

**Submission  
No 9**

## **INQUIRY INTO PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP ROSEHILL RACECOURSE**

**Name:** Dr Peter Kerkenzov

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Dr Peter Kerkenezov BM, BVSc, DipAppSc, Cert Equine Surgery  
Equine Veterinary Physician & Surgeon

**Submission to NSW Parliament Legislative Council Select Committee  
Re Rosehill Development Inquiry and Report**

Dear Chairman, Deputy Chair and Fellow Members,

**Introduction:**

I read the Terms of Reference and noted items (f) and (g) that relate to ‘impacts on the racing industry in NSW’, ‘animal welfare’ and any ‘integrity concern’. I am a little confused as to what information you are seeking in regards animal welfare apart from the fact that racehorses would need to be relocated to other horse racing precincts and this may be problematic. It has been reported, \$10 billion will pass to the Australian Turf Club if the Rosehill Racecourse development is approved. If this information is accurate, the way this money is utilised and by whom is surely of public interest. It has been my observation over the past 54 years, the horse racing industry has been laid bare to multiple improprieties and ongoing equine tragedies and it would be reasonable to predict an animal welfare advocacy firestorm if it became known the aforementioned money was to be spent maintaining the unacceptable status quo (see below) as opposed to being spent on improving the welfare of the main participants viz. the horses.

**Discussion:**

Horse racing can be thrilling / enthralling until you dig down deep and find it is not such a gala affair after-all (Figure 1). I have been a registered equine veterinary surgeon for 54 years and hence my prime interest and expertise in this matter should focus on the horses and what I deem the main challenges the racing authorities need to embrace.



Figure 1, Numerous horses die and suffer injuries on racetracks during training and on race days. Note also the condition of this training track upon that immature horses are galloped at intense speed, under the whip inter alia.

There is a plethora of issues of real concern that the Australian horse racing industry urgently needs to address. This list is not limited to the following:

- Racing undeveloped two- and three-year-olds
- Unlawful possession of prescription drugs, including the illicit and out of control use of valuable antimicrobial / antibiotic drugs, in the hands of untrained persons
- Horses ‘unfit to race’, with particular reference to poor biomechanics linked to the distal fore limbs associated with poor farriery (Figure 2), poor conformation (Figure 3) and incompetent management/administration.



Figure 2. A volar view of a racehorse's fore foot illustrating what is deemed the most common ‘root cause’ of repeat catastrophic breakdowns. This horse was ‘unfit to race’ yet recently raced and died. The racing authority failed to recognise the consequence of this critical imbalance deformity.



Figure 3. A horse displaying a developmental angular deformity ('toed-in' conformation) that is commonly associated with torque stresses, chronic lameness and eventual structural failure.

- Whipping horses during training, trials and racing meetings
- Racing horses over jumps
- 'Tongue-ties' and 'windsucking' collars
- Over breeding
- Unethical treatment of maimed and retired horses
- Irresponsible persons in charge of a horse(s)
- Unqualified, non-medical persons practicing veterinary medicine

Generally, the public are unaware what goes on behind the scenes and only see the glamour on race days. The reality is, once these infants start their racing career, they are fed a high energy diet and exercised for approximately 30 minutes daily. For most, they then spend the rest of their 24-hour day secured in a stable. If constant exercise is necessary for increased strength of bone, ligaments and tendons, and retaining mental health, then standing segregated in a confined space for much of the day for weeks and months would surely have a negative impact.

Overall, there has been relatively little improvement in the welfare of racehorses and unfortunately this has only come about following public exposure of damning evidence of cruelty, corruption and poor governance. Public perception is paramount and should not

be underestimated. The racing industry regulators need to understand harsh practices still persist and too many stakeholders continue to view horses as throwaway items.

Exercise induced musculoskeletal injury and adverse mental health are significant medical conditions affecting two- and three-year-old racehorses, and the prime contributing factors are physical and mental stressors enforced by humans at this early age. These equine athletes are mere infants with undeveloped body parts including their brains, dentition, bones, tendons and ligaments. One American equine veterinarian recently likened two- and three-year-old thoroughbreds to six- and nine-year-old children respectively. One could imagine the response of parents if their 6 -year-old child was to be administered repetitive intra articular injections and surgeries to facilitate ongoing athletic performance. Equine infants have no choice and are forced to work at high intensity over distances not commensurate to their maturity. It is disturbing to observe the high turnover and immediate loss of interest in these youngsters once they become a financial liability due to injury or uncooperative behaviour. That is, too many trainers and owners soon wash their hands of these adolescents the moment they are no longer financially viable. The most important issue for the horse industry is the welfare of the horse and poor welfare issues reflect badly on industry regulators namely federal and state racing authorities and state veterinary surgeon boards. As long as regulators allow racing two- and three-year-olds to continue, there will be no change. Immature horses will continue to acquire life threatening and lifetime injuries such as irreversible degenerative joint disease, bone fractures and subchondral bone necrosis. They will continue to be subjected to anaesthesia and surgeries, intra-articular injections and many other medical procedures for a short- term fix, all for entertainment and financial gain by humans.

Bob Dylan's song "Who Killed Davey Moor", is about a young 30-year-old boxer who died in the ring. The crowd, the sponsors, gamblers, boxing writers, each responded, 'Not I ....' and each told the truth however Davey Moor would not have died by a punch if those mentioned had not revelled in the entertainment.

**Conclusion:**

Overall, there has been some improvement in the welfare of horses and this has gathered pace and become more evident since the damning greyhound

industry raid in February 2015. The recognition, trend and effort to relocate retired racehorses is heartening. Improved laboratory testing for performance enhancing drugs has also been a giant leap forward. Retired racehorse paths can diverge in various directions and a lot depends on their nature, health and suitability. The lucky ones get retrained in another discipline and cared for, some get retrained and not cared for, some go to rescue homes of varying quality of care, others to studs...the less fortunate are euthanised or sent to a knackery...and hence many outcomes are undeserved and morally unacceptable.

**Recommendations:**

1. If the Australian Turf Club is to become the recipient of \$10 billion then it would not be unreasonable to suggest conditions be applied to ensure the betterment of all Thoroughbreds of all ages, in order to reduce the current unacceptably high cruelty, morbidity and mortality. This would mean the implementation of policies and Rules of Racing changes to accomplish ethical corrective action dealing with each issue listed above.
2. It is also timely and justifiable to advocate an independent stand-alone inquiry into the racing industry.

I make this submission without prejudice or malice and in the spirit to better the welfare of **all** horses.

Regards,

Peter

Dr Peter Kerkenezov BM.  
NSW 3060