

# Transition to Closure of the NSW Greyhound Racing Industry

## Questions and answers

### **Why is the greyhound industry being shut down in NSW?**

Once the live baiting issue came to light, the NSW Government commissioned a Special Commission of Inquiry into the Greyhound Industry in NSW. The Inquiry was undertaken by Former High Court Justice Michael McHugh AC.

On 16 June 2016, the Commission delivered its report to Government. The Inquiry found overwhelming evidence of systemic animal cruelty, including mass greyhound killings and live baiting. The Report concluded that the NSW Greyhound Racing Industry has fundamental animal welfare issues and integrity and governance failings that are unlikely to be remedied. Therefore, Government has supported the recommendation that Parliament consider whether the greyhound racing industry had lost its social license to operate and should no longer be permitted to operate in NSW.

### **What evidence of animal cruelty did the inquiry find?**

Based on the testimony of witnesses, the Commission found direct evidence that trainers engaged in the barbaric practice of live baiting. A vocal minority of trainers believed live baiting was necessary even after it was exposed in the media and those alleged to be responsible were charged.

Small animals, either alive or dead, have been used to train greyhounds. The commission found that live rabbits were offered for sale at race tracks.

It was also found that there were large-scale killings of healthy greyhounds by the industry. The Commission found that between 48,000 and 68,000 greyhounds – or at least half of all greyhounds bred to race – were killed in the past 12 years because they were deemed uncompetitive.

### **Why don't you reform the industry instead?**

The Government has accepted the Commission's advice that it lacks confidence in the ability for the industry to be reformed. The Commission found the industry is inherently based on the wastage of greyhounds through killing and mistreatment. Even if the industry committed to reforming or implemented more ethical practices, the industry would not be sustainable without the large-scale wastage of greyhounds.

Mr McHugh stated there was a "very real risk" that practices such as live baiting would continue. It is likely that any reform won't provide lasting results, given the entrenched culture of the industry.

### **In what timeframe will the industry be shut down?**

A plan to carry out the orderly wind-up of the industry will be implemented within the next 12 months. Greyhound Racing will be able to continue until 1 July 2017.

### **How will the shut-down occur?**

A transition plan has been developed and a taskforce established. The taskforce is led by the NSW Department of Justice and includes representatives from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Treasury, the Department of Primary Industries, the Office Local Government and the RSPCA NSW. The taskforce will develop a detailed industry shutdown plan during the second half of 2016 following consultation with the greyhound industry and animal welfare organisations.

It is proposed to appoint an eminent figure with relevant qualifications and experience to lead the taskforce in the process of closing down the industry.

To support an orderly transition, legislative changes will be brought forward in three phases.

### **What are the three phases in the Legislative Package?**

The legislation to cease greyhound racing in NSW will be brought forward in three stages over the next 12 months:

1. Immediate regulatory amendment to the racing rules making it an offence to dispose of greyhounds without Greyhound Racing NSW (GRNSW) approval;
2. An amendment to the Greyhound Racing Act 2009 to allow the Minister for Racing to appoint an administrator to GRNSW to manage the closing down of the industry;
3. Amendments to the Racing and Betting Act 1998 to ban greyhound racing and allow for an orderly shutdown of the industry.

### **What will happen to the animals and what is Government doing about this?**

As of July 7 2016 there 6,809 are registered greyhounds in NSW.

The NSW Government will support RSPCA NSW to help ensure greyhounds are treated humanely once transitioned out of the industry. The options for these animals will include:

- Remaining in their current home;
- Rehomed through an adoption program;
- Transferred interstate or overseas to jurisdictions that have appropriate animal welfare standards; or
- Humane euthanasia.

The Government will provide the RSPCA and the NSW Police Force with the means to oversee the humane treatment of greyhounds as the industry is shut down.

### **What support is the Government providing for owners and trainers impacted by these changes?**

The Government will soon announce a detailed support package to ensure animal welfare and assist the industry in the immediate future.

Details will be available at [www.racing.justice.nsw.gov.au](http://www.racing.justice.nsw.gov.au)

### **I have a young dog that is not registered yet. Is there time to register my dog so it is included in these measures?**

Yes. You have three weeks to register your dog while the Government puts in place the transition measures for working with owners of registered dogs.

### **Why can't you shut the industry down immediately?**

The Commission highlighted the killing of greyhounds on a massive scale. It is important the Government protects animal welfare as a priority and that the industry is shutdown in conducted in an orderly manner.

The Government will provide advice and support to industry participants and it is important that this is done in an effective and efficient way. A phased shutdown over 12 months will enable this to be done.

### **Are some of the industry being punished because of misconduct they did not take part in?**

The Commission found the industry has systemic and endemic animal cruelty issues on a very large scale. The Commission did not have confidence that the industry as a whole could reform in a sustainable way.

The Government will provide support to industry participants, including re-skilling of staff in businesses associated with the sector and the provision of advice and support for small businesses.

### **Won't this lead to the industry still operating but illegally?**

The NSW Police Force and RSPCA NSW have strong powers and enforcement ability to ensure laws are adhered to. The Government will introduce high penalties for continuing to race greyhounds, once it has been banned or for engaging in other unlawful conduct resulting in animal cruelty.

### **Do any other states or countries ban this sport?**

Yes. According to the report, Australia is one of only a small number of countries world-wide where a commercial greyhound racing industry is still permitted to exist.

The Commission report states that greyhound racing either does not exist on a commercial basis in many jurisdictions or it has been banned. Greyhound racing has also been banned in the vast majority of States in the United States of America. According to advice the Commission received in April 2016, in the USA only 19 dog tracks remain in six US states: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Iowa and West Virginia. The last greyhound track in Texas closed on 1 January 2016. In mid-May, 2016, the Arizona legislature legislated to ban greyhound racing in that state by the end of 2016, making it the 40th state in the USA to do so.

The report notes only the following countries host a commercial greyhound racing industry:

- Australia
- Mexico
- Macau (Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China)
- New Zealand
- Republic of Ireland
- United Kingdom (England, Scotland and Wales)
- USA
- Vietnam

The report further notes that the Commission is also aware that greyhound racing takes place in several countries not listed above. However, greyhound racing does not appear to operate on a commercial basis or as a professional sport in those countries.

### **What can I do to help?**

The RSPCA will soon be announcing how to register your interest in adopting a greyhound. Keep up to date at [www.rspcansw.org.au](http://www.rspcansw.org.au)

### **Who can I contact to get more information?**

You can go to [www.racing.justice.nsw.gov.au](http://www.racing.justice.nsw.gov.au) for a list of government contacts or call our information hotline on **1800 812 115**

### **What other support services are available for those affected?**

For people affected by these changes who need immediate wellbeing support there are a number of support services including:

- Lifeline 131 114
- Beyond Blue 1300 224 636

### **For more information**

Visit the website at [www.racing.justice.nsw.gov.au](http://www.racing.justice.nsw.gov.au)

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