy especially when done on private property. A very significant percentage of greyhound trainers are elderly pensioners.

Claims by GWIC that before they took over, kennels were not inspected is simply not true. GRNSW stewards did regular checks and checks if any complaint was received by them. They were tough but they respected the law and did behave in a professional and courteous manner. They also did it as part of their job description as a steward- quite a cost saving.

Despite some very occasional colourful encounters between Stewards and trainers- most trainers, including myself do not have an issue with the vast majority of Stewards. Many worked with GRNSW, were trained by GRNSW and still behave in the professional way they always have. The newer ones appear to adopt the same standards very quickly.

- **Comments from trainers about inspectors**

“they came banging on the kitchen windows, early in the morning, I didn’t know who it was at first and my family were frightened.”

” Next minute without a second to tidy myself up they are telling me anything I say can be used against me and started filming.”

“I was intimidated and scared I didn’t know what to say.”

“ I just agreed with anything they said because I didn’t know what else to do”.

“ I got home from the track and they had been through everything and left notes about work orders. My neighbours told me about them- they were concerned about just who they were” .

“ They rang me and kept insisting they were at my gate and that I must let them in. They were not at my gate they were at another property”.

“One kept me talking and told me not to leave his side, while the other one went through everything including the rubbish pile, I had no idea what she was actually doing.”

“ I said, that I did wash the dishes in the kitchen in my home, so one of them went into my home and started going through every cupboard, the fridge and the house and filming it.”

“He ordered me and X to stop what we were doing immediately, and not to leave his side.”

“One of the dogs had not been let out and he then emptied out in his kennel. Later she ordered me to get the dog out and clean up and then wrote a report about how unclean it was”. “ If they had not interrupted our routine it would not have happened.”



“They said I was targeted because some one had claimed xxxxxx - not once did they actually question me about this particular accusation.”

Aside from some serious suggestions of intimidation, just how foolish are these inspectors with regards to their own reputations and the reputation of greyhound racing? Just how sensible is it to go to a property without occupants, with neighbours watching- it does not occur to them that anything that goes missing could make them suspects?

As for biosecurity - now a “must do” for trainers- ignored by these inspectors. Going from dog to dog checking mouths sometimes without so much as a glove or a hand wash in between. Going from property to property and driving their cars into the property. Going to the wrong property. Separating from each other- so there goes any witness protection. Coming to a Covid free area and attending the properties of elderly greyhound trainers when one comes from a Sydney location and the other from an area that Service NSW has identified as having Covid 19 in the sewerage system. At least one bothered with a mask - the other obsessed with writing and recording the details about bags and buckets of dog poo, rifling through rubbish piles. Just how sensible is that on a rural property - particularly on the North Coast where there are numerous disused arsenic dips.

This is professional and courteous is it? This is the behaviour of experienced inspectors who have been trained and mentored and been selected by some expensive consultants- with the view of gaining the VOLUNTARY co-operation of trainers? Personally I have some serious doubts.

I have done a background check on two inspectors and I found no evidence to suggest either have any qualifications whatsoever with regards a veterinary science degree or building inspection qualifications. They have ordered trainers to take very old dogs to the vet and have their teeth removed. When participants did this - qualified vets outlined the very serious consequences of such a procedure. One vet said the dog would be likely to die, he was too old and did not do the procedure. These inspectors aside from supposedly having the qualifications to decide dental procedures are also apparently experts in diagnosing lupus. They have no such qualifications and appear to have not the slightest understanding of infection control or biosecurity laws either.

I gather from discussing this with many trainers that one plays “ bad cop” with the “ anything you say may be used against you” and the other plays “ good cop” and suggests you co-operate- almost like an audition for a third rate American cop show. Neither however mentions the Section of the Greyhound Racing Act that clearly states participants do not have to answer any questions they feel may incriminate them. While I believe one inspector may have some experience in private detection I could not find any legal or veterinary or building inspection qualifications.

I applaud anyone who works in any occupation but am not sure giving such people more power than the Police is a good idea either for the trainers or for them. With power comes responsibility. While one of these inspectors did seem to have some



understanding of this concept, the other had no idea. Sending such people to remote rural properties, which lots of greyhound properties are(not because we have anything to hide but because of council noise regulations)- sometimes turning up at the wrong property - with a “Gung ho, commando style, I can do anything I want and let’s sneak in here while the trainer is at the track” attitude is potentially dangerous.

An environmental officer has been killed on a rural property and a body camera would not have helped him. Yes the Greyhound Racing Act gives inspectors a lot of power but only a fool uses them to the nth degree without appropriate risk management strategies, good manners and an understanding of the responsibilities that go with power.

- If GWIC is seriously concerned about the health of greyhounds, particularly old ones who may have dental problems, lupus or heart conditions or arthritis- send a vet with an inspector, rather than two inspectors with no veterinary qualifications whatsoever. Perhaps a steward and a vet already employed by GWIC- cost saving and far more beneficial to the health of dogs particularly elderly ones.

Objective number 3

- **To maintain public confidence in the greyhound racing industry.**

I believe my comments with regards the previous two objectives indicate that GWIC has possibly not fulfilled this objective as well as it could.

Is the average Australian convinced that greyhounds are being looked after properly because we now have a lot more well paid superannuated public servants on the job, three well paid Commissioners (doing what exactly?) Some very inexperienced lawyers making it up as they go along. People with no veterinary qualifications checking the health of dogs , people with not so much as a trade qualification handing our work orders- running around the country -side, reporting on bags and buckets of dog poo and putting these in the public domain in graphic detail. Is the average Australian deeply concerned that a couple of dog trainers swore at each other in the car park-? and then had their licenses revoked- maybe they asked how their dogs were now going to be fed? Reporting on gender inclusivity and figuring out how to fund their behemoth? I have my doubts.

I think the average Australian wants to know that greyhounds are being fed well and nobody is being cruel to them and that large numbers are not being euthanised unnecessarily.

How about a Pathways and Masters race at every race meeting and some genuine support for the trainers and the good people in the community for some serious rehoming??



- The Whispli reports show that of the 357 allegations received 224 of them were basically a waste of time. Four matters resulted in a final disciplinary action.

Anonymous complaints are a two edged sword in my opinion. In certain circumstances and probably exceptional circumstances, where some one may be in danger I can see the value but this type of anonymous reporting - is also open to vindictive behaviour, revenge and bored nutters looking to fill in their day. To the person who evaluates all these - they probably deserve a medal but not sure just how efficient this type of system is?

- So far the evaluation of betting systems does not appear to be going well.
- Yes we now have a welfare committee- another outside group providing the software to make it easy. Any real correlations yet about the cause of injuries - other than “ the reason for more injuries in this age group is because there are more dogs running” - that is Science is it? Good to see that finally, one GWIC vet who does have a research background is actually doing a study with regards water in kennels.
- Not sure that despite some really great efforts by stewards during the Covid crisis -that putting a report into the public domain about a trainer requesting an exception with regard the handling rules because his dog was timid, request refused and dog was dropped and landed on it’s head and then the trainer swore twice (profanity written twice just to make sure anyone reading it didn’t miss it the first time?) is really enhancing the public’s confidence in greyhound training.

Do we need to air ever piece of “ dirty laundry” in the public domain. Do we need almost GPS tracking of a trainer’s movements, every profanity, every description of a poo bucket and whether it has a lid or not. Whether it smells (is there non smelling faeces somewhere on the planet ???) Some of this reporting is just tasteless and does absolutely nothing to enhance the public image of racing. Some of the reports with “trigger warnings” need some proof reading and discretion. Yes it may be acceptable to state that a trainer swore but do we really need a “ blow by blow” in the public domain. Just whose confidence is enhanced by reporting faeces and vulgarity? Of course this type of “ transparency” only involves the trainers. If it is a Steward or an employee of GWIC it is more along the lines of “ we are investigating, move along nothing to see here” - type of response.

- There was a time when high level public servants were appointed based on their expertise in the area they were responsible for. In regards GWIC there seems to be a trend to appoint people with no expertise in racing, based on the assumption this will somehow lead to less corruption and more public confidence - personally I don’t think it does. Why the need for three Commissioners?.What particular areas are these people responsible for ?



- The Minister, responsible for greyhound racing, has alluded to the possibility that there may be some anti racing people who have “infiltrated” GWIC. Personally I believe that in a democracy people are entitled to their views about racing whatever they are - what they are not entitled to do however is to use their well paid, superannuated, secure and tax payer and industry participant funded positions to push their own anti racing views at their place of work and do this by demonising and over policing decent working class people who own dogs. My suggestion is, they keep their political views to themselves and conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times while working - or they should have no place in GWIC. As a teacher I never discussed my political views at my place of work with students, or used my position to push a personal agenda at my place of work and I expect the same standards from the employees at GWIC. Want to push your anti racing views-of course you can but leave and join the appropriate animal activist organisation and express your views as much as you like and let the activist organisation pay your salary, superannuation, long service leave, sick days, petrol account and any accomodation costs.
- Whilst most certainly not a fan of live baiting, my view, barbaric and unnecessary- I find it somewhat perplexing that at my rural property- according the the *Animal Cruelty Act*- I can, if I wanted to, use a piece of skin or meat to train my cattle dogs and any of my neighbours can use it to train their kelpies or border collies. Could it be argued that this is somewhat discriminatory? What is so special about kelpies, border collies and cattle dogs? Anyone found with so much as an equid hair in a lure at a greyhound property “synthetic and some hair consistent with equid” is penalised. We pay an expert at the zoo (I can only imagine the cost) and “ consistent with” is the best they can do?
- Whilst most of the reports done by GWIC regarding drug charges are done fairly professionally, possibly because an outside independent agency provides the evidence- there are some discrepancies with regards penalties. I looked at three reports- levels of the compound very similar, previous offences - all nil and similar mitigating circumstances but the penalties were very different. I am not proposing mandatory sentencing but consistency does help with proof of integrity. I think there should be options for a fine or suspension on some lesser offences- whichever will result in making sure trainers can still earn enough money to feed their dogs. Some of the reports and their use of “precedent” are ad hoc, very different cases are compared and there appears to be no real understanding of the level of court where the previous decision was made. It does seem in some cases that it is a “ well let’s just throw a case in here for a bit of legal effect”.

Stating the obvious- I believe GWIC can do better and the emphasis needs to be on genuine welfare for the dogs not demonising and bullying decent working class people who dare to own a greyhound.

The recent decision to have an industry advisory group is a good one and perhaps should have been done when GWIC was first set up, but well done for this decision to those involved.

