

Submission
No 74

**INQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND WELFARE AND
INTEGRITY COMMISSION**

Name: Name suppressed

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NSW Parliament

Select Committee on Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission.

Submission

The establishment of the Greyhound Welfare Integrity Commission (GWIC) came with its code of conduct and new legislation to clean up a socially shameful industry. The purpose of GWIC was to separate the powers between the commercial interest and the regulatory interest. In 2020, a year of social restrictions, there were 91 prosecutions, 62 of those prosecutions relate to doping – with all sorts of amphetamines, caffeine and arsenic. It appears the “industry” is still continuing as it did before the parliamentary inquiry.

Long term trainers and owners such as Natina and Robert Howard, Leighton Winter, Gary Kimber and Leonardis Vanderburg were all found in possession of lures. Lures that contained animal hairs, skin and flesh. Shock collars still exist and were used by Jason Carter, Gail Kelly, Melinda and John Finn and Scott Board. The industry has not been pulled into moral ground by the GWIC instead it appears to be pulling the GWIC into its web of contradiction.

For example, Mr Tubinas was penalised with 9 months suspension for abusive language and inferring the industry was corrupt. Luke Adams was fined \$1200 for losing his temper, and Mr Barrett suspended for 6 months for the same. These are adequate penalties however when we compare these penalties to doping a greyhound – roughly 5 weeks suspension or 20 weeks suspension for killing an unwanted dog (no monetary fine) or to overbreed, 12 weeks suspension (no monetary fine), it appears the GWIC is persuaded more by abusive language than cruelty. When you read the case histories, owners and trainers used their long standing in the industry, one person 40 years another 33 years, to mitigate their penalties. Yet, their entrenchment in the industry is not something that ought to be mitigated because it shows a contribution to well-known and longstanding abuse of greyhounds. The public see that and so ought the GWIC.

In the case of the greyhound that was euthanised by Grey/Gray and Gafa penalties were mitigated because of their 19 year “clean record”. The claim of a 19 year clean record must be considered against the fact the “industry” was found to have a woeful reputation of being

complicit in animal cruelty for the past five decades. In the Grey/Gray, Gafa case there was no independent assessment of the greyhound to the alleged claims by Gafa and Grey that the greyhound was aggressive and therefore could not be rehomed. As an objective onlooker the case read as a determined effort of misinformation to ensure the greyhound was put down before any authority could intervene and that is what GWIC found. Yet their 20 weeks suspension (no monetary fine, no ban for life) appears almost incidental in comparison to the cruelty they committed and to the culture that they contributed to which still exists in the industry and that culture is; *being able to get away with wretched cruelty*.

The GWIC seems to be protecting the commercial interest of the owners and trainers as these owners and trainers are not fined or banned for life for the very reason the GWIC was appointed – greyhound welfare! In the case of Gail Kelly, who was fined a mere \$600 for being in possession of 12 shock collars, tells it all – the industry has not changed and the GWIC is slow to stamp it out because it is considering the financial hardship of the owners and trainers rather than the greyhound. To be abusive to a steward will attract a fine of \$1200 as in the case of Adams or a 9 month suspension in the case of Tubinas, but the cruelty that twelve shock collars can do is diabolical and begs the question what other cruelties happened.

Since the media exposed deplorable, shameful cruelty to greyhounds in 2015, there was supposed to be an overhaul of the “industry” after Justice McHugh’s independent inquiry. Justice McHugh was so horrified by the “industry’s acceptance” of doping and live baiting of greyhounds, the use of shock collars as training methods and the cruel manner of disposing of unwanted greyhounds that he asked the government to consider whether the “industry” had lost its social license to operate.

People move the Government and they did this when it came to light how the industry operated. Mass graves of greyhounds, baiting and electric shocks and all the rest, told society this industry ought not to have a license to operate. Yet the government chose to appoint the GWIC to help obviously seriously impaired individuals navigate a way to sensibility. The GWIC hasn’t effected enough of a change to the industry for the industry to remain in existence. The GWIC is failing in this regard. It’s done too little, as we can see from the prosecution list, doping remains a problem followed closely by cruelty.

No one on the board of GWIC are advocates for Animal Welfare Rights’ Industries such as PETA, Onewelfare,(Sydney edu) to debate the ethical treatment of greyhounds and that is why penalties are not a life time bans or a fine that is so punitive it effects change. No

greyhounds were seized for being doped by owner/trainers and no life time bans were placed on those owners and trainers with shock collars. The owner /trainers of the greyhound euthanised should have all their greyhounds removed for their welfare because the potential to do it again is possible. However, the greyhound racing industry is a powerful industry – just look what happened when Mike Baird tried to close it – he lost his job. Yet this softly softly approach to criminal activity because that is what it is; criminal, because if you are a sporting person and caught doping you are barred for life, yet those who dope and commit unspeakable cruelty on a dog appear to have political power to get away with it. It has long been known cruelty to animals by humans speaks to an underlying social problem namely psychosis.

Between September 2019 and September 2020 -

580 greyhounds were euthanised because of racing injuries resulting in “severe unbearable pain from bone and back fractures, spinal injuries, and hock fractures”

(this information is from veterinarian reports to the GWIC) caused by racing. That figure should appear at the front page of the GWIC website. It should then follow with other statistics compiled by the GWIC such as;

72 Greyhounds euthanised at the track from catastrophic injuries along with details of those injuries then followed by

83 Greyhounds put to death because of “behavioural” problems – and note that it is without independent assessments as to whether the greyhound suffered from electric shock treatments or amphetamine abuse to cause the greyhound to be aggressive. There’s no independent animal welfare assessment of the greyhound and I speak more about this later. And;

47 Greyhounds put to death because they could not be rehomed. Yet there are dozens of greyhound rescue organisations.

These are the statistics the GWIC ought to have front and centre on their website and not in quarterly reports that are tucked away under “reports and statistics” after all, the GWIC is about Greyhound welfare. It seems odd the GWIC website shows a graph of how many greyhounds were

The public need to know that **580 greyhounds died between September 2019 and September 2020 because they were raced to death. A total of 782 greyhounds died** in a year of racing restrictions due to covid, these statistics are frightening.

The GWIC need to show these figures clearly and alongside the **91 prosecutions – 62 of which related to doping with amphetamines, caffeine and arsenic which means;**

Over 70% of prosecutions involved doping

Other than the 4 people prosecuted for swearing at an official and 2 people banned for possession of marijuana,

28% of prosecutions were for Cruelty.

Those statistics clearly inform the public whether the GWIC has done enough with suspensions and fines to effect change. Yet to properly measure the effectiveness we the public need to know how many inspections were made to owners, trainers and breeders as well as how many doping tests were done. Transparency is key to trust.

Furthermore the GWIC ought to investigate whether “behavioural” problems – a term open to subjective interpretation, was the result of abuse. The question the GWIC failed to ask or make inquiries about was whether the aggression was caused either by doping or forced to race in pain with fractures or twisted organs and all sorts of other injuries as well as being subjected to shock collar treatment to make the dog more aggressive and therefore to run faster. Independent transparent assessment of greyhounds is vital to the public trust of the GWIC. In addition the GWIC ought to note that this long standing industry has its preferred vets which means many owners and trainers could be “vet shopping” to obtain their desired results. The whole industry has been found to be unclean therefore it would not be uncommon to find some veterinarians complicit in the doping, euthanasia and certification of behaviour for owners and trainers. Which brings me again to why the GWIC does not have Ethical Animal Welfare organisations investigating, certifying behaviour and on its board – rather than on committees groups.

Groups like PETA or animal rescue organisations ought to assist to make those **independent assessments** on this industry. It seems that RSPCA and the others on the GWIC ethics committee are paper pushers and have done little to change the behaviour of those who see greyhounds as commodities. What I would really like to say is don’t stack a committee with “titles” from industries that do not possess clean hands. The department of Primary and

Industry is also responsible for live export and the RSPCA was very slow to show support for the animals, that is until it became a society issue the RSPCA was silent on the matter. In other words, these “welfare” organisations can view animals as source of income, as a part of the economics of animals, **a commodity** as do many owners trainers and breeders in the greyhound industry.

780 dogs died last year – did they GWIC do enough – it tried but its not enough. The industry is incapable of change and ought to be put out of existence.

Postscript:

The Hon Keven Anderson recently twitted this statistic in support of the GWIC –

“the catastrophic injury rate in 2019-2020 to a record low of .07 per 1000 starts”

It sounds impressive when statistics are shown this way. For ordinary everyday people in society it means **580 greyhounds were raced to death in 2019-2020**. As Minister for better regulation and innovation his innovative description of such cruelty shows disregard for the welfare of the greyhound.