



Mike Baird wants everyone to know the decision to ban greyhound racing was the right one

MIKE Baird was criticised by some after his decision to ban greyhound racing in NSW, and now he's hit back at his naysayers.



James Matthey @jamesmatthey

🕒 JULY 9, 2016 10:37PM



Mike Baird is confident he made the right call. *Source:AAP*

NSW Premier Mike Baird has hit back at critics of his decision to ban greyhound racing in the state.

[On Thursday Baird announced all greyhound racing would be banned from July next year](#) — a decision made in light of the horrific findings of a Special Commission on Inquiry into the industry. Commissioner Michael McHugh recommended Parliament shut the industry down after the Inquiry found between 49,000 and 68,000 dogs were killed in NSW over the past 12 years.

The ACT followed NSW's lead later that day.

While that decision was met with applause by animal welfare groups, those in the greyhound racing industry were understandably upset that their livelihood would soon be taken away from them.



Mr Baird said he had no choice but to act the way he did. *Source:AAP*

“Here are the top 10 things that just aren’t true about the shut down of greyhound racing on 1 July next year. This has been a tough decision, but a considered one.

1. You are punishing many for the crimes of a few

Unfortunately, the report of the Special Commission is very clear that these practices were systemic — for too long, too many people who knew what was going on didn’t do enough to reform greyhound racing.

Intentional deception and illegal activity was rife ... I feel very strong empathy for those who are caught up in this who have not done anything wrong. They should feel deep anger towards others in their industry who have brought us to this place.

2. This is a land grab for developers. Wentworth Park is going to be sold off

No, it’s not. Let me state this as clearly as possible: we will not be developing any tracks on Crown Land into residential or high rise.

They will be used for community space. We will consult with the community about what this looks like, but it may include open space or sports facilities or even things like schools if appropriate.

3. All these greyhounds are now going to die. These changes are actually worse for them

There is absolutely a huge challenge here. We are working very closely with the RSPCA and their partners to re-home as many dogs as possible and our strong preference is for dogs to remain with their current owners or be adopted into homes. One of the reasons we have given till July next year for the industry to close is so we can work out the best possible way to care for as many as dogs as possible.



What will become of Wentworth Park? Source: News Corp Australia

4. This is a hastily made decision and there has been no consultation

The opposite is true. When the *Four Corners* story on this emerged over a year ago, our response was not to make immediate decisions. It was to undertake a very detailed inquiry, overseen by a former High Court Judge. That inquiry has taken over a year and had the powers of a Royal Commission. It received 2000 submissions and held private and public hearings. It has been in-depth. It has been comprehensive. There was nothing hasty about it, or this decision.

5. The Government is hypocritical and will still take money from people in NSW gambling on dog racing in other states

Let me be clear, we don't want to, and won't, be profiting from poor animal welfare practices. We don't want to curtail your right to punt. But we also don't want the government to profit from practices like the ones we have seen outlined in this review.

6. This Government just wants to ban everything

I understand why some people feel like they are being over-governed when we introduce more laws — particularly if it is a law you don't like. Creating extra restrictions brings me no joy. But neither does the death of thousands of dogs a year. My instinct on this, before the Inquiry's report was handed down, was that we would find a way to reform this industry. But then I read the report. I didn't need to read it twice. We are intervening here because we have to.

7. The industry was already reforming and on its way to a better future

Although there had been some progress made, the Inquiry found that the industry has had many years to reform and failed to do so. In fact, even after the *Four Corners* investigation and with the full knowledge that we had ordered an inquiry, the report found trainers were STILL using live baiting and flouting the rules.



The future of greyhounds is still unclear. Source: News Corp Australia

8. A total shut-down is an over-reaction. You should have just given more oversight

The culture of deception and mistreatment of dogs just ran too deep. Better regulation had been attempted, and failed, many times over. The Commission also found that the reforms required would have made the entire industry economically unsustainable. The sad reality is, further regulation simply isn't a viable option.

9. If you really cared about puppies you'd shut down puppy farms

We recently announced our response to a review into puppy farms and other issues relating to domestic pet breeding and sales ... We continue to work closely with the RSPCA and other stakeholders to try and get better outcomes here.

10. The review said this should go to Parliament. Why isn't it?

It is. The Government will present legislation to shut down greyhound racing during the next sitting period and Parliament will indeed consider and debate our proposal. At that point, all MPs can have their say.

Please let me urge you to go and read the review. It is horrific. It is damning. And it leaves the Government with no real choice but to take the action we have."