

10th June, 2015

Friends of the Hound Inc.
Greyhound Adoption Group

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Joint Select Committee on Greyhound Racing in Tasmania.

Whilst not physically operating in Tasmania, our Greyhound rescue and rehoming group has been working for the past 12 years across the eastern seaboard and has extensive knowledge and experience in dealing with Greyhound owners, breeders and trainers, and saving Greyhounds no longer required by the Australian racing industry.

From the outset, we maintain that the nature of this industry – the use of dogs for a large-scale commercial betting platform, on the economic basis of state wagering revenue and profits for participants, forms an unethical foundation to which problems of regulation, compliance and corruption, along with over-breeding, wastage and other animal welfare problems, are interminable issues.

Wastage, mass graves, live baiting, doping and injuries – we sincerely believe this industry does not reflect the values of today's society.

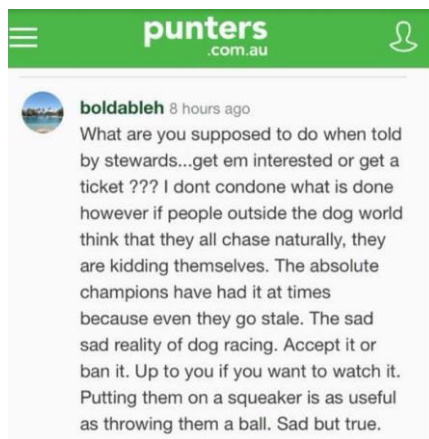
Friends of the Hound has developed relationships and a good reputation in our bid to save and rehome greyhounds. We work for the dogs. Our passion, drive and commitment is in saving greyhounds that would otherwise be destroyed as part of the cyclical nature of the exploitation of their speed and natural ability – crudely summed up by a greyhound owner/trainer with, *"we breed 'em, we race 'em and we kill 'em – what's ya problem?"*

With regard to the terms of reference for this Inquiry....

a) It would be remiss to believe that live baiting, 'wastage' and 'draining' of Greyhounds is not occurring in Tasmania or any other state. Whilst it is apparent that government and pro-industry supporters would like to believe that such behaviour is limited only to 'a few bad apples', it is becoming obvious that the very nature of the industry has an established rot that is permeating from its core. It has been obvious to many welfare groups and concerned individuals for many years that there are inherent problems within Greyhound racing, including live-baiting, and yet the controlling bodies have chosen to deny its existence, through apparent lack of evidence, and in doing so, have proven their incompetence or insouciance to effectively regulate the industry.

A common theme heard amongst the community is that live-baiting has always happened and is common practice. The 'wastage' – an obvious problem in an industry that cannot exist without the breeding and disposing of large numbers of dogs, has always been ignored and still continues to be glossed over or disregarded.

Below are examples of social media reactions to the Four Corners program.



The crimes of live-baiting are not the only problems in Greyhound racing. To many people, commercial dog racing and the negative consequences for the dogs, is a crime in itself. Every year the Greyhound Racing industry in Australia breeds nearly 20,000 Greyhounds for racing and gambling. It is a breeding lottery for the fastest dog. The only possible outcome for this continual overbreeding is an early death for most of the dogs.

This exploitation and routine killing is reason enough for an end to this industry.

The ABC Four Corners program, Making A Killing, revealed gruesome and sickening methods of training Greyhounds to win races by tying small animals such as piglets, possums and rabbits to the lure arm. The scandal created shock waves around the nation, with the cruel and confronting images searing themselves indelibly on people's minds, creating a huge outcry of disgust and abhorrence. The nation has witnessed the character of people involved in this industry - not just on the ABC program but in the aftermath of talkback radio, news programs, news article comments, and social media. And the fallout is ongoing.

Many people are now calling for **an end to Greyhound racing**.

There are countless people (both within the industry and in the community) that believe the controlling bodies did know about live baiting, or suspect it happened, but did not act.

The widespread duplicity amongst Greyhound racing participants is evident with important names within the industry being captured on film performing criminal acts of animal abuse. Leading trainers and industry officials across three states have been implicated. With perpetrators of this callous and criminal 'bleeding' of dogs holding the status of 'Greyhound Trainer of the Year', people are right to wonder if the success of a racing dog comes down to the criminality of its trainer.

Attached is an interesting document that gives some insight on the use of live baiting or 'bleeding'.

b) In an organisation dependent on commercial gain and profitable outcomes, regulatory functions are compromised due to a conflict of interest with commercial performance. For this reason controlling bodies responsible for both commercial and regulatory functions of Greyhound racing are not effective in carrying out both roles, serving to undermine the transparency and accountability required and indeed expected.

The Greyhound racing industry should not have been permitted to self-govern and should not have had the responsibility of regulatory control. Issues regarding transparency and accountability stem from ineffectual oversight and the obvious consequence has been **poor animal welfare outcomes**.

There has been an obvious lack of transparency or disclosure in recording and supplying accurate data about the animals that are the core product of this industry.

Lip-service about welfare initiatives has become tiresome.

For total transparency of this industry and a real look at its social licence we need FULL DISCLOSURE to the public.

Attempts at regulatory control have been forsaken for economic values, and an air of complacency has infiltrated the Greyhound racing industry at all levels – in all states.

This is an industry that claims to be made up mostly of hobbyists – that then states employment as a justification for its existence; an industry that believes it is beyond social and market forces, and above the law; an industry that exhibits an arrogant attitude about its long-time protection and support from the government, based on economic reasons. Like other iconic Aussie organisations that once flourished but have hit an economic and social wall impeding their continuation due to market demand and customer perceptions, the Greyhound Racing industry should face its challenges and decline without legislative provisions and without government support or finance.

It is time to let it go.

Integrity is long-gone, and the rot is embedded at all levels. The stain from the mix of animals, racing, gambling and greed has festered and spread.

The apparent industry pact, or expectation of silence and/or feigned ignorance, and the fear of recrimination when reporting activities by members of the public and industry alike, in relation to unsavoury, illegal and unacceptable behaviour of some racing participants, has been a major drawback to the effectiveness of regulatory control.

Our knowledge of the Greyhound racing industry is that it is a group of like-minded colleagues forming an insular social community, and from this, we believe it highly probable that knowledge of live-baiting, if not actual involvement in the practice, would be considerably widespread. There is a distinct culture in Greyhound racing. This culture involves a mindset where the breeding, exploitation and disposal of dogs for racing and gambling is acceptable and considered the norm, with a general lack of compassion and empathy for the lives of the animals that are 'bred to do a job'. Many will argue that they treat their dogs well, and this may well be true for some, at least whilst their dogs have the potential to perform and win races.

This 'sport' or 'hobby' sees a large generational involvement, with old ways and attitudes shared and passed down amongst family participants, and embedded in the present culture. Within this mindset there has shown to be a tolerance for, or general acceptance of, live-baiting training methods. Participants seem desensitised to the cruelty – lacking in concern or empathy for pain and suffering of animals. Those caught on film on the Four Corners program showed a baseness that is alarming and absolutely sickening.

Let's be real.... the majority of people involved in the industry are in it to make money. The allure of a win is the driving force behind their behaviour and conduct, and sets their expectations for the dogs. There is a huge disconnect between Greyhounds as products for racing and gambling – and as living, sensitive, beautiful DOGS. This separation of reality has immersed Greyhounds into an often cruel and unsympathetic culture where commercial objectives are at the fore, resulting in inadequate care and management, and disregard for their long-term future. Greyhound racing participants often seem immune or detached from feelings of responsibility, protection or compassion for these sentient creatures.

In relation to regulatory functions and animal welfare, it is not possible to have effective regulation without transparency and independent scrutiny. It is also not possible to carry-out effective monitoring, management and regulation to uphold welfare obligations without adequate resources (funds and personnel). The responsibility is a mammoth task, and one that is beyond the capabilities of the current controllers – or any other body or inspectorate.

The ability of the industry to conduct regular and efficient inspections of all participants' properties and activities, and enforce penalties that ensure compliance by its members, may never be attained.

Minimum standards and Codes of Practice are only worth implementing if they contain adequate welfare principles at their core, teamed with sufficient enforcement and regulation, and frequent random inspections. This is a culture that exists by exploiting animals for commercial gain with a history of complacency in regard to the stringency of regulations and welfare initiatives. The resources, time and money required to adequately monitor or police these properties and participants, with **regular** kennel inspections (not once every 2 years!) and the necessary random follow-up checks – is unfeasible. How many inspectors or stewards will be required to effectively carry out these duties? And will it be successful if participants are notified in advance of the date and time of inspection? This actually ensures that no breach will be discovered.

c) <http://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/products/reports/aus-gambling-stats/aus-gambling-stats-30th-edn.pdf>

The table below shows only **2.7% of total wagering revenue** earned by the racing industry in Tasmania in 2013 – for all three codes (thoroughbreds, harness & greyhounds). With Greyhound racing holding only a very small percentage of the current racing market, it means a very little amount of total wagering revenue for the dogs.

It is a minority of participants responsible for killing many thousands of dogs every year for gambling, and **an end to dog racing would likely not affect government wagering revenue** as punters would just bet on something else given the wealth of choice available in our betting nation.

The Greyhound racing industry should not be provided with state government funding. Tax-payers should not be faced with the burden of propping up this dog-killing industry.

TABLE TAS 15
TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT REVENUE FROM RACING
AS % OF TOTAL GAMBLING REVENUE

	BOOKMAKERS	ON-COURSE TOTALISATOR	TAB	TOTAL RACING
	Percentage (%)			
1987-88	1.60	0.79	16.73	19.11
1988-89	1.33	0.71	18.19	20.23
1989-90	1.28	0.69	18.54	20.51
1990-91	1.03	0.75	19.09	20.88
1991-92	0.73	0.81	21.15	22.69
1992-93	0.61	0.77	22.76	24.15
1993-94	0.45	0.74	21.20	22.39
1994-95	0.30	0.71	23.04	24.04
1995-96	0.08	0.62	21.00	21.71
1996-97	0.07	0.52	16.47	17.07
1997-98	0.06	0.47	14.05	14.58
1998-99	0.04	0.34	11.57	11.95
1999-00	0.05	0.42	8.08	8.54
2000-01	- (1)	- (2)	1.24 (2)	1.24
2001-02	-	-	-	-
2002-03	-	-	-	-
2003-04	-	-	-	-
2004-05	-	-	-	-
2005-06	-	-	-	-
2006-07	-	-	-	-
2007-08	5.89 (3)	-	-	5.89
2008-09	8.03 (3)	-	-	8.03
2009-10	6.76 (3)	-	-	6.76
2010-11	2.50 (4)	-	-	2.50
2011-12	2.19 (4)	-	-	2.19
2012-13	2.70 (4)	-	-	2.70

Notes: These data should be read in conjunction with the explanatory notes.
Data for the gambling revenue received by states and territories from 1 July 2000 onward are not comparable with that of preceding years because of the impact of changes brought about by the introduction of the GST.

d) With regard to the recommendations from the Chief Veterinary Officer of Biosecurity Tasmania, and the Director of Racing in Tasmania, whilst deemed positive, and a significant improvement on current arrangements, the recommendations **do not adequately address the main problem of overbreeding**. To suggest that such changes are designed to decrease wastage and improve the likelihood of each greyhound going on to actually race is ignoring the real problem of:-

too many dogs bred = too many dogs dead.

Educating participants about breeding, rearing and training of greyhounds does not address the overbreeding and wastage problem. Other states have chosen to recognise that there are many Greyhounds that do not make it to the track due to a lack of ability, injury or other reasons, and plan to institute better breeding strategies to improve the number of stock making it to the track but this **still does not address the overall wastage issue**, only the timing of the wastage. The term 'responsible breeding' is farcical when we know that most Greyhounds live to die early in racing. Likewise grading schedules and providing further racing opportunities for slower or older greyhounds does not prevent the ultimate death or abandonment of the dog, it only prolongs the period of exploitation until 'retirement' – (a well-known euphemism for death), and raises further concerns of injuries and strains and discomfort in these dogs.

For Greyhounds, it literally, is.... **the QUICK, or the DEAD.**

The focus on the supposition that only those Greyhounds with lack of ability or injury, whose racing careers do not eventuate or are shortened, are deemed **unnecessary wastage** is yet another example of the complete lack of understanding, accountability and responsibility shown by the industry and government as to the major welfare and image problem the industry faces. The failure to recognise the wastage of the 'retired' dogs, thousands of ex-racers that are killed once no longer able to compete, is convenient, but unreasonable, and certainly a poor oversight.

The licensing of training tracks and bullrings may not effectively combat live-baiting, as our experience is that even Greyhound owner/trainers keeping Greyhounds in semi-rural and suburban areas can use live animals to keep their Greyhounds 'keen'.

e) Puppy-farming has gained much focus around Australia as a major animal welfare concern, with many key animal welfare groups and government representatives advocating the abolishment of puppy mills. Yet, the Greyhound racing industry is the largest group of puppy farmers in the country – seeking to profit from the over-breeding of these dogs - and the breeding and killing of Greyhounds continues on unchecked.

The past decade has seen concentrated effort and emphasis from grass-roots volunteer greyhound rescue groups and animal welfare organisations in Australia and around the world, in educating people and creating awareness about the plight of Greyhounds, and bearing the responsibility and heartbreak of cleaning up after an industry that routinely discards and kills these dogs. There has been a significant shift in attitude about the breed, and about Greyhound racing.

Decades of racing promotion, seeing them muzzled and thinking of them only as those fast dogs that chase things definitely produced a stigma about Greyhounds, which benefited the racing industry in preventing a public outcry. Now however, years of rescue, rehoming and promotion and assimilating them into the community has dispelled many of the misconceptions and has resulted in an increase in rehoming opportunities, and greater opposition to the industry.

We received a phone call from lady in her 70's who had been involved in racing for decades and was once a leading trainer in South Australia. Her colleagues had asked her to call to 'sort us out' and a lengthy conversation ensued, in which our issues with the mass wastage of Greyhounds due to the racing industry were explained. She maintained that the dogs are "bred to do a job" and revealed that she had "probably put to sleep about 300 in her time." That's 300 dogs killed by one hobbyist in her pursuit of pleasure, through her involvement in a profit-driven gambling industry!

Caught up in this culture of oversupply and wastage are the Veterinarians and universities who present a means to an end to Greyhound racing people, at least to those willing to pay, by providing an easy disposal of the dogs. Vets are killing thousands of healthy, young Greyhounds every year, and Universities are using and killing hundreds of Greyhounds every year for veterinary science training and experimentation, taking the stance that it is better to put the dogs to sleep humanely than the cruel alternative. Justification for their actions is based on the presumption that the dog is going to die anyway and may suffer a more brutal or inhumane death if they do not perform this service. A Veterinarian's charter is to relieve animal pain and suffering but, all too often, Vet clinics are accepting payment for killing a healthy, young animal that is of no further commercial use 'in case' another method might be used or because the Greyhound will likely be killed anyway.

Greyhounds and their easy availability make them the dog of choice for medical training of all sorts. Please read the article at this link - <http://venusianmoon.com/2015/05/09/animal-lab/>

Friends of the Hound has recently rehomed a dog to a Cardiologist – and this specialist doctor recounted his experience in entering a training session at a Brisbane hospital with Greyhounds having tubes inserted into their chest. And just recently, another doctor recounted her training in Anaesthetics using Greyhounds in city-based hospital.

Prioritising humane euthanasia as a solution to welfare problems is not sufficient. “Humane” being characterised by compassion, kindness and mercy; and “euthanasia” being the practice of ending a life to relieve pain and suffering.

There is nothing kind nor compassionate about killing a healthy, young dog simply because it is no longer useful for making one money in a commercial racing and gambling industry.

A significant amount of the relatively small percentage of Greyhounds that do find homes as companion animals are usually at the expense of non-profit groups and the effort of volunteer rescuers.

Community acceptance of Greyhound racing has largely been the result of widespread ignorance or lack of knowledge about the welfare concerns and negative consequences for the dogs. However this has been steadily changing, due to over a decade of rehoming Greyhounds into the community and raising awareness about their plight, and more importantly, promoting the breed as a gentle, affectionate, sociable companion dog. There is a huge focus on animal welfare issues in Australia and around the world. Animal protection agencies, welfare organisations, rescue groups and concerned individuals are resolutely supporting and lobbying for the ethical treatment of animals, and Greyhound racing is under the spotlight. This is evident by the increasing number of rescue and advocacy groups, rallies, protests, television commercials, billboards, and passionate mass support. Opposition to this dog-killing industry is growing for good reason. **People love dogs.**

Australia is one of only 8 countries in the world where dog racing exists, Greyhound racing in the United States now occurs in only 7 states, it has been banned in South Africa, and is facing opposition in the United Kingdom. The global decline in popularity and acceptance of this so-called sport will impact the industry's future here.

Hundreds of Greyhounds are still exported to China each year.

The claim that many Greyhound owners ‘keep their dogs’ – or rehome their dogs – cannot be substantiated.

A simple, independent “where are they now” exercise highlighting dogs that were registered for racing in a selected timeframe, and tracking their whereabouts now, would certainly indicate the wastage reality for these dogs.

Likewise an independent audit of some of the industry's large-scale (Group 1) trainers whose facilities house hundreds of dogs, if undertaken – would likely determine exactly how many they breed and race, and their unfortunate demise or disappearance when not racing or ‘retired’.

There is no doubt that numerous properties exist where large numbers of Greyhounds have been killed.

The Greyhound racing industry in Australia is made up of around 30,000 people – killing up to 18,000 dogs annually. ...A minority of people, responsible for major carnage, for a small percentage of wagering revenue.

The use of animals in entertainment and sport, where their well-being and safety is at risk, is at odds with the changing values of modern society. Australian's are fast becoming aware that around 20,000 Greyhounds are bred every year only to be killed when no longer a viable asset to the racing owner or trainer, they are learning that there are countless injuries, and even deaths, suffered on the track by these poor dogs, and that just under half the dogs bred never even make it to the track.

Dogs are one of the world's most favoured companion animals. It is unreasonable and rather arrogant to expect that the Australian public should not be concerned about the breeding of nearly 20,000 of one breed of dog every year for gambling.

The emotional case against Greyhound racing is easy to make... people love dogs, and racing dogs face short lives. Money, as a justification for activities considered immoral, archaic or inexplicable, generates levels of social activism and advocacy. Dog racing is one such activity. With regard to the social licence of Greyhound racing, it is clear that there is an increasing majority of people who do not approve of this form of gambling industry and the negative outcomes for the 'products' of the sport, - as opposed to a minority of people actually involved.

Humans have long given themselves rights and privileges over other species. The use of animals is generally balanced against human benefit. Animal exploitation for the purpose of gambling has a fragile moral claim. Given that the Greyhound racing industry requires large-scale disposal of dogs each year, the industry has a rather questionable claim on validity.

It will come down to numbers – the number of dogs bred which subsequently render this a dog-killing industry; the number of greyhounds that are still being exported to Asian countries - with no animal welfare laws; the relatively small minority of active participants actually engaged in this 'sport'; the amount of government spending (tax-payer dollars) to prop up this code of racing; the high rate of injuries sustained by the animals providing this 'product'; the amount of doping incidents and prohibitive cost and lack of funds for eradicating the misuse of these illegal and performance enhancing drugs; the numbers involved in live-baiting and the fact that the industry has allowed it to continue; the numbers within the industry revealing dissatisfaction and causing conflict regarding administration mismanagement, poor governance, corruption and lack of profit-share; and, the number of people who oppose the Greyhound racing industry and seek an end to dog racing in Australia.

Even with tighter regulations and improved governance, we know that the industry would still present serious ethical and moral issues. Greyhound racing must end.

Therefore, the question to ask your government officials is.... how many dogs do YOU believe it is justified to breed, exploit and kill for gambling/wagering?

Lisa White
President
Friends of the Hound Inc.