

**41ST PARLIAMENT**



## **Report 92**

# **STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS**

*Report on hearings arising under Committee term of reference 3.3(a)(ii): the financial operations and funding pathways of greyhound racing in Western Australia*

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Presented by  
Hon Peter Collier MLC (Chair)

September 2024

## **Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations**

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Hon Dan Caddy MLC

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**ISBN 978-1-923220-02-7**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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- 1 This report arises out of a request by Free the Hounds for the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations (Committee) to:
  - inquire into the financial operations and distribution of Government funding to the sport of greyhound racing by Racing and Wagering WA.
- 2 The Committee sought the Minister’s feedback on this request. It subsequently held hearings with the Western Australian Greyhound Racing Association, Racing and Wagering Western Australia and Free the Hounds. Serious animal welfare issues were raised at these hearings.
- 3 This report gives some brief background information on the Western Australian greyhound racing industry and the controversy surrounding it. It also gives a summary of some of the evidence the Committee received at the hearings.
- 4 The Committee considers there is a clear public interest in the animal welfare issues being fully investigated by a parliamentary committee. To the Committee’s knowledge, unlike some other Australian jurisdictions, there has not been a detailed inquiry into the industry in Western Australia.
- 5 Accordingly, considering:
  - the 41st Parliament will soon conclude
  - the Committee has insufficient time to inquire into the issues raised in the hearings due to its other standing obligationsthe Committee resolved to recommend that, in the 42nd Parliament, the Legislative Council establish a select committee to inquire into and report on these issues.

## Findings and recommendations

**Findings and recommendations are grouped as they appear in the text at the page number indicated:**

### FINDING 1

Page 9

There has been a 155% increase in the number of on track greyhound deaths from the 2022 to 2023 financial years, despite investment in animal welfare measures.

### FINDING 2

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There is a lack of clarity regarding the overall number and reporting of greyhound deaths and serious injuries.

### RECOMMENDATION

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The Legislative Council in the 42nd Parliament establish a select committee to inquire into and report on animal welfare issues in the Western Australian greyhound racing industry.

# 1 Introduction

## Reference and procedure

1.1 On 22 September 2023 Free the Hounds<sup>1</sup> requested the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations (Committee) inquire into:

the financial operations and distribution of Government funding to the sport of greyhound racing by Racing and Wagering WA' (RWWA).<sup>2</sup>

1.2 In its request, Free the Hounds highlighted the following issues:

- the funding pathways involved in supporting greyhound racing
- the financial impact greyhound racing has on RWWA and the taxpayer
- the viability of greyhound racing in Western Australia from a financial and social perspective
- the harm caused by problem gambling
- greyhound injuries and deaths.

1.3 The Committee sought the Minister's feedback on these issues, who provided information that, in his view:

demonstrates that, overall, the greyhound racing industry in Western Australia provides a net positive economic benefit and is not reliant on government funding.<sup>3</sup>

## Hearings

1.4 The Committee held public hearings with Western Australian Greyhound Racing Association (WAGRA); RWWA and Free the Hounds on 8 May and 12 June 2024. This was to consider the serious concerns raised by Free the Hounds and to enable the Committee to obtain a greater understanding of the issues.

1.5 Copies of the transcripts of evidence are available on the Committee's [website](#).

1.6 The Committee thanks those witnesses who appeared at the hearings for their assistance.

# 2 Background

## Brief overview of the greyhound racing industry

2.1 Australia is one of 5 countries actively undertaking greyhound racing.<sup>4</sup>

2.2 Of the 110 racing tracks worldwide, more than half (64) are in Australia.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Free the Hounds launched in 2015 as an advocacy group committed to improving the lives of greyhounds. It supports the complete end to commercial greyhound racing in Western Australia and around the world. See [What We Do](#), accessed 15 July 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Melissa Harrison, President, Free the Hounds, letter, 22 September 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Hon Paul Papalia CSC MLA, Minister for Racing and Gaming, letter, 12 February 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Other countries are the United States, United Kingdom, Ireland and New Zealand.

<sup>5</sup> Grey2K USA Worldwide, [Greyhound Racing Around the World](#), 2024, accessed 12 September 2024.

- 2.3 In Western Australia, greyhound racing has occurred since 1974. The first race took place on 12 December 1974 at the Canning Agricultural Society Showgrounds. This was the first metropolitan greyhound racing track in Western Australia.<sup>6</sup>
- 2.4 Until 1981, the Canning Greyhound Racing Association (CGRA), which was first licenced in 1973, conducted greyhound racing under the *Greyhound Racing Control Act 1972*. WAGRA succeeded CGRA in 1981 under the *Western Australian Greyhound Racing Association Act (1981)*.
- 2.5 Greyhound racing is currently governed by the *Racing and Wagering Western Australia Act 2003* (Act). The Act established RWWA as 'the principal club and controlling authority of the Western Australian Turf Club, the Western Australian Trotting Association and the Western Australian Greyhound Racing Authority.'<sup>7</sup>
- 2.6 RWWA's charter under the Act, as the regulator of the industry, is to:
1. Foster the development, promote the welfare and ensure the integrity of metropolitan and country thoroughbred racing, harness racing and greyhound racing, in the interests of the long-term viability of the racing industry in Western Australia; and
  2. Carry on the business of operating an off-course totalisator wagering service on races and certain sporting and other events trading as the TAB.<sup>8</sup>
- 2.7 WAGRA currently manages greyhound racing at the Cannington, Northam and Mandurah racetracks. In 2023, there were 357 race meetings hosting 4,127 races,<sup>9</sup> attended by 61,528 people.<sup>10</sup>
- 2.8 According to RWWA, as at May 2023:
- the total economic impact of greyhound racing in Western Australia was \$225.1 million
  - there were 2,011 people involved in the industry, comprising 479 employees, 1,303 participants, including owners, trainers and associated staff in small business set ups<sup>11</sup> and 229 volunteers.<sup>12</sup>
- 2.9 RWWA identifies the community and social benefits of greyhound racing as including:
- racing club partnerships with community organisations
  - supporting the education, training and development of participants and racing club staff and volunteers
  - creating a major source of employment and a variety of career opportunities for Western Australian residents
  - charitable organisations supported by racing revenue
  - bringing together family and friends for a social experience

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<sup>6</sup> Racing WA, [Racing WA Greyhounds History](#).

<sup>7</sup> Racing and Wagering Western Australia, [Annual Report 2023](#), p 10.

<sup>8</sup> Racing and Wagering Western Australia, [Annual Report 2023](#), p 9.

<sup>9</sup> Western Australian Greyhound Racing Association, [Annual Report 2022/23](#), p 16.

<sup>10</sup> Racing and Wagering Western Australia, [WA Racing Contribution](#), 2023, accessed 30 July 2024.

<sup>11</sup> Ian Edwards, Chief Executive Officer, Racing and Wagering Western Australia, [\[transcript of evidence\]](#), Legislative Council, 8 May 2024, p 16.

<sup>12</sup> Racing and Wagering Western Australia, [WA Racing Contribution](#), 2023, accessed 30 July 2024.

- the provision of various amenities, including kids' clubs, playgrounds and petting zoos.<sup>13</sup>

## Funding

2.10 Greyhound racing is largely funded through the racing bets levy (RBL). The Gaming and Wagering Commission of Western Australia collects the RBL and transfers it to RWWA for distribution to race clubs. RWWA describes funding for greyhound racing as income from the State Government in its 2022-23 annual report. The Minister explained:

The RBL is collected by the Gaming and Wagering Commission of Western Australia and then transferred to RWWA for distribution to race clubs, and this is why it shows up in the RWWA annual report as income from the State Government.<sup>14</sup>

2.11 In 2022-23 WAGRA received \$30,435,452 from RWWA in RBL income,<sup>15</sup> as well as \$579,439 in RWWA grants.<sup>16</sup> It also generated income through direct sales to customers such as food and drink.

2.12 Mr Noel Reilly, Chief Executive Officer of WAGRA told the Committee its funding is:

partially through distribution payments from Racing and Wagering Western Australia. We generate our own revenue through food and beverage operations, on-course tote administration operations and also through trial income fees...<sup>17</sup>

2.13 Mrs Marie Falconer, Chief Financial Officer of WAGRA further advised:

Our funding is all through Racing and Wagering association and the distribution is majority of our funding. So, in 2022-23 it was \$33 million.

...

\$30.435 million in total. That is comprising of two components. You have got participant funding, which is mainly stake moneys and prize money for participants, so that money goes straight through. But that is equivalent to about 75 per cent of our distribution. Then we retain club funding, which is to run our race meets, which is about 25 per cent of our funding from RWWA which is around \$8 million and has been around \$8 million for the last two financial years. That is made up of a number of different components.<sup>18</sup>

2.14 In terms of racing and other income, in 2022-23 greyhound owners received \$32.4 million. This included \$17.9 million in prize money and \$1.6 million in breeding bonuses.<sup>19</sup>

## Welfare concerns

2.15 In recent years, the greyhound racing industry has attracted significant controversy in Australia. Concerns over greyhound welfare have been aired in all jurisdictions in which

<sup>13</sup> Racing and Wagering Western Australia, *Size and Scope of the Western Australian Racing Industry*, pp 50-58, 2023, accessed 31 July 2024.

<sup>14</sup> Hon Paul Papalia CSC MLA, Minister for Racing and Gaming, letter, 12 February 2024.

<sup>15</sup> Western Australian Greyhound Racing Association, *Annual Report 2022/23*, p 78.

<sup>16</sup> Western Australian Greyhound Racing Association, *Annual Report 2022/23*, p 31.

<sup>17</sup> Noel Reilly, Chief Executive Officer, Western Australian Greyhound Racing Association, [[transcript of evidence](#)], Legislative Council, 8 May 2024, p 1.

<sup>18</sup> Marie Falconer, Chief Financial Officer, Western Australian Greyhound Racing Association, [[transcript of evidence](#)], Legislative Council, 8 May 2024, p 2.

<sup>19</sup> Racing and Wagering Western Australia, *Annual Report 2023*, p 21. See also Melissa Harrison, President, Free the Hounds, [[transcript of evidence](#)], Legislative Council, 12 June 2024, p 10-11.

racing occurs. This includes petitions calling for the banning of the industry. There have been 6 petitions tabled in the Western Australian Parliament since 2016.<sup>20</sup>

- 2.16 Numerous parliamentary and government-initiated inquiries have investigated these concerns. One of the first was the New South Wales Select Committee on Greyhound Racing's report into *Greyhound Racing in New South Wales* tabled on 28 March 2014.<sup>21</sup> A second report was tabled on 16 October 2014.<sup>22</sup>
- 2.17 A *Four Corners* investigation undertaken by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation on the ill-treatment of greyhound racing dogs was aired on 16 February 2015.<sup>23</sup> This was followed by further inquiries in New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia and the Commonwealth.
- 2.18 In 2017, the Australian Capital Territory became the first Australian jurisdiction to ban greyhound racing.<sup>24</sup>
- 2.19 On 11 July 2024, the New South Wales Government announced a further inquiry into the New South Wales greyhound industry following 'fresh concerns over animal welfare'.<sup>25</sup>
- 2.20 The Western Australian Government has consistently expressed its support for the industry. In a response to one of the petitions tabled in the Legislative Council, the then Minister for Racing and Gaming made the following statement regarding safeguarding greyhound welfare:

The State's greyhound racing industry is subject to strict governance and integrity measures. In addition, RWWA has a comprehensive welfare strategy that guides its organisation in fulfilling its commitment to safeguard the wellbeing of the greyhounds within the industry.

RWWA's vision for the strategy is to set the highest standard in animal welfare for racing in WA, with high standards of care provided for greyhounds, throughout all stages of their lives, from birth to retirement.

There are several welfare initiatives and programs in place to protect the wellbeing of racing greyhounds before, during and post racing. These standards are upheld by the overarching rules and regulations that are enforced by RWWA's Stewards.

The WA Government believes the welfare of all animals involved in the racing industry is of paramount importance. We will continue to support and work with the industry and RWWA to ensure animal welfare remains a key priority for the sector.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See, for example, [Tabled Paper 1591](#), Legislative Council, 20 September 2022.

<sup>21</sup> Select Committee on Greyhound Racing in New South Wales, report 1, [Greyhound Racing in NSW](#), New South Wales, Legislative Council, 28 March 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Select Committee on Greyhound Racing in New South Wales, report 2, [Greyhound Racing in NSW](#), New South Wales, Legislative Council, 16 October 2014.

<sup>23</sup> Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Video: [Making a Killing](#), 17 February 2015.

<sup>24</sup> C Knaus, ['Greyhound racing banned in Canberra after reports of 'egregious' cruelty'](#), The Guardian, 29 November 2017, accessed 30 July 2024.

<sup>25</sup> S Nichols, ['Independent inquiry into Greyhound Racing NSW confirmed after animal welfare conditions raised'](#), ABC News, 11 July 2024, accessed 29 July 2024.

<sup>26</sup> Hon Reece Whitby MLA, Minister for Racing and Gaming, [Letter](#), 30 August 2021, p 1.



### 3 Animal welfare issues raised in hearings

- 3.1 During the Committee’s hearings various issues were raised, including the following concerning greyhound welfare:
- track safety for greyhounds, including comparing straight to round racing tracks
  - the increase from 9 to 23 deaths of greyhounds on track from 2022-23 to 2023-24
  - how RWWA lists a severe injury
  - the absence of veterinarians at public greyhound racing trials (public trials)
  - the circumstances in which greyhounds are euthanised
  - the tracking of greyhounds by RWWA once they exit the industry
  - the number of greyhound breeders in Western Australia
  - a breeding scheme providing an incentive to breed greyhound pups in Western Australia by the payment of bonuses to breeders
  - greyhound rehoming and overbreeding
  - RWWA’s reporting of injuries using starters instead of individual dogs
  - the lack of independent oversight of greyhound racing
  - hereditary disorders in greyhounds such as pannus (eye condition) and dental diseases
  - the move from the Greyhound Injury Full Recovery Scheme and the Greyhound Injury Surgery Rebate (ceased on 31 January 2024) to the Greyhound Recovery Initiative (commenced 1 February 2024).
- 3.2 Some of the evidence on veterinary assistance for greyhounds, injuries and deaths of greyhounds and concerns over rehoming and overbreeding, is summarised below.

#### Veterinary assistance for greyhounds

- 3.3 The Committee heard that WAGRA provides an on-track veterinarian for every race meeting. They inspect each greyhound prior to racing to ensure they are fit to race.<sup>27</sup>
- 3.4 Free the Hounds expressed concerns about a lack of adequate medical equipment available to veterinarians on track. It contended that this is resulting in injuries not being picked up when they occur, only to subsequently surface in a race. Ms Melissa Harrison, President of Free the Hounds, stated:

Now, that vet might have five minutes maximum to look at a dog. There is no diagnostic equipment at the track—no X-rays, nothing like that—it is only what they bring in their bag. The dog is full of adrenaline. You can imagine some of these really muscley dogs that might have had a fracture or something, or some tears within their leg—the vets are only feeling it by hand. Obviously, yes, they are very professional and they get a lot of practice, but we do not know that that time that they are given is actually correct.<sup>28</sup>

- 3.5 Ms Natalie Doyle, Injury Analyst at Free the Hounds, also stated:

that is also why they come back and sustain injury—because they are not picking up on the injuries when they should have. Someone needs to be following up after

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<sup>27</sup> Noel Reilly, Chief Executive Officer, Western Australian Greyhound Racing Association, [\[transcript of evidence\]](#), Legislative Council, 8 May 2024, p 11.

<sup>28</sup> Melissa Harrison, President, Free the Hounds, [\[transcript of evidence\]](#), Legislative Council, 12 June 2024, p 4.

this to make sure that they have not sustained an injury that is not picked up the next day, because then they just come back and race seven days later and then they are injured.<sup>29</sup>

- 3.6 Free the Hounds also highlighted veterinarians not being present at public trials. This is demonstrated in the following exchange:

**Hon DAN CADDY:** Something else you mentioned when answering one of Brad's questions was about public trials. I have never viewed this, but can you explain the process? What is a public trial?

**Ms HARRISON:** It is where the dogs practise running, basically. They are held at one of the racetracks—Cannington, Mandurah or Northam. Usually, you will have only one or two dogs on the track at a time. There is no vet present.

**Hon DAN CADDY:** That was going to be my question. It is simulated racing, basically, but there is no vet present.

**Ms HARRISON:** Correct, but whoever is in charge, the manager or whoever is in control of the race—generally, I believe WAGRA would be there, because I know that there are no stewards present either. It is whoever's name is on the paperwork for the day, if you like. There is also a public straight track in Southern River, I believe, that they use. They have to instruct the participants to take the dog to the vet immediately.

**Hon DAN CADDY:** That was going to be my question. If it is simulated racing, surely there are injuries as well that occur during public trials.

**Ms HARRISON:** Absolutely.<sup>30</sup>

## Injuries and deaths of greyhounds

### Generally

- 3.7 Injuries to and deaths of greyhounds have been central to animal welfare concerns with the industry.

- 3.8 In RWWA's 2022-23 annual report in the section on animal welfare titled 'Greyhound race injury report' makes the following statements:

Most injuries that occur during greyhound racing are of a minor nature and are treated by the on-track veterinarian present at every race meeting in Western Australia.

All racetracks are designed and maintained with the safety of the greyhound in mind, and includes camber, careful surface preparation and monitoring of track conditions using scientific instrumentation.

Track conditions are also inspected by stewards at the beginning of every meeting and periodically throughout the meeting to ensure their suitability for racing.<sup>31</sup>

- 3.9 If a greyhound is injured on track, the veterinarian will assess its severity and determine the course of action. Some minor injuries such as mild joint or muscle soreness require no follow

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<sup>29</sup> Natalie Doyle, Injury Analyst, Free the Hounds, [\[transcript of evidence\]](#), Legislative Council, 12 June 2024, p 21.

<sup>30</sup> Hon Dan Caddy MLC and Melissa Harrison, President, Free the Hounds, [\[transcript of evidence\]](#), Legislative Council, 12 June 2024, p 5. See also Hon Peter Collier MLC, Chair and Melissa Harrison, President, Free the Hounds, [\[transcript of evidence\]](#), Legislative Council, 12 June 2024, p 16.

<sup>31</sup> Racing and Wagering Western Australia, [Annual Report 2023](#), p 47.

up treatment. For more severe injuries, like bone fractures, appropriate treatment will be prescribed. When the injury is too severe resulting in a poor long-term prognosis for the greyhound, euthanasia may be required.<sup>32</sup>

- 3.10 An injury may require a greyhound to be subject to a stand-down period during which it must not compete.<sup>33</sup>
- 3.11 RWWA uses a classification system to categorise injuries to determine the stand down period or a more serious outcome.<sup>34</sup> Injuries are classified as category A, B, C, D, E, F or G.
- 3.12 The following table is described by RWWA as detailing:

the number of injury incidents reported in each category, where a greyhound with at least one injury was identified by an on-track veterinarian after participation in a race or qualifying trial in Western Australia.<sup>35</sup>

Figure 1. *Greyhound reported injury incidents 2022-23*

| Injury category                   | Total number of incidents | Incident risk rate (incidents per 1000 starts) | Incident rate as % of total starters |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Category A                        | 4                         | 0.13   | 0.01                                 |
| Category B                        | 389                       | 12.63  | 1.26                                 |
| Category C                        | 228                       | 7.40   | 0.74                                 |
| Category D                        | 158                       | 5.13   | 0.51                                 |
| Category E                        | 9                         | 0.29   | 0.03                                 |
| Total A-E                         | 788                       | 25.58  | 2.56                                 |
| Category F (serious injuries)     | 84                        | 2.73   | 0.27                                 |
| Category G (non-serious injuries) | 704                       | 22.85  | 2.29                                 |

[Source: Racing and Wagering Western Australia, [Annual Report 2023](#), p 49]

### How injuries are recorded

- 3.13 Free the Hounds told the Committee about the use by RWWA of starters<sup>36</sup> to record injuries rather than individual dogs, with the latter resulting in a more serious injury rate:

**Ms DOYLE:** That is because they use starters instead of individual dogs. A starter is every single time a dog has a race. For the last racing season there were over 30 000 starters. Then they divide the injuries sustained between the starters. There were 785 injuries, and that makes an injury rate of I think it is about 2.6 per cent. But when you look at individual dogs, you have got 1 668 dogs that raced for that year and I think it was about 560 dogs that sustained an injury, so you have got a 36 per cent injury rate per individual dog. It is all in the way —

**Hon SAMANTHA ROWE:** It is the way it is reported.

<sup>32</sup> Such as a severe fractured hock. See Denis Borovica, Chief Racing Integrity Officer, Racing and Wagering Western Australia, [[transcript of evidence](#)], Legislative Council, 8 May 2024, p 9.

<sup>33</sup> [Rules of Greyhound Racing 2022](#), rule 41(1).

<sup>34</sup> Racing and Wagering Western Australia, [Annual Report 2023](#), p 48-49.

<sup>35</sup> Racing and Wagering Western Australia, [Annual Report 2023](#), p 49.

<sup>36</sup> Each time a dog has a race.

**Ms DOYLE:** It is the way they report it. I mean, it is a valid way of reporting it; it tells you how many dogs are getting injured per race but it does not tell you how many individual dogs are being injured. It is only just the tip of the iceberg.<sup>37</sup>

3.14 Free the Hounds also gave evidence about significant injuries off-track:

**Ms DOYLE:** Well, they have off-track injuries, there were over 800 off-track injuries. They are all given a 10-day standdown so we have no idea about the severity of injury.

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** So 530 on track, did you say? On-track injuries was— sorry.

**Ms DOYLE:** There were 785 on-track injuries.

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** Sorry, 785. And another 800 off track, you think?

**Ms DOYLE:** Over.

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** Eight hundred.

**Ms DOYLE:** Over that amount off track. We do not get any information about those injuries; we do not know how severe they are. We can only base it on how long it takes for the dogs to come back to racing. Some of them come back after the 10-day standdown that they are given, but some of them come back a hundred days later. It could have been a major injury but we will never know.<sup>38</sup>

### Recent increase in deaths

3.15 The Committee also heard that on track deaths of greyhounds had increased from 9 in 2022-23 to 23 in 2023-24. RWWA could not point to a specific reason for this increase:

**Mr EDWARDS:** There is not one reason. As Denis referred to before, there are a whole collection of incidents that are documented through stewards' reports and not a consistent pattern through that. It is a significant enough jump for us to be interested in investigating, which is part of the work that the epidemiologist has been engaged for, which Denis referred to earlier. It is not as simple as saying there is one particular reason for it. It is not one track or it is not one point of a track that has caused it.

**Mr BOROVICA:** No. As you say, it is a number that we obviously have noticed and we are questioning it as to the change. I think the important thing to remember is that the decision to euthanise the dog at the race is made by the veterinarian who is on duty and it is undertaken on the basis that the veterinary opinion is that that is the most suitable outcome for the greyhound given the extent of the injuries. That is what the vets are telling us and that is what those figures that Ian was talking about represent. Other than that, there has not been any alteration that explains the nine to 23 that we are aware of at the moment.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Hon Samantha Rowe MLC and Natalie Doyle, Injury Analyst, Free the Hounds, [\[transcript of evidence\]](#), Legislative Council, 12 June 2024, p 4.

<sup>38</sup> Hon Dr Brad Pettitt MLC and Natalie Doyle, Injury Analyst, Free the Hounds, [\[transcript of evidence\]](#), Legislative Council, 12 June 2024, p 4.

<sup>39</sup> Ian Edwards, Chief Executive Officer, Racing and Wagering Western Australian and Denis Borovica, Chief Racing Integrity Officer, Racing and Wagering Western Australia, [\[transcript of evidence\]](#), Legislative Council, 8 May 2024, p 9.

## FINDING 1

There has been a 155% increase in the number of on track greyhound deaths from the 2022 to 2023 financial years, despite investment in animal welfare measures.

- 3.16 Free the Hounds referred to other deaths of greyhounds that are not counted as on track deaths:

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** Do you know how many dogs are euthanised each year? Is that information available?

**Ms HARRISON:** It depends on what it is for. We have had instances where dogs have had an injury on track, been taken to the vet and have then had a heart attack or have not made it through the anaesthetic, and that dog is not counted as an on-track death. It has been counted as all sorts of things—accident, injury.<sup>40</sup>

- 3.17 Free the Hounds also gave evidence that there had been '100 other deaths within the industry' within a racing year, including in training and public trials.<sup>41</sup>

## FINDING 2

There is a lack of clarity regarding the overall number and reporting of greyhound deaths and serious injuries.

## Dog rehoming and overbreeding

- 3.18 RWVA's Greyhounds as Pets program (GAP) encourages and enables safe rehoming of retired greyhounds in Western Australia that are healthy and behaviourally sound.<sup>42</sup> These include greyhounds who have recovered from serious injury.<sup>43</sup>
- 3.19 RWVA's 2022-23 annual report has a dedicated section for GAP. It states there were 273 greyhounds retired to the program.<sup>44</sup>
- 3.20 There are other groups that are involved in finding homes for greyhounds.<sup>45</sup>
- 3.21 The Committee heard evidence that GAP cannot take in every greyhound and that there is a waitlist.<sup>46</sup> Concerns were raised about the number of dogs that can be sustainably rehomed each year, considering the rate of breeding, retirement and rehoming capacity.<sup>47</sup> Free the Hounds referred to overbreeding as a 'massive, massive issue'.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Hon Dr Brad Pettitt MLC and Melissa Harrison, President, Free the Hounds, [\[transcript of evidence\]](#), Legislative Council, 12 June 2024, p 5.

<sup>41</sup> Melissa Harrison, President, Free the Hounds, [\[transcript of evidence\]](#), Legislative Council, 12 June 2024, p 5.

<sup>42</sup> Greyhounds as Pets WA, [About](#), accessed 5 August 2024.

<sup>43</sup> Racing and Wagering Western Australia, [Annual Report 2023](#), p 47.

<sup>44</sup> Racing and Wagering Western Australia, [Annual Report 2023](#), p 52.

<sup>45</sup> Dr Anna Smet, Head of Animal Wellbeing, Racing and Wagering Western Australia, [\[transcript of evidence\]](#), Legislative Council, 8 May 2024, p 2.

<sup>46</sup> Dr Anna Smet, Head of Animal Wellbeing, Racing and Wagering Western Australia, [\[transcript of evidence\]](#), Legislative Council, 8 May 2024, p 18.

<sup>47</sup> Hon Dr Brad Pettitt MLC, [\[transcript of evidence\]](#), Legislative Council, 8 May 2024, p 25.

<sup>48</sup> Melissa Harrison, President, Free the Hounds, [\[transcript of evidence\]](#), Legislative Council, 12 June 2024, p 9.

## 4 Correspondence with the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs

- 4.1 The Committee has written to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs regarding the animal welfare issues raised in the hearings. This is because the Legislative Council referred four petitions in this Parliament supporting banning/opposing greyhound racing to that committee between May 2021 and August 2024.<sup>49</sup>
- 4.2 There is also a pending e-petition supporting the phasing out of greyhound racing in Western Australia.

## 5 Conclusion

- 5.1 The end of the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament is drawing near and the Committee has insufficient time to inquire further into the issues raised in the hearings due to its other standing obligations.
- 5.2 The Committee concludes there is a clear public interest in the issues being fully investigated by a parliamentary committee. This is warranted given the serious animal welfare concerns raised by Free the Hounds and the significant differences of opinion on the benefits of the industry to the State. Further, to the Committee's knowledge, unlike some other Australian jurisdictions, there has not been a detailed inquiry into the industry in Western Australia.
- 5.3 Further evidence should be gathered to enable the issues to be explored and analysed in greater detail, including through submissions from stakeholders and in hearings.
- 5.4 The Committee considers that, for a more detailed examination to be undertaken, a select committee should be established in the 42nd Parliament.<sup>50</sup>

### RECOMMENDATION

The Legislative Council in the 42nd Parliament establish a select committee to inquire into and report on animal welfare issues in the Western Australian greyhound racing industry.



Hon Peter Collier MLC  
**Chair**

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, [Tabled Paper 1591](#), Legislative Council, 20 September 2022.

<sup>50</sup> Free the Hounds reiterated its call for an inquiry during its hearing before the Committee. See Melissa Harrison, President, Free the Hounds, [\[transcript of evidence\]](#), Legislative Council, 12 June 2024, p 20.

## GLOSSARY

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| Term                 | Definition   |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>Act</b>           | <i>Racing and Wagering Western Australia Act 2003</i>    |
| <b>Committee</b>     | Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations |
| <b>CGRA</b>          | Canning Greyhound Racing Association                     |
| <b>GAP</b>           | Greyhounds as Pets program                               |
| <b>Public Trials</b> | public greyhound racing trials                           |
| <b>RBL</b>           | Racing Bets Levy   |
| <b>RWWA</b>          | Racing and Wagering Western Australia                    |
| <b>WAGRA</b>         | Western Australian Greyhound Racing Association          |

## **Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations**

### **Date first appointed:**

30 June 2005

### **Terms of Reference:**

The following is an extract from Schedule 1 of the Legislative Council Standing Orders:

3. Estimates and Financial Operations Committee
    - 3.1 An Estimates and Financial Operations Committee is established.
    - 3.2 The Committee consists of 5 Members, 3 of whom shall be non-Government Members.
    - 3.3 The functions of the Committee are to -
      - (a) consider and report on -
        - (i) the estimates of expenditure laid before the Council each year;
        - (ii) any matter relating to the financial administration of the State; and
        - (iii) any Bill or other matter relating to the foregoing functions referred by the Council;
- and
- (b) consult regularly with the Auditor General.





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