

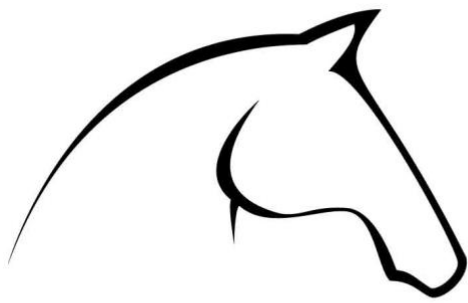
Submission  
No 58

## INQUIRY INTO PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP ROSEHILL RACECOURSE

**Organisation:** Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses

**Date Received:** 18 July 2024

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# THE COALITION FOR THE PROTECTION OF RACEHORSES Inc.

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P.O Box 163 South Melbourne, 3205

18 July, 2024

Dear New South Wales Parliament Select Committee,

**RE: Submission to the Inquiry into the Proposal to Develop Rosehill Racecourse**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry regarding the proposal to develop Rosehill Racecourse in NSW. Our organisation, the Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses focuses upon the welfare of Thoroughbred racehorses throughout Australia. We have grave concerns about potential impacts on Thoroughbred welfare, which fall under the Terms of Reference *(g) the impact on animal welfare and any integrity concerns associated with the proposal which relate to animal welfare, and (h) any other related matters.*

We understand that the Australian Turf Club (ATC) is likely to benefit by up to \$10 billion from the sale and development of Rosehill. Regardless of the type of development at Rosehill, we are concerned that such a large amount of money will allow the racing industry to expand and intensify its operations in ways that may negatively impact the lives of Thoroughbreds. We hope instead that the ATC will view the funds as an opportunity to improve the welfare of NSW racehorses. This would also help to improve the industry's somewhat tarnished image. To date however, the racing industry has demonstrated little genuine concern for its racehorses, and is notorious for a lack of transparency regarding the fate of horses who exit racing.

**CPR supports the proposal for Rosehill Racecourse to be sold and developed for purposes other than racing. Our support depends upon the use to which the sale monies are put, particularly those which cause further negative impacts on Thoroughbreds.**

CPR requests that the NSW Government intervenes to impose some conditions on the ATC, regarding use of the potential \$10 billion Rosehill development income. The sale/development of Rosehill presents an opportunity for NSW racing to make a genuine contribution to the welfare of racehorses. A lack of funds will no longer be an excuse.

We would like to see the sale/development monies used to benefit Thoroughbred racehorses as listed below:

1. Ensure lifelong traceability of every horse in the NSW racing industry;
2. Fund a safe, lifelong retirement for every horse in the NSW racing industry;
3. Instigate immediate action to improve racehorse welfare on the racetrack and off track by replacing current standards of welfare with those based on the 2020 Five Domains Model for animal welfare assessment, and require that members of the racing industry are educated accordingly; and
4. Provide a fund to help transition members of the racing industry into professions outside racing.

Kind regards

Elio Celotto

**President  
Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses**

## Introduction

NSW is a major state in the Australian Thoroughbred racing industry, and accounts for almost 30% of all tracks, race meetings, races and starts. In 2023, NSW also comprised 29% of individual racing Thoroughbreds (10,534 animals), and 38% of Broodmares (7,123 mares), who birthed 5,778 foals, being 45% of Australian foals (Racing Australia, 2023).

The NSW racing industry is obliged to act in the public interest (Thoroughbred Racing Act, 1996). Australians are greatly concerned with animal welfare (98%) and agree that government should do more to protect animals against cruelty and ensure they have good quality of life (94%) (Roy Morgan Research, 2022). In the face of recent scandals about racehorse deaths at slaughterhouses, and on track however, the racing industry has done little to assure the public that racehorses are protected.

The potential financial windfall from the proposed development of Rosehill Racecourse is an opportunity for racing to properly address the many animal welfare concerns that pervade the industry. We note that recently, for example, a \$20 million injection to NSW racing was spent at racetracks, with hopes for more jobs, 'future proofing' the industry, and new stabling to increase the number of horses on track. No mention was made of animal welfare (NSW Government, 2024).

Given the racing industry's very poor treatment and welfare record of the horses they have bred, and their reluctance to provide transparency on foals, Broodmares and all retired Thoroughbreds, we are not convinced the industry will willingly use their resources for the animals' benefit. For this reason, we request that the NSW Government intervenes by imposing conditions on the NSW racing industry, regarding use of the sale monies. CPR suggests conditions relating to horse traceability, breeding, welfare standards and a retirement plan, which are further detailed below.

## 1. Horse Traceability Register

One of the ongoing and major concerns regarding Thoroughbreds in NSW, is Racing NSW's lack of responsibility and concern for the whereabouts and welfare of retired horses. This lack of concern has been brought to the public's attention, in scandals such as the 2019 investigation at a Queensland abattoir (Meldrum-Hanna, 2019), which found that NSW racehorses were being slaughtered.

The most recent scandal concerns the discovery of 500 horse carcasses at an illegal knackery in NSW, where Thoroughbreds have again been confirmed as

present (NSW Parliament, 2024). This investigation is ongoing, and it illustrates that Racing NSW has done little to improve its record of care for retired racehorses.

The potential \$10 billion income from the development of Rosehill Racecourse would enable Racing NSW to set up a lifelong traceability register, ensuring transparency into, and traceability of all Thoroughbred horses born into the NSW racing industry. In doing so, not only retired racehorses but also any un-registered foals and breeding Thoroughbreds would be accounted for, and the responsibility for their welfare could be traced back to their owners at any point in time.

As such, a lifelong traceability register would help prevent any NSW Thoroughbreds from being subjected to neglect or premature death.

**CPR urges the NSW Government to ensure that Racing NSW implements a lifelong traceability register for all NSW Thoroughbreds, which is overseen by an independent body.**

## 2. Rehabilitation and retirement plan for racehorses

The racing industry has a moral obligation to look after all the racehorses it breeds. To date, the racing industry's promises to rehabilitate and rehome their retired animals have proven inadequate and insufficient.

CPR estimates that approximately 3,500 Thoroughbred horses exit racing in NSW each year, and they simply cannot be accommodated by pony clubs, private buyers, and other rehoming programs. The racing industry does not know and refuses to disclose any information about the whereabouts of these horses.

Last year the NSW racing industry made close to \$343 million in prizemoney (Racing Australia, 2023). According to their annual report (Racing NSW, 2023, p.5), 1.5% of this money, which is over \$5.1 million, was allocated to the Equine Welfare Fund. However, there is no public transparency into how this money is being spent to improve the lives of racehorses pre, during or post racing.

**CPR urges the NSW Government to ensure that a properly funded rehabilitation and rehoming program is implemented to ensure a safe, lifelong retirement for all current and future Thoroughbred horses involved in the NSW racing industry.**

## 3. Breeding

The racing industry's breeding program is a direct cause of wastage. The intensive, factory farming model of the Australian racing industry is based on industry demand for profit, with little consideration for animal welfare. The focus on selective breeding for speed over the past two hundred years, has meant that Thoroughbreds have gradually become structurally weaker, and more prone to catastrophic breakdown on the racetrack (Bower et al., 2012; Denny, 2008; McManus et al., 2013).

Approximately 600 out of every 1000 foals will never make it onto the racetrack (Bourke, 1995). While some young horses will go straight into breeding, others are found unsuitable for a racing career and others break down from the strain of the initial race training. There is currently no transparency into the whereabouts and welfare of these horses.

The animals involved in breeding are confined to conditions that deprive them of their needs which further causes them distress. Stallions live solitary lives of social deprivation and are frequently transported from one stud to another to provide 'services', with no choice in selecting their mate (McManus et al., 2013). During the breeding process, Broodmares in NSW are restrained with hobbles, chains, a nose twitch or even sedation, which deprives them of any agency to decide for themselves.

Australia wide, an estimated 3,000 mares go into breeding each year, with at least 3,000 exiting. Mares are typically bred from every year until they are exhausted, and "retire" at around the age of 10. They have very little hope of being re-homed. CPR estimates the wastage of Broodmares in NSW for the 2022 year at approximately 1,050. The racing industry keeps no publicly available records of these mares exiting breeding.

**CPR urges the NSW Government to put a cap on breeding numbers, and make the NSW racing industry responsible for the welfare of all the horses they breed and have profited from. Funding could be provided by the sale/development of Rosehill Racecourse.**

## 4. Animal Welfare in Racing

The racing industry clearly demonstrates that it puts profit above animal welfare. Thoroughbred welfare is compromised through the industry's intensive breeding programs, its day-to-day and racetrack treatment of the horses. The industry is a direct cause of Thoroughbreds' early deaths at slaughterhouses, as well as deaths on and off track.

To date, the public's understanding of cruelty in the racing industry has focused on the violent, highly visible acts that occur on race day, particularly the death of a racehorse, and whipping (Arcari, 2023; Regan, 2004). The global acknowledgement of animal sentience, however, is also alerting the public to the equally debilitating and destructive effect of racing's failure to provide horses with their biological day-to-day needs – that is, 'deprivations,' of an animal's basic needs.

In the intensely controlled racing environment, the horse is unable to adjust through their normal biological adaptive mechanisms (Fennell & Thomsen, 2021; Regan, 2004).

### Cruelty on race days

The effects of cruelty on the racetrack can be seen on television every race day – horses breaking down, distressed, and injured. Their deaths are hidden from the public behind a green screen. Negative reinforcement, that is, the use of pain

and fear of pain, is a common method to force a horse to enter the barrier and race, rather than allowing the horses agency to make their own decisions.

The forceful handling and use of restrictive or painful equipment are considered acceptable and have been normalized in the NSW racing industry. However, these handling practices do not align with good welfare according to the International Federation of Horseracing Authorities' minimum horse welfare guidelines, which are based on the 2020 Five Domains Model for animal welfare assessment.

Some of the most common cruelty includes whipping, the use of tongue ties, sharp mouthpieces, prohibiting horses' hearing with earplugs and blocking their vision with blinkers or blindfolds. These actions directly cause physical and psychological harm, pain, and distress to horses. Although the use of tongue-ties is common in racing, studies show that the practice stresses the horse, causes ischemia, and can cause long-lasting damage to the horse's highly vascularized tongue (Findley et al., 2016). McLean & McGreevy, 2010).

The practice of whipping, that is, beating a horse during a race, is heavily debated both within the racing industry and in the public arena. The case against whipping is supported by research that shows beating a horse does not significantly increase the speed or placement in a race (Evans & McGreevy, 2011; Wilson, Jones & McGreevy, 2018). More details can be found in CPR (2015) *Proposal for the phasing out of the whip in Australian Thoroughbred racing*.

One of the effects of the cruelty inflicted on horses during a race is EIPH (Exercise Induced Pulmonary Hemorrhage): almost all horses suffer from it, to varying degrees, while being raced (Sullivan & Hinchcliff, 2015). This condition goes mostly unnoticed, and therefore unreported on race day because it mostly occurs deep in the lungs and is only detected via endoscopy. Only 1.1% to 3.5% of horses show visible signs of bleeding, with blood at the nose (Sullivan & Hinchcliff, 2015). The limitations on racing due to a horse being diagnosed with EIPH, is ironic, given it is a condition that is caused by the demands placed upon the horses by racing (Sullivan & Hinchcliff, 2015).

## Day to day cruelty

CPR argues that horse racing fails to accommodate the most basic, natural needs of a horse as per the 2020 Five Domains Model (Mellor et al., 2020). Racehorses are caused harm because of poorly informed and inadequate management practices, that are visited on horses on a day-to-day basis over their entire racing lives: housing, diet, training, racing, and breeding regimes that conflict with their biological needs.

Frequent, minor acts, cause life-long suffering, poor welfare outcomes and an early death. This commonly results in horses behaving very differently from how they would under natural circumstances, and can cause further difficulties when the horses are retired from racing and need rehoming. Some of these practices are described below, and also in our *Submission to Thoroughbred Aftercare Welfare Working Group* (CPR, 2020a).

### **Housing**

The accommodation in which horses are kept whilst being used to race is entirely inappropriate - they are confined to individual stalls for up to 22 hours per day.

Horses can also suffer from inflammatory airway disease caused by excessive exercise as well as agents such as dust, allergens and endotoxins (Linklater et al., 2000). Because they are unable to socialize and move freely, many stabled racehorses will develop abnormal behaviours such as wood chewing, box walking, windsucking and weaving (Malikides & Hodgson, 2003).

### **Diet**

The conventional feeding regime of racehorses in work deprives the horses of unlimited access to forage, and instead they are fed large quantities of high energy concentrates. This feeding regime causes most racehorses to suffer from stomach ulcers (Begg & O'Sullivan, 2003). Horses suffer daily pain and distress as a result. That is, while the feed may be 'sufficient' it is not 'appropriate' because it does not suit the horses' biological needs.

### **Deprivation of social needs**

Horses are social, herd animals, who need companionship and interactions with other horses, yet they are forced to spend most of the day housed in single stalls. This kind of limitation is a form of cruelty by depriving the animals of ways to express their natural needs and instincts, denies positive effects, and creates negative experiences (Jones & McGreevy, 2010). The lack of social interaction is detrimental to both their physical and mental wellbeing (Linklater et al., 2000).

### **The Five Domains Model**

Following the 2020 Five Domains Model, means that horse welfare must be assessed from the perspective of the horse, not what may be most convenient for their owners or trainers (Mellor et al., 2020). By implementing standards for horse welfare based on the 2020 Five Domains, most of the serious welfare issues regarding horses in the NSW racing industry would be significantly reduced. It would mean that for horses to have good welfare, they must be allowed to exercise freely in the company of a trusted herd, have 24-hour access to appropriate forage and must be handled without the use of force or painful equipment.

**CPR urges the NSW Government to ensure the NSW Racing industry improves Thoroughbred welfare, by implementing regulated minimum standards for horse welfare based on the 2020 Five Domains Welfare Model for all racehorses, and require that all relevant members of the racing industry are educated accordingly.**

## 5. Racing related deaths and injuries

The racing industry directly causes the death of many Thoroughbreds it has bred, on the racetrack, from injuries caused by the intense training and breeding regimes, and through planned "disposal" at slaughterhouses.

### **Death on the racetrack**

CPR's (2023) Deathwatch report for Australia in 2023, shows that 168 Thoroughbreds died on track or shortly after as a direct result of racing, with the most common injury being a catastrophic front limb injury. New South Wales racetracks were responsible for approximately 30% of these deaths.

Whitton et al., (2013) demonstrate that that bone fatigue is the leading cause of catastrophic injury in racehorses. Recommendations to avoid these injuries include significantly increasing the frequency and duration of rest without training and racing (Whitton et al., 2013; Whitton Presentation). Currently however, there are no limits on how often a horse can be raced, and no mandatory requirements for spelling frequency or duration. The deaths on track are not "accidents", but instead, occur because the racing industry is knowingly overworking horses to the point of serious injury.

The average Australian no longer accepts the abuse of animals for human gambling and entertainment. No other 'sport' in the world would allow one of their athletes to be killed every second day, as Thoroughbred racehorses are in Australia.

### Death at slaughterhouses

Some of the public scandals relating to the racing industry have focused around the apparently planned and systematic killing of Thoroughbreds at slaughterhouses.

Racing NSW was directly implicated in the 2019 investigation concerning the slaughter of Thoroughbred and Standardbred racehorses at abattoirs in Queensland (as reported on the now well-known ABC 7.30 program , "The Final Race", (Meldrum-Hanna, 2019). NSW racehorses were found at slaughterhouses, despite Racing NSW's introduction of Local Rule (LR114), prohibiting such slaughter.

In the *Rules of Racing NSW* (1 October, 2017) the purpose of a new rule was stated as being "to ensure the welfare of thoroughbred horses from birth, during their racing careers and on retirement" (Racing NSW, 2017, p. 200). Owners were required to make all efforts to find a home for the horse they no longer wanted to care for. The rule also stated that "the horse is not to be, directly or indirectly, sent to an abattoir, knackery or similarly disposed of."

In September 2018, horses awaiting slaughter at an abattoir in Caboolture were inspected, and data obtained from microchip scans, video, and photographic evidence, showed that 14 horses had come from the same stud in NSW. None of the horses appeared to have any injuries or any reason for being sent to slaughter. In a clear breach of LR114, these 14 horses were killed almost a year after the introduction of LR114. In addition to the horses from this particular stud, a further 45 horses that were scanned at another slaughterhouse during the investigation were either born in NSW, and/or raced in NSW (CPR, 2020b).

**These examples illustrate the ineffectiveness of Racing NSW promises, and even their own regulations, for protecting racehorses. It also reflects the problems caused by over breeding, and a lack of transparency and tracking of Thoroughbreds.**

## 6. Social impact of the Racing Industry



Studies report that humans who are cruel to animals are likely to also be violent towards other humans (Gullone et al., 2002). As such, the normalization of animal cruelty, which is publicly displayed every race day and practised every day within the racing industry, can be seen as a significant risk not only to animals, but also to humans.

In 2023 the Victorian Racing Integrity Commission found that devastating physical and sexual abuse had occurred in the racing industries for decades, including against children as young as 12 (ABC News, 2023). Similar harassment and sexual abuse cases reported in NSW indicate that this abusive culture is not only prevalent within the Victorian racing industry.

Additionally, the horseracing industry is inherently linked to the gambling industry, which causes addiction, financial distress, crime, and violence. Studies show that 41% of those who regularly gamble on horse and dog racing, experience one or more gambling-related problems such as relationship issues, financial pressures, and health problems (Armstrong & Carroll, 2017; Centre Care, 2024).

Research also shows that emergency department admissions, police recorded assaults and family incidents are elevated on major horseracing event days. The NSW Government is obligated to help combat these social problems by funding various problem gambling aid initiatives.

**CPR urges the NSW Government to set conditions to prevent any of the potential sale monies from Rosehill Racecourse being spent on expanding the NSW racing industry. We are concerned this would further exacerbate these negative social impacts.**

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Since CPR was established in 2008, it has been in communication with several racing industry bodies including Racing Victoria, Racing NSW and Racing Australia.

Our objective was to lobby for positive improvements for the Thoroughbred before and after racing. We naively believed they would want the same.

In that time, animal welfare has become a major issue and the racing industry has been forced to act, not because they care, but because their brand and social licence are being constantly challenged. They had to at least try to address the many animal welfare concerns being raised, or risk becoming irrelevant.

In the last 16 years, we've seen:

- whip rules tightened;
- padded whips introduced;
- equine welfare departments established;
- rehabilitation and re-homing programs established;
- the banning of horses being sent to slaughter; and
- retirement properties established for racehorses.

None of the above have made any significant impact on horse welfare.

We have also seen:

- horses taken off the track to be euthanised so they don't appear in Stewards Reports;
- race day footage doctored or removed altogether if it involved a serious incident;
- refusal by RNSW to respond to any of our communications;
- thousands of racehorses sent to knackeries and slaughterhouses to be killed each year;
- horses being drugged;
- horses being jiggered (electric shock device);
- sexual abuse of young workers;
- intimidation of workers who speak out publicly about welfare matters; and
- confidentiality agreements used to silence workers.

The racing industry continues to operate as it always has, putting profits above animal welfare and the NSW horseracing industry is no exception.

The last 16 years has clearly demonstrated that the racing industry will only act on animal welfare when it feels it needs to, and do just enough to give the appearance of taking appropriate action.

There is potentially a \$10 billion windfall from the sale of Rosehill Racecourse. There is a unique opportunity to provide funding for a new set of welfare standards for racehorses that will protect them from the issues mentioned above.

In summary, we request that the NSW racing industry:

1. Ensure lifelong traceability of every horse in the NSW racing industry;
2. Fund a safe, lifelong retirement for every horse in the NSW racing industry;
3. Instigate immediate action to improve racehorse welfare on the racetrack and off track by replacing current standards of welfare with those based on the 2020 Five Domains Model for animal welfare assessment and require that members of the racing industry are educated accordingly; and
4. Provide a fund to help transition members of the racing industry into professions outside racing.

**Finally and most importantly, there is a fundamental conflict of interest when you are trusting those who profit from racing to look after the welfare of the horses. History has shown us that the racing industry is notoriously corrupt and deceptive. For that reason, we strongly request that an independent body is established to monitor, audit and provide transparency on any conditions concerning the welfare of racehorses.**

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