

ENQUIRY INTO GREYHOUND RACING IN TASMANIA
SUBMISSIONS TO THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE
BY THE LAUNCESTON GREYHOUND RACING CLUB INC.

In these submissions we shall deal with the Terms of Reference of the above Committee and shall refer to the recommendations from the Minister for Racing dated the 17th March 2015.

1. **LIVE BAITING**

Dealing first with this issue and the provision of penalties in respect of the practice, the creation of mandatory penalties generally is understood by the Club to be fraught with argument and difficulty well known to legislators and to the Courts alike.

The Club takes the view however that penalties should be available in respect of a person found guilty of live baiting sufficient to provide for a deterrent both to those who offend and to others.

The Club is unaware of the existence of live baiting in Tasmania, but believes that there have been comments in recent months by some claiming that the practice does exist here.

Those comments however unfairly defame an industry which in Tasmania is indeed particularly good at self regulation. The recent and widely publicised discovery of live baiting at some mainland tracks is of great sadness and potential harm to the industry and to those who have acted at all times humanly and who abhor cruelty to animals.

Further, the situation existing in those States where live baiting has been discovered must be differentiated from the Tasmanian situation.

In Tasmanian there are no trial tracks.

Indeed, there are in Tasmania only three tracks where greyhound trialing and racing are undertaken. They are at Devonport, Hobart and Launceston and they are highly regulated.

The organisation Greyhounds Australasia comprises representatives from jurisdictional controlling bodies in the Australian States and Territories, and New Zealand.

The Greyhound Australasia Rules are the National Rules of Racing under the control of that peak body and are adopted by the respective controlling bodies.

In Tasmania, that authority is Tasracing.

At page 23 of the Report there is a reference to the Greyhound Animal Welfare Policy. One wonders whether there is a case here of too many cooks! Over Governance often leads to confusion and uncertainty and particularly so where, as here for example, local Rules made by Tasracing can override the National Rules. This is referred to in the Report at page 32 as:

“inhibiting a coordinated and harmonized National approach to key issues such as animal welfare”....

Whatever that means!

It is unclear whether the report advocates change.

At page 33, there is a reference to Tasracing's

“Greyhound Animal Welfare Manual”.

It would seem, that the industry has the benefit of at least all of the following:

Greyhound Australasia Rules

Tasracing Local Rules of Racing

Tasracing “Greyhound Animal Welfare Policy”

Tasracing “Greyhound Animal Welfare Manual”

A document entitled Management & Care for each Stage of the Lifecycle of a Greyhound.

Legislation touching or concerning animal cruelty and animal welfare.

In addition it is noted that in 2012 the State Government received submissions in relation to amendments to the Dog Control Act. More than a year and a half ago an issues paper was released and, apparently, 51 submissions were received. All we know as to that is that the “submissions are currently being considered”.

On the 20th April 2015 the National Rules of Racing were amended and added to. These changes confirmed the practices and aspirations of the industry at large and provided strict and carefully drafted requirements and penalties to deal with any who would doubt the standards of behaviour expected by the industry.

Those amendments included:

The creation of an offence in the case of any person unauthorised by the stewards or the Controlling Body to keep or bring on to a race course or trial track or facility or a surrounding area a live animal other than a greyhound. (See R86(ad));

An offence in the case of any person who uses an animal connected with greyhound racing or training in a manner which amounts to maltreatment of an animal or is improper or illegal (R86(af));

A requirement in respect of the use of only approved lures to incorporate offences relating to luring and baiting. (R86A and R86B);

The introduction of a new rule to assist in the interpretation and enforcement of the Rules referred to above; (R86C)

A provision that any person offending against R86A, R86B or R86C (or any equivalent rules) shall not be entitled to make any application to the Controlling Body for any licence or registration or be the owner of any registered greyhound.

A provision that the penalty for a breach of R86B shall be disqualification for a period of not less than 10 years, together with a fine; and together with a provision (R86B(2)) whereby any person who witnesses a breach of the earlier provisions and who fails to report the conduct shall be disqualified for a period of not less than 5 years and/or fined a sum not exceeding \$20,000.00.

The changes to the Rules of the 20th April 2015 appropriately address, throughout Australia and New Zealand, any practice involving live baiting or the prospect of it being considered or any preparation for it.

Indeed, it comprehensively deals with all conceivable issues which may be relevant to the prospect of live baiting. It does so by dealing with the greyhound as being the focal point of the prohibition rather than, for example, by reducing the viability of training aids such as bullrings which themselves are beneficial to the sport.

2. **WASTAGE**

As to wastage, the Club has for some while had views in relation to methods of reduction of wastage, and has actively pursued a number of initiatives.

Funding from the Club to support the Greyhound Adoption Program (GAP) in the last 12 months for example has been in excess of \$9,000.00.

Submissions and recommendations to reduce wastage were prepared by the Club more than a year ago and supplied to the Director of Racing. The Club is of the view that the implementation of those recommendations was capable of being undertaken almost immediately.

However, only in the last few weeks has the Director of Racing advised of recommendations he at last has made for changes to the Grading Schedule. He says that, if implemented, they will:

“provide the most significant changes to the Grading Schedule in over a decade.”

The delay has been regrettable but the recommendations now made largely mirror the submissions of the Launceston Greyhound Racing Club Inc.

It is unfortunate that the preparation of the review of the Grading Schedule has been so long in coming and indeed it is noted that the review does not even form part of the Final Report of the 13th March 2015.

The prescribed bonuses referred to on page 36 of the Report are in the course of being removed and the Launceston Greyhound Racing Club Inc supports the cessation of that arrangement.

There is anecdotal evidence to suggestion that, paradoxically, the publicity given to live baiting has led to a reduction in the number of those willing to adopt a greyhound through GAP, and a reduction in those who are prepared to assist in respect of the relevant arrangements leading to adoption.

It is hoped that some positive results will come from this Joint Select Committee which hopefully will avoid further degradation of the Greyhound Adoption Program.

Finally and in respect of wastage, it is important to note that new breeding restrictions will come into effect on the 1st July next.

These amendments arise from work undertaken by Greyhounds Australasia and it is understood that Tasracing is content and will not seek any local changes and indeed will endorse the rules as promulgated.

3. **DRAINAGE**

This is an issue which it seems is largely within the knowledge and expertise of those practicing as veterinary surgeons.

They no doubt have their own codes of conduct.

It is understood that some veterinary surgeons collect blood from greyhounds because of its usefulness in veterinary practices.

It is understood that blood from greyhounds has properties which make it useful for transfusions in other canine breeds.

It is NOT the case that greyhounds are ever “drained”, by veterinary surgeons, of their blood!

This is a most unfortunate misconception.

4. **THE ROLE OF REGULATORY AUTHORITIES IN UPHOLDING ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARDS IN THE INDUSTRY**

We refer you to our comments above, but also raise in this context the risk of there already being wasted expenditure from over governance brought about by confusion from too many rules and too many rule makers.

Be that as it may however it is clear that the industry is fully regulated in all of the facets of its operations.

Stewards from Racing Services Tasmania (RST) attend all racing meetings which are conducted in Tasmania and the industry is of the view that the Stewards fulfill their obligations satisfactorily.

They ensure that animal welfare standards are maintained - in contrast of course to the situation which exists with respect to domestic owners and breeders of other dogs where there is no opportunity for the imposition of such control.

So far as powers of entry, search, inspection and taking possession are concerned, it is submitted that Rules 18 and 19 of the Greyhound Australasia Rules deal sufficiently with the issue of such regulatory role and indeed provide more than adequately for the upholding of appropriate animal welfare standards and the application of the "Five Freedoms".

5. **LEVEL OF STATE GOVERNMENT FUNDING**

The level of income enjoyed by Tasracing from the greyhound racing industry is approximately on an equal footing with such income from the thoroughbred racing industry. This would suggest a near equality in the popularity of the two codes.

Increases in the popularity of greyhound racing indeed have been a significant factor in the increase in revenue received by Tasracing. In respect of income presently received by Tasracing from the 3 codes, about 40% of total revenue comes from the greyhound industry.

In the 2013-2014 season, income received by Tasracing exceeded their budget by approximately \$1,800,000.00.

However, and as to funding, the greyhound industry is the least well funded of the codes. By way of comparison, in the last financial year the division of Government funding was approximately 19% for the greyhound industry compared with 27% in relation to harness racing and 54% for thoroughbred racing.

The disparity continues to grow given, for example, that revenue from the greyhound industry has increased to date this financial year by 11%.

Funding received by each of the codes has for some years increased only at the CPI rate. However, the significant increases in income received by Tasracing, and to which the greyhound industry has contributed far more than its pro-rata share, has not resulted in any increased dividend to **any** of the codes.

There is thus considerable disquiet at the failure of Tasracing to use its revenue to the best benefit of the three codes, and of those three codes the greyhound industry remains the least well served.

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