



9 June 2015

The Secretary
Joint Select Committee on Greyhound Racing in Tasmania
Parliament House
HOBART TAS 7000

Dear Secretary

I am writing to you to provide a submission for the Inquiry into Greyhound Racing in Tasmania.

Brightside Farm Sanctuary has rescued and re-homed over 300 greyhounds and has a particular interest in the welfare of greyhounds in Tasmania. Although trainers in Tasmania were not exposed in the recent 4 Corners program, which uncovered terrible cruelty with live-baiting, we believe there are many issues with the greyhound industry in this State and the use of cruel practices relating to owners and trainers wishing their greyhounds to win races is an inherent risk that cannot be disregarded.

There are many issues that have since come to light since the ground-breaking 4 Corners story that we also cover in our submission. These issues relate to: over-breeding, 'wastage', Government subsidies and welfare of dogs.

It is our belief that the greyhound racing industry should be banned, but while this industry continues we wish to provide information by way of this submission to improvements that can be made to reduce over-breeding and 'wastage'.

Please do not hesitate to contact us, should you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

Julie Williamson
Brightside Farm Sanctuary Inc.

PO Box 283, CYGNET, TAS, 7112
Email: info@brightside.org.au
www.brightside.org.au



1. Practices in the Tasmanian greyhound industry

a) Live-baiting

Widespread live-baiting practices were exposed by Animals Australia and Animal Liberation across New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. This horrific cruelty revealed an entrenched practice involving, or known to many, in the greyhound industry.

It should not be considered that live-baiting does not occur in Tasmania, purely due to the fact that this was not exposed in the 4 Corners program.

Training facilities in Tasmania operate away from the public eye and are subject to little or no inspections during the year. On numerous occasions examples of past live-baiting practices have been related to us by people associated with the industry in Tasmania and cases of live-baiting have been uncovered in Tasmania with charges laid against at least one trainer in recent years.

b) Over-breeding and 'wastage'

It is estimated that approximately 20,000 greyhound puppies are born each year in Australia. The majority of greyhounds surrendered to Brightside are around 18 months to 2 years of age, indicating their racing life is very short. Other dogs have been surrendered to Brightside at an older age and these have usually been used as breeding greyhounds post racing. Brightside is aware of dogs aged 8 to 10 years being used as breeding bitches, and while this may have kept the dogs alive longer, the welfare issues of breeding bitches of this age would have to be questioned.

Considering the high number of greyhounds killed each year as 'wastage', it is therefore shocking that the racing administration offers incentives to those within the industry to breed more puppies. This so called 'puppy payment' creates many more greyhounds that will then in turn be killed, purely because they are not fast enough to win races.

Only a relatively small number of racing dogs are re-homed by GAP. GAP not only receives substantial funding from Tasracing, but also requires those surrendering greyhounds to the program to pay a fee of \$110 per dog. The cost of euthanasing a greyhound is heavily subsidised/discounted at around \$40 to \$55 per dog. This promotes a very strong message to trainers and owners and makes euthanasia a more attractive proposition than re-homing. Furthermore, it is extraordinary considering the cost faced by a member of the public to have their pet dog put to sleep would be around \$80 to \$120.



In contrast to GAP, other rescue organisations such as Brightside are not funded for the rescue, rehabilitation and re-homing of greyhounds and depend on the dedication of those running the programs and the generosity of the public to fund this work. To compete with the discounted cost of euthanasia Brightside only charges \$50 for a greyhound to be surrendered into our program. Brightside has taken in over 25 greyhounds in the last month alone.

The industry, owners and breeders, need to take responsibility for every greyhound from puppyhood to old-age. The euthanasia rate is unjustifiable and the over-breeding of greyhounds is unethical and irresponsible. We believe that the industry and administration need to urgently address this issue and to this end:

- All greyhound breeding incentive schemes should be abolished.
- Schemes similar to those in other States should be introduced to direct a percentage of betting proceeds to the rehabilitation/rehoming of all greyhounds.
- Mandatory levies should be imposed on greyhound breeders to be used for the rehabilitation/rehoming of all greyhounds.
- GAP must be expanded to increase the number of places available for dogs to be entered into the program. The capacity of the program should never be compromised for reasons such as dogs being held during the suspension of trainer/owners. The fee should also be realistic to encourage the surrender of greyhounds.

c) Welfare

During training greyhounds are generally housed in extremely cramped conditions in sheds. They are generally kept in wire and concrete pens measuring around 2 m x 1 m. Many dogs would spend over 20 hours in every 24 in these pens, where ammonia levels can be high.

The housing of greyhounds and the associated welfare issues should be considered as part of this Inquiry.



2. Role of regulatory authorities

One of the main failings identified in the investigation into greyhound live-baiting, was the lack of independent oversight of the industry. We believe that Tasmania has an extremely low incidence of inspections of kennels and facilities and there is little administration and control of the tracking of greyhounds during their life, including the number of greyhounds euthanased. Of the hundreds of dogs Brightside has taken over the years we have been contacted on very few occasions by Racing Services to confirm the whereabouts of the dogs.

It is clear that this approach has not worked. Any conflicts of interest, whether they be within the industry or with Government, should be removed to ensure the welfare of greyhounds within Tasmania. We therefore hold that while greyhound racing continues an independent regulatory body should oversee the industry and this body would need to be properly funded to enable it to undertake the necessary assurance oversight.

Further to the regulation of the industry, we believe that there needs to be serious consideration regarding disqualification of trainers. Currently partners and immediate family members of a disqualified trainer can train and take over the racing of greyhounds. It will therefore be extremely difficult to determine if the disqualified person is still involved and participating in the training of dogs. A disqualified trainer can still also own greyhounds.

3. State Government funding

The greyhound industry over-breeds and kills a large number of greyhounds every year. The State government currently provides funding to the industry in Tasmania in the form of a 20 year funding deed signed in 2009. We believe this support of the industry encourages the current practices of over-breeding and other welfare issues.

In contrast the State Government provides no funding to animal welfare organisations other than to provide limited funds for the contracting of animal welfare inspectors under the Animal Welfare Act to the RSPCA. Animal welfare organisations such as Brightside are left to undertake greyhound rescue and re-homing with no funding or recognition that this work is greatly needed as a result of the issues within the greyhound industry.

Australia is one of the few countries in the world which continues to allow greyhound racing. In many countries greyhound racing is now illegal. In the USA, greyhound racing is banned in 39 states. Over the past decade the number of greyhounds

PO Box 283, CYGNET, TAS, 7112

Email: info@brightside.org.au

www.brightside.org.au



registered to race in Australia has been in decline. Given this and the apparent and significant issues with welfare and euthanasia rates, it is not unrealistic to question why the Government would continue to provide funding to this industry.

4. Other matters relating to greyhounds

Greyhounds in Tasmania are still required to be muzzled in public under the Dog Control Act – this includes pet greyhounds never trained or raced. Many of these dogs come to us with the temperament of a pet dog.

There are other States that recognise that greyhounds re-homed through reputable welfare organisations do not need to wear muzzles. The need to muzzle greyhounds suggests that these dogs are aggressive, which is a great disservice to this wonderful breed.

When re-homed through a program it should no longer be necessary to impose this restriction on owners as these greyhounds pose no more risk than any other dog in the community.