

Special Commission of Enquiry into the Greyhound Racing Industry in NSW

Issues Paper on Governance and Social Contributions

Submission from the Australian Veterinary Association Ltd



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The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) is the national organisation representing veterinarians in Australia. Our 8500 members come from all fields within the veterinary profession. Clinical practitioners work with companion animals, horses, farm animals such as cattle and sheep, and wildlife. Government veterinarians work with our animal health, public health and quarantine systems while other members work in industry for pharmaceutical and other commercial enterprises. We have members who work in research and teaching in a range of scientific disciplines. Veterinary students are also members of the Association.

Governance

The AVA provides the following responses to questions raised by the Commission into issues of future governance of the NSW Greyhound Racing Industry.

1. Should the commercial and regulatory functions of the greyhound industry be separated into two different bodies? If yes, why? If no, why not?

Yes, it is essential that the two functions become separated, and further, that the regulatory function be undertaken by an entirely independent regulatory authority. This is essential to protect the interests of the animals involved, and restore the community's faith in the industry.

The recent exposure by *Four Corners* of serious, extensive and unchecked animal welfare abuses showed that GRNSW has completely failed to adequately investigate, address and remedy unacceptable animal welfare attitudes and practices in the industry. While incredibly shocking, the exposé was not unexpected, given that veterinarians and others have spoken out about their concerns on these issues for several decades.

The anecdotal evidence is that these animal welfare abuses were occurring before the 2009 merging of the commercial (GRNSW) and regulatory (GHRRA) arms of the greyhound industry; so merely separating the two functions back into two bodies again will not achieve the necessary reforms. Instead, a wholly independent authority must be established to perform the regulatory functions, and be free to operate without industry influence and conflicts of interest.

2. If the commercial and regulatory functions of the greyhound racing industry in NSW are to be separated into two separate bodies:

a. What is the appropriate composition for the Board of the body vested with regulatory functions? Why do you take this view? Should it include industry participants? If so, please provide reasons why.

The Minister should directly appoint the board of the independent regulatory authority.

Those on the board of the independent authority must include at least one registered veterinarian proposed by the Australian Veterinary Association to ensure the interests of greyhounds are appropriately protected. The appointment process for the veterinarian should follow the process currently in place for the NSW Animal Welfare Advisory Committee – the Australian Veterinary Association puts forward three appropriately-qualified candidates and the Minister selects one to serve. In addition to the issue of live baiting, there are significant animal welfare concerns for the greyhounds themselves in relation to how they are bred, broken in, trained, raced and their post-racing fate. There is also a significant industry-wide issue of over-breeding and wastage. There is a clear role for a significant increase in veterinary input to ensure adequate standards of animal welfare are achieved.

Representatives of animal welfare organisations such as RSPCA and Animal Welfare League should also be appointed to the board.

Industry participants should be excluded from being on the board in order to maintain independence and avoid conflicts of interest. This is in light of the shortcomings in attitude towards animal welfare demonstrated by some industry participants, and the fact that the public have completely lost faith in their ability to self-regulate.

The role and constitution of the independent authority should be embedded in the *Greyhound Racing Act 2009*, including its specific powers in relation to protecting animal welfare.

- b. What is the appropriate composition for the Board of the body vested with commercial functions? Why do you take this view? Should it include industry participants? If so, please provide reasons.**

The Minister should directly appoint the board of the body vested with commercial functions.

Industry participants should be excluded from being on this board also, in order to maintain independence and avoid conflicts of interest. Again, this is essential in order to restore public faith in the industry.

- c. Is there a continuing need for a Greyhound Racing Industry Consultation Group? If so, should its role be limited to consultation with the Board of the body vested with commercial functions? Please provide reasons for your view.**

Yes, there would still be merit in having an Industry Consultation Group to provide information to the commercial board about on-going issues within the industry. Responsible breeders, owners and trainers can be a source of advice to assist with reform of the industry. However their role should be restricted to provision of information only - they should have no input to the functioning of the regulatory board.

- d. What functions should a greyhound racing Integrity Auditor undertake? What powers should that person be able to exercise? Please provide reasons.**

The role of the Greyhound Racing Integrity Auditor should be abolished. It should be replaced by the abovementioned independent authority.

The authority should be empowered to engage Authorised Officers who would be appointed under the Act with powers of entry and audit for the purposes of a formal animal welfare monitoring program.

Preferably a dedicated inspectorate could be established; failing this, additional funding for the existing government appointed RSPCA and Animal Welfare League inspectorate could fulfil this independent auditing role. This proactive independent monitoring is required in order to restore public trust in the industry.

The authority should report publicly on all complaints investigated.

- e. Who should fund the new regulatory body? Please provide reasons for your view.**

The new regulatory body should be government funded and as such, wholly independent of the industry.

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