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NATIONAL ACT

ACT government says it can no longer support greyhound racing after NSW decision

By Henry Belot and David Polkinghorne

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ACT Chief Minister Andrew Barr will ban the greyhound racing industry in Canberra saying it has turned a blind eye to animal cruelty for too long.

The decision was made after [NSW Premier Mike Baird announced the sport would become illegal](#) from July 2017, after considering an 800-page report tabled by a Special Commission into the industry.



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Greyhound racing banned in NSW

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NSW Premier

The report found between 48,891 and 68,448 dogs had been killed because they were considered too slow to pay their way or were unsuitable for racing.

It also found an estimated 180 greyhounds each year sustained catastrophic injuries, such as skull fractures or broken backs that lead to immediate death, during races.





NSW will ban the sport of greyhound racing after a damning report tens of thousands of dogs were being killed.

Photo: Anthony Johnson

Mr Barr, who is in New Zealand on a trade mission, said it was untenable for the government to continue allowing and financially supporting greyhound racing.

"The findings of from the Special Commission of Inquiry into the NSW greyhound racing industry are damning," he said.

Mr Baird said the report was "chilling, confronting, horrific" and showed the industry had "overseen the slaughter of tens of thousands of healthy dogs whose only crime was not being fast enough".

Mr Barr said his government would consider the findings of the report before announcing a process to ban the sport in Canberra. It is not clear when the sport will be banned, but it is likely to match the NSW deadline of mid-2017.

The government had been reviewing the terms of reference for the ACT Racing Industry, although a decision was not expected for some time. The ban would result in a small loss of Canberra jobs.

The decision was made after considerable pressure on Thursday from RSPCA chief executive Tammy Ven Dange, who described Mr Baird's stance as "brilliant" and "an amazing day for greyhounds everywhere".

"This is an important milestone for animal welfare today, particularly for greyhounds," she said.

"RSPCA ACT has been calling on the ACT government to end funding and to ban greyhound racing since last year.

"We are very pleased to see them make this historic decision that is a win for these gentle giants everywhere."

Greens MLA Shane Rattenbury, who holds the balance of power in the ACT Legislative Assembly, also called on the government to ban the industry immediately after the NSW decision.

"This is huge news from the NSW Government and a step that the ACT must immediately follow," he said.

"We don't need to wait for NSW to commence its wind down; the ACT should move to shut this industry down now."

The NSW investigation was prompted by an ABC's Four Corners program that showed surveillance footage of piglets, rabbits and possums being mauled and used as live bait for greyhounds to increase their performance on the track.

After the ABC report, [Canberra Greyhound Racing Club chairman Ron Peck condemned the actions of trainers interstate](#), calling for anyone involved in live baiting to be banned for life and for the sport to become more transparent in its operations.

The Canberra Greyhound Racing Club spent close to \$30,000 on new security systems to strengthen its bid to prevent illegal live baiting, adamant the practice was not a problem in Canberra.

Club chairman Ron Peck said he was very disappointed by the ACT government's decision.

"We've done nothing wrong, nothing like that [live baiting etc] has been done in Canberra and now they're banning us," he said. "It's not on."

Mr Peck said the biggest challenge would be re-homing dogs given they could be sent to the NSW racing community.

"It's going to be a battle because there's a lot of dogs to find homes for, it's going to be really hard," he said. "I'd hate to think how many dogs are out there."

"A lot of people will try and send them to Victoria because they're going to still be racing and probably send some to New Zealand.

"We try to find a home for as many as possible ... all we can do now is hope and pray that they can be all re-homed."

There are 6809 registered greyhounds in NSW. Government plans for the transition of the industry including rehoming, transfer to interstate competition, or euthanasia.

The ACT ban comes after Mr Rattenbury routinely called for the government to stop providing \$1 million annually in taxpayer subsidies to support the industry.

"This funding should cease immediately," he said.

"It is completely unacceptable for our government to financially prop up this cruel and inhumane industry and I have previously called on both the responsible minister and the Chief Minister to put an end to the funding.

The ACT Greyhound Support Network has also called on the ACT government to end its \$1 million in annual funding to the local racing industry.

Earlier on Thursday, opposition racing spokesman Brendan Smyth said the Liberal party would consider the findings of the NSW report before making a decision on the industry.

"There is no doubt however, that the decision in NSW will have enormous implications for the local industry here in the ACT, given many of the greyhounds that compete locally come from interstate," Mr Smyth said.

"We have absolutely no tolerance for animal cruelty and will now consider NSW's decision."

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Mike Baird

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In response to widespread illegal and unconscionable activity, including the slaughtering of tens of thousands of dogs, I can today announce that NSW is putting an end to greyhound racing.

More than a year ago, we established a Special Commission of Inquiry into the greyhound industry after very disturbing reports emerged of cruelty to animals and other illegal activities.

We have now received the report of the Commission, conducted by former High Court Judge Michael McHugh, ... [See More](#)



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