

Greyhound racing to be banned in New South Wales, Baird Government announces

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Greyhound racing will be banned in New South Wales from July 1 next year, with Premier Mike Baird saying the "widespread and systemic mistreatment of animals" cannot be tolerated.

It comes after a special commission of inquiry found overwhelming evidence of animal cruelty, including mass greyhound killings and live baiting.

In announcing his reasons for the ban, Mr Baird said the inquiry found:

- Between 48,000–68,000 dogs were killed in past 12 years in NSW because they were too slow or otherwise unsuitable for racing
- Live baiting is widespread, with about 10–20 per cent of trainers engaged in the practice
- Greyhound Racing NSW had a policy of deliberately misreporting the number of dog deaths and injuries
- The industry is not capable of reforming over the short or medium term

Mr Baird said the Government had received the report of the commission, conducted by former High Court judge Michael McHugh, and the findings were damning.

The ban also comes after the ABC's Four Corners program exposed widespread and extreme animal cruelty and cheating through the use of live baiting to entice and train greyhounds, which then led to the special commission.

Internal documents revealed senior greyhound racing administrators in NSW were actively strategising to downplay live baiting in the industry in the days before the program was set to air.

Mr Baird said the State Government would work toward an orderly shutdown of the industry over the coming months.

"Certainly this is not an easy decision," Mr Baird said.

"It's not something that has been taken lightly. But when confronted with Justice McHugh's report, I believe there is no other alternative."

Greyhound trainers say they will fight until the end to stop the ban, with one trainer blaming the ABC for the decision, not Mr Baird.

In his recommendation to Parliament, Mr McHugh said it should be considered whether the industry had lost its "social licence" to operate and should be shut down.



PHOTO: Mike Baird said the decision showed the NSW Government was making animal welfare a priority. (ABC News)

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Key points:

- NSW becomes first state in Australia to ban greyhound racing
- Mike Baird says the Government was left with "no acceptable course of action except to close this industry down"
- Detailed plans for the shutdown will be developed with industry consultation

Four Corners: Making A Killing



Four Corners exposes the use of piglets, possums and rabbits as live bait in secret greyhound training sessions.

His alternative recommendation was extensive reform, including tighter regulation. But he said if the industry continued, there was a "very real risk" that live baiting would continue.

There are 6,809 registered greyhounds in NSW, which will need to be re-homed, transferred interstate or put down, the inquiry found.

'Horrorific' evidence of animal cruelty heard by special commission

Mr Baird said the decision showed the State Government was making animal welfare a priority.

"As a humane and responsible Government, we are left with no acceptable course of action except to close this industry down," Mr Baird said.

"This is the inevitable conclusion to be drawn from the appalling revelations in Mr McHugh's report and his considered view that any other measures are unlikely to protect animals from further cruelty."

Mr Baird described the evidence of animal cruelty heard by the commission as "chilling and horrorific".

"As you will see when you go through the report, he has shone the light on an industry that has overseen the slaughter of tens of thousands of healthy dogs whose only crime was they weren't fast enough," Mr Baird said.

"He's also shown an industry which has turned a blind eye to the barbaric practice of live baiting. He's shown that the industry has a culture of deception.

"Indeed the commissioner has found that it is no longer entitled to the trust of the community."

In a statement, Greyhound Racing NSW (GRNSW) said the industry was "devastated" by the decision and responded to the ban by emphasising its overhaul of integrity protocols since the live-baiting scandal broke.

"GRNSW had taken decisive action as it strived to recover community trust and believed that its reforms and strategic direction could have transformed the sport into a stronger, sustainable one in which animal welfare and integrity were fundamental to a vibrant future," they said.

"The NSW Government, after receiving the report of the special commission of inquiry, has come to a different conclusion, one that will rock industry participants and associated communities around our state, as well as the hardworking GRNSW team and its partners who have been working tirelessly to improve the industry."

GRNSW has now suspended racing for the next seven days.

'A tough day' for many in the industry

Racing Minister and Deputy Premier Troy Grant said he was sure that everyone who read the report would be horrified by it, as he was.

He said the evidence in the report went far beyond the single issue of live baiting.

"No Government wants to close down an industry and I absolutely want to acknowledge that there are many, many great people in the greyhound industry who will be devastated by this news," he said.

What's happening across Australia?

- Racing to continue in **Queensland** with continued vigilance, Racing Minister says
 - **ACT** Chief Minister announces sport has 'no future' in the territory
 - The industry is 'on notice' in **Victoria** but racing will continue, Minister says
 - 'No plans' to ban racing in 'much-smaller, heavily-regulated' **WA** industry, Government Minister says
 - **Tasmania** Government awaiting a parliamentary report
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What now for the dogs?

"But there are too many of those in the industry for financial gain or for whatever other motivation they had, chose to put animal welfare as their least consideration in their own pursuit of profit or what other motivation they had.



New homes can be found for former racing greyhounds following a ban on the sport in New South Wales, dog welfare advocates say.

"This is a tough day for all those connected to the industry but I urge them not to panic."

The State Opposition said while Labor deplored animal cruelty, the Premier had jumped the gun.

"We're talking about wiping out an entire industry," Labor's racing spokesman Michael Daley said.

Welfare group calls for national ban

Animals Australia's Shantha Hamade described the announcement as "a courageous decision in line with the community expectation".

"We are dealing with an industry who, for more than a decade, has been founded on the practice of live baiting," she said.

"Also an industry that has happily been responsible for the slaughter of tens of thousands of dogs, healthy dogs each year and so - let's not forget the drugging of dogs for performance enhancing reasons that goes on in this industry."

Ms Hamade said other states should follow the lead of NSW.

"Everything that is going on in NSW is going on nationally and without a national approach to this problem, what we'll see happening is that trainers in NSW will start moving their dogs interstate and racing them interstate," she said.

Countries that allow greyhound racing:

- Australia
- Mexico
- Macau
- New Zealand
- Republic of Ireland
- United Kingdom
- USA
- Vietnam

More on this story:

- Making a Killing: Four Corners' greyhound live-baiting report
- Piglets, possums and rabbits used as greyhound live bait: Four Corners
- Greyhound Racing NSW charges 179 trainers over allegedly exporting dogs to Macau
- Greyhound injuries downplayed to avoid negative scrutiny, boss admits
- National rallies call for end to greyhound racing
- More greyhounds being adopted amid calls for end to racing
- Former greyhound racing chief 'had no evidence of widespread live baiting'

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