

**Submission
No 68**

**INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND WELFARE AND
INTEGRITY COMMISSION**

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My submission to the Select Committee – Legislative Council – Parliament of NSW

Inquiry into the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission

Select Committee

Legislative Council

Dear Select Committee

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission. Before I address the Terms of Reference I wish to make it clear that in my opinion the Greyhound Racing Industry needs to cease its operations permanently, because of the fate of most of these animals. The abuse, the crowded kennels and shelters, the disappearance of numerous greyhounds no longer needed in the industry, and also the lack of proper medical care administered to greyhounds which have sustained injuries on the race track, are just some of the reasons why the greyhound racing industry needs to come to an end. No animal should have to endure these abuses, so that the gambling industry can enjoy profits and take part in a sick sport.

This is such a waste of taxpayers money that could be used for so many other worthwhile causes.

On the other hand, while this industry is in operation I fully support and thank the Government in making the decision to set up an independent regulator - The Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission (GWIC). This is definitely a step in the right direction.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

a) The policies, procedures, mechanisms, and overarching principles of the Commission in relation to industry participants.

While the GWIC has set out options to the owners and trainers in regards to the re homing of greyhounds no longer needed in the racing industry, there is still no accurate and consistent records to clearly document what the real fate of the grey hounds actually is. Many greyhounds are unaccounted for, or go missing after their life as a racing dog is over, as evidenced by the Coalition for the Protection of Greyhounds. It should be the role and right for the GWIC to know and document the whereabouts of every greyhound, and to make sure they are re homed to a responsible and qualified owner. This is one of the most important roles that any independent regulator should have in order to ensure that the grey hounds do not end up being exported overseas, euthanized or worse, submitted for medical experiments which probably happens more often that we like to admit. It is crucial that proper tracking records are kept for the duration of the life of these animals.

The current greyhound racing industry policies covering breeding, re-homing, euthanasia and tracking are unfortunately inadequate.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The current Greyhound re-homing and tracking policies must be amended and strengthened to make sure that the greyhounds end up with a caring and loving owner. **The GWIC should be given the authority to track and check all greyhounds for the duration of their life.** Whether the owners or trainers have kept their greyhounds or decided to sell them privately, all transactions and locations involving the greyhounds, need to be checked, recorded and verified by the industry regulator GWIC. This is the only way to ensure the dogs do not go missing.

The number of greyhounds bred needs to drastically reduce as well. It should be the role and responsibility of GWIC to ensure that over breeding does not take place. This will obviously reduce the number of abused greyhounds.

b) The appropriateness of disciplinary action for those industry participants breaching legal requirements as set out by the Commission

With any breach of the law in regards to the welfare of greyhounds, the penalty needs to match the seriousness of the breach or abuse. Also the maximum penalty should always be imposed to deter individuals or organizations from mistreating their animals.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It should be the role of GWIC or any independent regulator to make sure that these penalties are enforced.

The current penalties are not adequate enough to provide a deterrent. The penalties need to be increased and more importantly - they need to be enforced if any real meaningful change for greyhounds is going to take place.

All breaches that impact the health of the greyhounds should be recorded and the details need to be sent to animal welfare organizations such as the RSPCA NSW, and in the more serious cases to the NSW Police for further investigation.

c) The options for appeal by industry participants who breach legal requirements as set out by the Commission

No comment for this.

d) The combined relationship of the Commission, the industry operator Greyhound Racing NSW, and industry participants in relation to the overall greyhound racing industry.

In order for the Greyhound Welfare Integrity Commission to effectively carry out its duties in policing GRNSW and industry participants, it is imperative that GWIC remains completely independent of the racing industry and receive its funding from the State Government and NOT GRNSW. As an independent regulator, It must not be compromised in any way.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

GWIC must continue to exist as an independent regulator without any influence or funding from the Greyhound Racing and Gambling Industry. It is imperative that the Racing and Gambling Industry have no power whatsoever to influence or undermine the GWIC in any way.

The GWIC needs to be able to go about its business without being manipulated or controlled by the Racing Industry. The only way that I can see for this to happen is that GWIC should receive all of its funding from the Government and it also requires more ministerial support. The Legislation should also be amended or strengthened to allow GWIC to carry out its intended function.

e) The existing funding agreement between the Commission and Greyhound Racing NSW with a view to considering recommended options

It is totally unacceptable and inappropriate for a commercial entity like the Greyhound Racing industry to be the main provider of funds to the body who is responsible for regulating and policing the commercial entity. Under this arrangement there will be no welfare or protection for the greyhounds. This needs to be rectified.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The funding arrangement between the GRNSW and GWIC needs to cease as soon as possible. The Greyhound Welfare Integrity Commission should be receiving all of its funds from the NSW State Government. This is imperative if any real change in the welfare of greyhounds is to exist. This should be no problem for the government as they can recoup these funds from the GRNSW and gambling industries via taxation.

f) The actions, conduct and effectiveness of the Commission and GRNSW, in particular in relation to its role in improving the welfare of greyhounds

In order to provide the type of protection, welfare and care that the greyhounds need, the GWIC must continue to remain the independent regulator of the greyhound racing industry. The commercial and regulatory body need and should always be completely separate. The GWIC should not accept any funds from the Greyhound Racing NSW. This is totally unacceptable and contrary to the welfare of the greyhounds. The GWIC needs more power, resources, support from Ministers, and adequate funding from government if it is to provide the quality of care and welfare that the greyhounds desperately need.

In addition to this, there are restrictions and constraints in the Greyhound Racing Act 2017 and the Greyhound Welfare Code of Practice which further impede the ability of the regulator GWIC to carry out its function properly in protecting and safeguarding the welfare and health of greyhounds. **There needs to be an amendment to the Act and Code if any real progress is to be achieved in protecting these animals.**

There is also the issue of a proper register being set up for the purpose of capturing the identity and whereabouts of all greyhounds throughout their life. This is of paramount importance, but unfortunately this is not happening as often as it should be, and there are legislative restrictions that prevent GWIC from tracking retired greyhounds. These restrictions need to be removed in order for GWIC to be able to effectively track the greyhounds.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Maintaining a registry or list of all greyhounds for the duration of their life

The GWIC needs to be able to track all retired greyhounds, **and in fact the law needs to be amended to make it mandatory for GWIC to track retired greyhounds for the whole duration of their life.** This is the only way to make sure that the greyhounds are not euthanized, exported, or sent to some medical facility for experiment purposes. The GWIC needs all the assistance, funding and resources in order to carry out this extremely important function.

I also ask that the Select Committee take into account the study done by the University of Technology Sydney in regards to preventing many race track deaths and injuries by simply designing straight tracks, and the races to include no more than 6 dogs at a time. This will go a long way in preventing serious injuries.

The GWIC should also have the authority to set the standards of race tracks and training facilities. If the Greyhound racing industry fails these standards, the GWIC should have the legislative power to withhold their licenses until the standards are met.

Another very important point is the issue of many greyhounds who suffer injuries on the racetrack are not given the proper medical care and pain relief that they need.

This is disgraceful. This needs to be investigated and corrected immediately. Proper Veterinary Care should be enforced by law.

This is another area in Greyhound Welfare that needs to be addressed. GWIC needs the appropriate funding and resources in order to employ not only more Veterinarians, but also more inspectors who should be given the power to arrive unannounced to the premises where the greyhounds are housed or trained.

More sanctuaries and qualified people are needed who are trained and well equipped to nurse and assist greyhounds in returning to normal life after their life as a racing dog is over. Many greyhounds are not able to be re homed because they are not mentally capable of fitting into a domestic environment. **This is where more sanctuaries are needed.**

Euthanasia should only be a last resort, and should definitely not occur to healthy grey hounds who are capable of being re homed.

Transparency within the industry is vital. For this to occur, both the GWIC and the racing industry need to disclose more information to the public.

The details of the operating licenses that are issued to GRNSW need to be made available to the public for comment and scrutiny.

The Select Committee should also make information available as to the public feed back in regards to the Greyhound Welfare Code of Practice . From what I can surmise the Code of Practice has failed to provide Greyhound Safety and Welfare.

Over many years, thousands of Australian Greyhounds have been exported or gone missing. The lack of transparency, over funding of the GRNSW, minimal resources given to GWIC or other independent regulators, and lack of proper tracking and checking, has allowed the gross abuses of greyhounds to continue for decades. The GWIC needs to be given the resources it needs to investigate previous abuses, disappearances and breaches of law, so that this does not continue to occur.

The abuses, negligence and total lack of respect and care for these animals is so rampant, that I plead with the NSW Government to put an end to the Racing Industry as a whole. This is not where our funds should go. At the very least the strategies need to be put in place so that the Greyhounds are protected and cared for during their life as a racing dog.

Thank you very much for considering my submission.

Yours Sincerely

Ourania Dimitrakopoulos