

GREYHOUND RACING

Can this "sport" be reformed?

Any industry involving gambling and animals faces intrinsic problems. The punters pay with their wallets and the animals with their lives.

Background

Greyhound racing involves greyhounds chasing a motorised lure around or along a specialised track while spectators place bets on particular dogs to win. Many dogs are drugged, tortured, overbred and killed for not *being fast enough*², government regulation is lax and tax subsidies prop up this distasteful business.

The live baiting scandal

The practice of "live baiting" or "bleeding", which involves the use of rabbits, piglets, chickens³, kittens and possums as live bait to entice and train greyhounds, was banned across all states and territories of Australia in 1979⁴. Yet in 2015, the ABC's *Four Corners* revealed that this horrendously cruel practice was rampant in NSW, Victoria and Queensland and was conducted by individuals at the highest levels in the industry.

As a result of the *Four Corners* show, States reacted immediately to "clean up" the industry. The NSW Government banned greyhound racing in 2015 after the McHugh Special Commission of Inquiry, but the ban was reversed a few months later due to greyhound racing industry pressure and the NSW government promised minimal industry reform instead⁵. Victoria also held an inquiry in 2015⁶, but despite this, evidence emerged in 2019 that live baiting was still continuing⁷. In Queensland, the *Racing Integrity Act 2016*⁸ was passed and industry watchdog the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission (QRIC⁹)¹⁰ established. However, despite "animal welfare and care" strategies and "wastage reduction" promises, QRIC has not delivered. Funding has been poured into new race-track infrastructure, instead of its multi-million dollar funding

package going toward the fulfillment of its functions and powers under the Act.

There seems to be little action to safeguard the welfare of animals in the industry. "Welfare" initiatives should *at least* include a transparent records system for birth to death tracing and ongoing industry integrity investigations; employ more stewards to enable cover at the track, training and breeding facilities; and review the penalty structure to ascertain if current penalties deter criminal activity. The Animal Justice Party (AJP) does not believe QRIC, or similar racing bodies will ever stamp out the cruelty inherent in the industry, and that's probably the point.

Greyhound racing remains legal across Australia, except in the ACT where it was banned in April 2018¹¹.

Overbreeding and "wastage"

Programs aimed at stopping overbreeding and "wastage" are also a failure.

Approximately 10,000 greyhound puppies are bred every year and approximately 7,000 of these will die before they make it to a track¹². Females are bred multiple times over, in the hope of birthing a race winner. Greyhounds are mostly kept in small, barren, solitary cages or kennels with no proper socialisation or play, as they are bred to race for money, and treated as commodities - not as sentient beings. It is far easier and less costly for breeders to simply kill these animals. Reports surface frequently of mass graves¹³ ... just google "greyhounds mass graves" for yourself.

The greyhound industry depends on "wastage" (the deliberate over-breeding of dogs and killing of unwanted dogs) to ensure that a proportion will run fast enough to be commercially

¹<https://www.animalsaustralia.org/issues/greyhound-racing.php>

²<https://www.animalsaustralia.org/issues/greyhound-racing.php>

³<https://www.northernstar.com.au/news/live-baiting-another-jailed-for-using-chicken-pigl/3205641/>

⁴<https://www.abc.net.au/4corners/making-a-killing/6127124>

⁵<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/history-of-nsw-greyhound-racing-ban>

⁶https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/file_uploads/2015_Own_Motion_Report_into_Live_Baiting_in_Greyhound_Racing_6M6410tn.pdf

⁷<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-11-13/greyhound-trainers-suspended-after-allegedly-using-live-bait/11699434>

⁸<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/pdf/inforce/current/act-2016-012>

⁹<https://qric.qld.gov.au>

¹⁰<https://qric.qld.gov.au>

¹¹<https://www.act.gov.au/greyhound>

¹²<https://www.animalsaustralia.org/issues/greyhound-racing.php>

¹³<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-07-12/greyhound-grave-uncovered-on-sydney-property/9986408>



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“useful”. Young, healthy dogs who do not meet this criterion are routinely killed or given away to science and export, with only a small proportion re-homed. Insufficient transparency and lack of published data mean estimates vary, but the numbers bred for the sport are huge, and more than half are deliberately killed. According to the RSPCA, between 13,000 and 17,000 healthy greyhounds are killed every year across Australia as they are deemed not fit for racing¹⁴.

All Australian states have a government-supported Greyhound Adoption Program (GAP), or similar. However, the *program*¹⁵ is not mandatory for industry breeders, and those who try to enter the program must semi-rehabilitate the dog beforehand, in a domestic setting, and sometimes pay an enrolment fee, which acts as a barrier to entry.

After dogs have been accepted into the program, they must satisfy a number of tests before they are fostered and re-homed. One such behaviour test for the NSW GAP is that the dog must not bark or shake when confronted with an animal smaller than themselves or another greyhound. It is widely accepted that barking and shaking from fear or excitement, or a mixture of these, is a natural response for a dog in this circumstance. Consequently, hundreds of dogs have been killed in NSW because they failed the GAP assessment¹⁶.

Due to the extremely high number of animals, there is little chance each individual will find a good home. For example, less than 300 greyhounds are rehomed through GAP in Queensland, on average, each year. If GAP cannot take the dog immediately, the industry deems they can be killed. The sheer magnitude of animals in the system begs the question, what has happened to them and where are they?

Harm on track

Greyhound racing is a high speed, full body contact “sport”. The tight turns and 60 kph speeds make dog crashes inevitable. The results are a range of joint, bone and muscle injuries. In 2019, in Queensland alone, 64 greyhounds¹⁷ were killed due to track injuries and there were over 1,200 non-fatal injuries. The most common of these were hock (ankle) injuries. Such an injury in a companion animal could be repaired, but when an animal’s only value is in the money he or she can earn, killing and replacing is the option of choice for trainers.

Greyhounds are often drugged with illegal substances to aid performance or disguise injury for the purpose of winning. Dogs testing positive for prohibited drugs¹⁸ are a regular occurrence (virtually weekly).

Live export

According to the peak national racing body, Greyhounds Australasia (GA), the live export of greyhounds is not permitted

unless the greyhound has a passport and the destination country has passed an animal welfare check. Cities such as Hong Kong and Macau were blacklisted by GA in 2013 for having no animal welfare standards at all¹⁹. However, this did not stop unauthorised export. Almost 1,000 dogs were sent to race to their death in the notoriously cruel Macau Canidrome alone. Greyhound Racing NSW launched an inquiry and as a result, charged²⁰ 179 trainers in 2016 for exporting dogs to Macau. Thankfully, the Macau Canidrome closed down in July 2018, due to the unrelenting pressure from animal welfare groups.

Vivisection

Many ex-racing greyhounds have been bought or surrendered to animal testing and research laboratories for *experimentation*²¹. Humane Research Australia found 78 cases in particular during 2016, where ex-racing greyhounds from South Australia, Western Australia and Victoria were subjected to a range of invasive and painful heart, kidney and dental surgical experiments designed for human benefit. All dogs were killed at the end of the experiments. Further testing on greyhounds continues *today*²², made possible by an industry that has no accountability post-track. It is estimated that over 11,000 dogs are used for testing every year. Ironically, greyhounds (and beagles) are preferred due to their docile and trusting nature. However, the canine and human anatomy is so different that results are unreliable, inconclusive or speculative at best and therefore pointless and cruel.

Gambling

Australians lose more than \$24 billion annually²³ on gambling and greyhound racing is one of the *main*²⁴ activities on which participants gamble. Social costs of gambling, including greyhound racing, are domestic violence, relationship breakdowns, financial problems, anxiety, depression and suicide. Yet, federal and state governments invest more and more taxpayer funding into propping up this insidious industry and perpetuating the cycle of poor mental health outcomes, and violence towards animals and fellow human beings.

Policy

The Animal Justice Party (AJP) is opposed to greyhound racing and the use of animals for “sport” and entertainment. Specifically, we do not believe that the greyhound racing industry can be safely regulated for the animals’ sake, and acknowledge the repercussions of gambling on human mental health, domestic violence and financial stress. Therefore, we promote non-violent, community-friendly events that are also free from animal exploitation.

¹⁴<https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-are-the-animal-welfare-issues-with-greyhound-racing/>

¹⁵<https://gapqld.com.au/owners-trainers/>

¹⁶<https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/state/nsw/2018/09/20/greyhound-racing-nsw-rehoming/>

¹⁷<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-01-29/greyhound-racing-see-64-deaths-1200-injuries-on-qld-tracks/11903650>

¹⁸<https://qric.qld.gov.au/stewards-reports/greyhound/>

¹⁹<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/11/export-of-590-greyhounds-to-macau-went-ahead-despite-industry-ban>

²⁰<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-06-09/greyhound-racing-nsw-charges-179-trainers-owners/7497738>

²¹http://humaneresearch.org.au/campaigns/Discarded_by_the_racing_industry

²²<https://www.humaneresearch.org.au/greyhounds-used-to-test-drug-delivery/>

²³<https://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/issues/2646/australian-gambling-statistics-35th-edn-1992-93-2017-18.pdf>

²⁴<https://aifs.gov.au/agrc/publications/gambling-australia-during-covid-19>

Key Objectives

1. End greyhound racing in every state and the Northern Territory.
2. Until the industry is phased out, fund non-profit volunteer run greyhound rescue groups who undertake rescue, rehabilitation and rehoming of greyhounds while educating the public about the horrors of racing.
3. Redirect government funding and subsidies into transitioning those employed by the industry into non-exploitative jobs and careers.
4. Legislate a ban on the commercial live export of greyhounds.



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