



Minister for Housing; Racing and Gaming

Our ref: 27-27704

Hon Simon O'Brien MLC
Chairman Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
GPO Box A11
Perth WA 6837

Dear Mr O'Brien

PETITION NO. 130 - OPPOSE GREYHOUND RACING

Thank you for your letter of 13 October 2016.

The petition you refer to has linked its objections to greyhound racing based on an independent inquiry (the McHugh Report) into the greyhound racing Industry in NSW which detailed widespread evidence of systemic cruelty in that State.

It should be noted that the Western Australian greyhound racing industry is significantly different to that of NSW, both in terms of size and the manner of operation and to draw conclusions from the NSW inquiry and apply those to the Western Australian industry is not advisable.

As you are aware, the NSW Government recently announced its decision to reverse the proposed ban on greyhound racing.

The following responses were provided by Racing and Wagering Western Australia (RWWA) addressing both the terms of the petition and the submission from the principal petitioner.

Claim

Only a total ban of greyhound racing will resolve the issues identified in the McHugh Report.

Response

The NSW Government now believes that the industry is capable of reform and has subsequently overturned its original decision to ban greyhound racing.

Claim

The findings of the McHugh Report are not isolated to NSW.

Response

Evidence and facts produced by RWWA clearly demonstrate that the NSW situation is significantly different to the WA greyhound racing industry.

Claim

The Western Australian Greyhound Racing Association (WAGRA) is not in a financial position to implement welfare initiatives that are required to meet expectations.

Response

WAGRA is not responsible for the implementation of welfare requirements beyond providing a safe racing environment. All other welfare initiatives are funded and monitored by RWWA.

Claim

The cost associated with the NSW recommendations is \$20m per annum and if implemented in WA would be financially untenable for WAGRA.

Response

Any costs associated with the implementation of new recommendations would be met by RWWA.

RWWA has reviewed the 79 recommendations arising from the McHugh Report which has identified that:

- Forty five percent of the recommendations are directed towards changes to enabling legislations and Acts that govern the NSW operating model. Many of these do not translate directly to WA.
- Only 26 recommendations need to be either adopted in full or in part in WA to achieve 100 percent compliance with the recommendations of the McHugh Report (excluding technical Act changes regarding membership of industry regulatory bodies which does not translate directly to WA legislation but have been flagged for Government consideration).
- While there are 26 recommendations to be considered to strengthen the WA position (which are being pursued as a priority), these recommendations are not considered to be high risk or related to significant shortcomings.

The following points should also be noted in relation to the comparisons made between NSW and Western Australia in the petition:

- The issues specific to NSW – which instigated the McHugh Report – need to be understood in the context of size and scale of the industry.
- Western Australia maintains three racetracks with a relative population of greyhounds to maintain racing at those three venues.
- All stages of a greyhound's life cycle are monitored and regulated by RWWA which oversees breeding, racing and retirement management (via the Greyhounds as Pets program).

- A comprehensive investigation carried out in February 2015 by RWWA and the RSPCA found no evidence of live baiting in Western Australia. Furthermore, by utilising the extensive powers available to Stewards pursuant to the RWWA Act, every lead and complaint received by RWWA is thoroughly investigated. This includes covert surveillance, vehicle and property searches, and monitoring as required.
- There has been a gradual decline in breeding numbers in Western Australia over the past three years as this State has always been an importer of dogs and relies on eastern states dogs to fulfil the required number of animals to maintain its racing program.
- RWWA recently invested more than \$13M into the new Cannington track which was specifically designed to minimise injury.
- RWWA has further invested in its Greyhounds as Pets adoption program with a dedicated kennelling facility soon to be finalised.

In relation to issues directly concerning the welfare of greyhounds, such as wastage, supply and injury, RWWA, according to its Greyhound Welfare Strategy, adheres to the following principles;

RWWA is committed to ensuring that the best levels of care are given to greyhounds throughout all stages of their lives, through a program of investment, education, monitoring and regulation. When a greyhound retires from the racing industry, at any age, RWWA will aim to have every healthy and behaviourally sound greyhound re-homed.

The central disciplines that comprise the strategy include:

- Controlling supply via greyhound breeding programs;
- Increasing demand for greyhounds as pets and promoting the associated program;
- Industry education;
- Tracking of all greyhounds at every stage of their life cycle;
- Policing the industry; and
- Overarching governance to ensure that the animal welfare strategy is applied across all stages of animals' lives.

With regard to the transport of dogs overseas or interstate, in Western Australia, RWWA rigorously enforces the rules requiring notification of the movement of racing greyhounds, and no evidence exists of greyhounds being exported to any of the South East Asian countries identified as non-compliant with welfare standards. Due to the nature of the greyhound racing industry in Western Australia, the importation of greyhounds is more commonplace than the export of greyhounds.

It should be noted that the WA greyhound racing industry is highly regulated, and the Liberal National Government does not support banning the sport in Western Australia.

Thank you for writing to me on this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brendon Grylls', written in a cursive style.

Hon Brendon Grylls MLA
MINISTER FOR RACING AND GAMING