

**Submission
No 89**

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP ROSEHILL RACECOURSE

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SUBMISSION TO INQUIRY INTO SALE OF ROSEHILL AND ASSOCIATED ANIMAL WELFARE MATTERS

Hon Scott Farlow, MLC

Chair - Select Committee on the Proposal to Develop Rosehill Racecourse

Parliament of NSW

INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon. My name is Carolyn McDonald. Thank you very much for the opportunity of making a submission to this Inquiry under Terms of Reference (g) and (h).

I am a former registered stable-hand with Racing NSW and during such time I witnessed first hand the mental, emotional and physical suffering of thoroughbred racehorses kept in stables for up to 23 hours a day. Horses are sentient beings with extraordinary powers of perception and intensely emotional lives who scientists say “feel” their lives. I witnessed a filly who I became very bonded with suffering so badly from depression, learned helplessness and loss of autonomy/freedom from stable life that she crashed over the running rail in training and was subsequently euthanased due to the catastrophic injuries she suffered. Consequently, for many years since ceasing to work for trainers, I have been an advocate for the racehorse.

Due to my concerns in regard to the welfare of the racehorses, I have contributed to and co-authored two scientific papers published in 2017:

Thoroughbred fatality and associated jockey falls and injuries in races in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory Australia 2009-2014. Here is the link to the study. I can provide a full copy of the paper on request. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29031324/>

Whip rule breaches in a major Australian racing jurisdiction: welfare and regulatory implications. Here is the link to the study. I can provide a full copy of the paper on request.

<https://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/pmc5295154/>

LIVING CONDITIONS OF THOROUGHBRED RACEHORSES

This article provides information on how stabling can affect the immune system of horses. Professor McGreevy said previous studies had found behavioural changes in boxed horses, but the new study was the first of its kind. “The general way we keep horses if we’re keeping them in stables is we give them exercise under saddle, but we don’t give them much autonomy,” he said. “These data suggest that there is a price to pay for not just the horse, but for the people who are looking for optimal performance.” Here is the link to the article.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2022-08-18/horse-welfare-stable-social-isolation-immunity-behaviour/101341016>

My main concern was the boredom suffered by the horses due to being deprived of their natural behaviours and herd dynamics and lack of “enrichment” in their lives. The article ***Housing Horses in Individual Boxes Is a Challenge with Regard to Welfare*** provides comprehensive scientific information in regard to the behavioural changes in boxed horses. From my observations of Rosehill, there is extremely limited space for every individual horse and there are two-storied stables in order to fit more stables into the racecourse. I have seen videos of horses in their “boxes” at Rosehill with copious amounts of scratch marks on the stable doors

indicative of stereotypic behaviours, boredom and loss of freedom. The article states: “Horses are mainly housed in individual boxes. This housing system is reported to be highly detrimental with regard to welfare and could trigger the expression of four behavioural indicators of a compromised welfare state: stereotypies, aggressiveness toward humans, unresponsiveness to the environment and stress-related behaviours.” Here is the link to the article.

<https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/9/9/621>

THE USE OF WHIPS ON RACEHORSES

I have extensive knowledge and made significant contributions to scientific papers in regard to whip use on racehorses in the thoroughbred racing industry. Sydney University has provided conclusive evidence that the whip used on racehorses does cause pain. I also have hundreds of instances of horses reacting badly when struck with the whip which is clear evidence that it causes pain and is therefore a breach of the New South Wales Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act in relation to the beating of an animal. I find it appalling that Racing New South Wales refuses to acknowledge that the whip causes pain to the horses that serve their industry so well.

<https://www.sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2020/11/12/first-conclusive-evidence-horses-hurt-by-whips--whips-don-t-aid-.html>

It is interesting to note that the RSPCA also does not endorse the use of the whip except for safety purposes. This Information Paper explains their position and this is their conclusion.

“There is a mounting body of evidence that the use of whips in horseracing causes suffering, is not justified and is not supported by the community. Furthermore, the current rules are not effective in safeguarding welfare as they are either inadequate, ignored by jockeys, not enforced by stewards and the minor penalties do not act as a deterrent. On this basis, the RSPCA continues to strongly advocate for jockeys to only be permitted to carry and use a whip for safety reasons, when it can be clearly demonstrated that such use is necessary.”

<https://kb.rspca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/The-use-of-whips-in-Thoroughbred-racing-RSPCA-Information-Paper-November-2020.pdf>

Thank you once again for the opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry. I believe the welfare and social licence issues associated with horseracing must be taken into consideration in relation to the proposed sale of Rosehill racecourse. I also believe that this Inquiry does not have sufficient powers to investigate all the corporate governance issues, or the issues pertaining to the relationship between Racing NSW and the NSW Government. It does not have sufficient powers to properly investigate all the animal welfare issues associated with the horseracing industries that must include the harness racing industry. I believe these matters are in the public interest and deserve an independent inquiry. I would be happy to contribute more information to such an inquiry.

Carolyn McDonald

18 July 2024