

**Submission  
No 119**

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

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**Date Received:** 17 July 2024

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## **Submission to the Inquiry into the Proposal to Develop Rosehill Racecourse**

Dear Select Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry regarding the proposal to develop Rosehill Racecourse in NSW. I 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."\*

I understand that the Australian Turf Club (ATC) is likely to benefit by up to \$10 billion from the sale of Rosehill. Regardless of the type of development at Rosehill, I am 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. This potential expansion could lead to increased breeding, more races, and consequently, more horses at risk of exploitation and injury.

I hope instead that the ATC will view the sale funds as an opportunity to improve the welfare of NSW racehorses. This would also help to improve its somewhat tarnished image, particularly in light of recent exposés on the treatment of racehorses both during and after their racing careers. 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. This lack of accountability has been a persistent issue, highlighted by numerous animal welfare organizations and investigative reports.

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

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

I would like to see the sale monies used to benefit Thoroughbred racehorses as listed below:

1. Ensure lifelong traceability of every horse in the NSW racing industry, implementing a comprehensive database system that tracks horses from birth to death.

2. Fund a safe, lifelong retirement for every horse in the NSW racing industry, including the establishment of dedicated sanctuaries and rehabilitation centers.

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. This should include mandatory welfare training for all industry participants.

4. Provide a fund to help transition members of the racing industry into professions outside racing, offering retraining programs and financial support for those seeking alternative careers.

5. Invest in research to develop safer racing practices and improve equine health, focusing on reducing injuries and fatalities in racing and training.

Yours faithfully,

Shreshtha Jain

## **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. These statistics underscore the significant role NSW plays in the national racing industry and highlight the potential for widespread impact from changes in the state's racing practices.

The sale of Rosehill Racecourse will have a major impact on racing in NSW and of course the surrounding area. This huge financial windfall is an opportunity for racing to properly address the many animal welfare concerns that pervade the industry. It's crucial to note that these concerns have been longstanding and have gained increasing public attention in recent years, particularly following investigations into the treatment of ex-racehorses.

### **1. Horse Traceability Register**

**The potential \$10B sale income from the Rosehill racecourse would enable Racing NSW to set up its own comprehensive traceability register, ensuring transparency into, and traceability of all Thoroughbred horses born into the NSW racing industry. In doing so, all un-registered foals, breeding horses or ex-racehorses would be accounted for, and the responsibility for their welfare could be traced back to their owners at any point in time.**

This register should be designed to:

- Utilize microchip technology for accurate identification
- Include regular welfare checks and updates
- Be accessible to relevant authorities and welfare organizations
- Implement penalties for non-compliance to ensure full participation

## **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. An estimated 3,500 Thoroughbred horses exit racing in NSW each year, that 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.

This lack of accountability has led to numerous instances of ex-racehorses ending up in neglectful situations or being sent to slaughter, as revealed by various investigations.

**I urge the NSW Government to ensure that a properly funded rehabilitation and rehoming program is implemented to ensure the lifelong retirement of all current and future Thoroughbred horses involved in the NSW racing industry.**

This program should include:

- Dedicated retirement facilities with appropriate space and care
- Retraining programs to prepare horses for second careers
- Partnerships with equine therapy programs and riding schools
- Regular health checks and necessary veterinary care for life
- A transparent reporting system on the status of all retired horses

## **3. Breeding**

Horses are bred based on industry demand without any consideration for their welfare after racing. Approximately one third of all horses bred for racing will not even make it to the racetrack. This overbreeding leads to a surplus of horses, many of which face uncertain futures. Mares are typically bred from every year until they exit at around the age of 10, with very little hope of being re-homed. The racing industry keeps no publicly available records of mares exiting breeding.

**I urge 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 of Rosehill Racecourse.**

Proposed measures include:

- Implementing a quota system for breeding, based on industry capacity to rehome and care for retired horses
- Requiring breeders to contribute to a welfare fund for each foal produced
- Mandating thorough health screenings for breeding stock to reduce hereditary health issues
- Establishing a monitoring system for breeding mares to ensure their welfare post-breeding career

#### **4. Animal Welfare in Racing**

The racing industry clearly demonstrates that it puts profit above animal welfare. The racing industry compromises Thoroughbred welfare through its breeding programs, its day-to-day and racetrack treatment of the horses, and directly causes Thoroughbreds' early deaths on track and at slaughterhouses.

##### **Cruelty on race day**

The effects of cruelty on the racetrack can be seen on television every race day -- horses breaking down, distressed, injured and their deaths hidden from the public behind a green screen. 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. 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.

Recent studies have shown that whipping does not improve race performance and causes unnecessary pain and distress to horses. Despite this evidence, the practice continues in most racing jurisdictions.

The forceful handling and use of restrictive or painful equipment are considered acceptable and have been normalised in the NSW racing industry. However, these handling practices do not align with good welfare according to the 2020 Five Domains Model for animal welfare assessment.

##### **Day to day cruelty**

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.

The accommodation in which horses are kept whilst being used to race is entirely inappropriate - they are confined to stalls for up to 23 hours per day. This confinement goes against their natural instincts as herd animals that evolved to roam and graze continuously. The inability to graze, combined with their feeding regime, leads to most racehorses suffering from painful stomach ulcers. Studies have shown that up to 90% of racehorses may suffer from gastric ulcers due to stress and unnatural feeding practices. Combined with their inability to socialize and move freely, many stabled racehorses will develop stereotypical behaviours such as wood chewing, box walking, windsucking and weaving to try to cope with the stress.

Conventional feeding and housing regimes within the NSW racing industry fail to accommodate the most basic, natural needs of a horse as per the 2020 Five Domains Model. This commonly results in horses behaving very differently from how they would under natural circumstances such as displaying learned helplessness or being difficult or even dangerous to handle and ride. These behaviours are nevertheless also normalised in the NSW racing industry, and cause further difficulties when the horses are retired from racing and need rehoming.

**I urge the NSW Government to ensure the NSW Racing industry improves Thoroughbred welfare by introducing the Five Domains Welfare Model for all racehorses.**

This should include:

- Mandating minimum turnout times for horses to engage in natural behaviors
- Implementing feeding regimes that mimic natural grazing patterns
- Requiring regular mental and physical stimulation for stabled horses
- Establishing strict guidelines for training intensity and duration, especially for young horses
- Regular welfare assessments by independent equine behaviorists and veterinarians

## **5. Racing related deaths and injuries**

I have learned from CPR's (2023) Deathwatch report that in 2023, Australia wide, 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.

It's important to note that these figures likely underestimate the true toll, as they only account for deaths that occur on the track or shortly after racing. Many horses are euthanized days or weeks later due to racing-related injuries, and these deaths often go unreported.

**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.**

To address this issue:

- Implement stricter pre-race veterinary checks
- Invest in track surface research and maintenance to reduce injury risks
- Establish mandatory rest periods between races
- Create a public database of all racing-related injuries and fatalities for transparency

## **6. Social impact of the Racing Industry**

Studies report that humans who are cruel to animals are also likely to be violent towards other humans. The public display of cruelty to Thoroughbreds every race day, further encourages the normalisation of animal cruelty, and the risk of violence towards humans.

Additionally, the horseracing industry is inherently linked to the gambling industry. 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. Research also shows that 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.

The social costs of problem gambling extend beyond the individual, affecting families, communities, and placing additional strain on social services and healthcare systems.

**I urge 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. I am concerned this would further exacerbate these social impacts.**

Instead, a portion of the funds should be allocated to:

- Problem gambling prevention and treatment programs
- Community education on responsible gambling
- Research into the social impacts of the racing industry
- Support services for individuals and families affected by gambling addiction

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

History has proven that profit driven industries will always put animal welfare second. The NSW horseracing industry is no exception. If the potential sale monies for the Rosehill Racecourse is in any way used to expand the NSW racing industry, I have grave concerns that the many issues described in this submission will be exacerbated, resulting in severe negative impacts on Thoroughbred welfare in the NSW racing industry.

Therefore, if the proposal to develop Rosehill Racecourse is agreed upon, I request that the NSW Government acts to impose conditions on the ATC, regarding use of the sale income. These conditions include, that the sale monies must not be used to maintain or expand existing practices of the horseracing industry, and instead be allocated to improve the welfare of the horses in the NSW racing industry.

I would like to see the sale monies used to benefit Thoroughbred racehorses as listed below:

1. Ensure lifelong traceability of every horse in the NSW racing industry, implementing a comprehensive database system that tracks horses from birth to death.
2. Fund a safe, lifelong retirement for every horse in the NSW racing industry, including the establishment of dedicated sanctuaries and rehabilitation centers.
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.
4. Provide a fund to help transition members of the racing industry into professions outside racing, offering retraining programs and financial support for those seeking alternative careers.
5. Invest in research to develop safer racing practices and improve equine health, focusing on reducing injuries and fatalities in racing and training.
6. Establish an independent oversight committee to monitor the implementation of these recommendations and ensure transparency in the use of funds.
7. Allocate a portion of the funds to support community initiatives that promote animal welfare and responsible gambling practices.

The sale of Rosehill Racecourse presents a unique opportunity to address longstanding issues within the racing industry and set a new standard for equine welfare in Australia. By implementing these recommendations, NSW can lead the way in creating a more ethical and sustainable future for horse racing, or potentially pave the way for a gradual phase-out of the industry in favor of more humane entertainment options.

Thank you for considering my submission. I urge the committee to prioritize the welfare of horses and the broader social implications in their decision-making process.