

**Submission  
No 123**

**INQUIRY INTO PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP ROSEHILL  
RACECOURSE**

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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 re the development proposal regarding Rosehill Racecourse. Many of us are very concerned about the impact on the horses that are raced. I refer to 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.”*

Australian Turf Club (ATC) is likely to benefit by up to \$10 billion from the sale of Rosehill. That is an enormous amount of money. WE know the ugliness of the horse racing industry in a number of exposes over the years. I am urging ATC to spend the money to improve the welfare of NSW racehorses. This might go some way to make amends for its disgraceful and shameful behaviour. Unfortunately history has shown that the racing industry hides the extent of animal cruelty and the ultimate fate of unsuccessful or ‘spent’ horses. We *know* they are sent to slaughterhouses across the state.

I request that the NSW Government intervenes to impose conditions on the ATC, regarding use of the potential \$10 billion Rosehill sale income. The sale 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.

I suggest the following as ways to spend the money

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.
4. Provide a fund to help transition members of the racing industry into professions outside racing.

Yours faithfully,

**Heather Barnes**

## 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. 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.

## 1. Horse Traceability Register

**The potential \$10B sale income from the Rosehill racecourse would enable Racing NSW to set up its own 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.**

## 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.

**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.**

## 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. 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.**

## 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.

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. The inability to graze, combined with their feeding regime, leads to most racehorses suffering from painful stomach ulcers. 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.**

## 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.

**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.**

## 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.

**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.**

## 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.
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.
4. Provide a fund to help transition members of the racing industry into professions outside racing.

Thank you for considering my submission.