

# The Sydney Morning Herald

EXCLUSIVE NATIONAL NSW

## At least 99 'underperforming' greyhounds killed, buried in mass grave, report finds

By Sean Nicholls  
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Investigators have found it is probable that at least 99 greyhounds were brutally killed at a Hunter Valley property and buried in a mass grave over a four-year period because they were "underperforming" and "therefore of no further use".



The bombshell finding follows a year-long investigation at Keinbah Trial Track near Cessnock and comes shortly after Premier Mike Baird's shock announcement that the industry would be shut down from July 1 next year.



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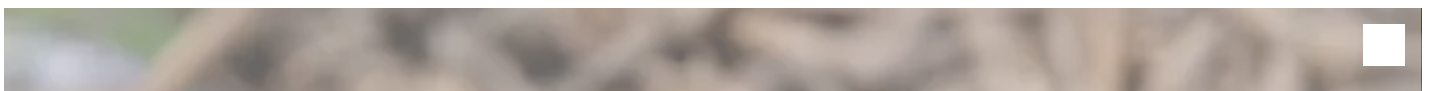
Greyhound grave found in backyard

Playing in 5 ... [Don't Play](#)

Natina Howard unearthed what's believed to be a dumping ground for slow greyhounds at her Cessnock property.

The report by senior barrister Clive Steirn, SC, found most of the dogs were killed with a blow to the head, from either a gunshot or a blunt instrument.

It says it was probable that most of the dogs were killed between 2009 and 2013 for reasons other than emergency euthanasia. The vast majority of the remains recovered showed no sign of any other injury.





Skeletal remains of greyhounds were discovered on the Keinbah property last year.

*Photo: Jonathan Carroll*

The report of the investigation, which involved the first reported excavation and exhumation of a mass grave in Australia, was handed to Greyhound Racing NSW on Monday.

It is being referred to NSW Police for advice as to whether criminal charges should be brought against those adversely named.

The findings relate to previous owners and managers of the track and in no way implicate the present owners, Natina and Robert Howard, who bought the property in December 2013 and last year discovered the first evidence of a mass grave.

"The report's findings have confirmed everyone's worst fears," the outgoing interim chief executive of Greyhound Racing NSW, Paul Newson, told Fairfax Media. "That mass graves have occurred and a number of industry participants were involved in sickening and unconscionable acts of animal cruelty – which, if proven, should not go unanswered."

The investigation, assisted by forensic vet Dr Lydia Tong, was commissioned by the regulator in mid-July last year following persistent rumours about a mass grave at Keinbah track.

Greyhound Racing NSW had found there was no evidence of a mass grave on the property following a two-day disciplinary hearing that heard from 14 witnesses.

But a week later equipment being used for fencing work on the property sunk into soft ground. A [shallow excavation of the area](#) revealed skeletal remains of several dogs, sparking the investigation.

Ms Howard declined to comment on the report until she is able to read it.

But she said: "Ninety-five per cent of greyhound trainers are responsible animal lovers and it's up to the governing bodies to prosecute those who aren't, so that the dogs' welfare comes first."

Mr Newson confirmed key details of the report but declined to release it to Fairfax Media as those adversely named have not had a chance to respond.

The report comes two weeks after the release of the Special Commission of Inquiry into NSW Greyhound Racing by former High Court judge Michael McHugh, which was sparked by an expose of live baiting in the industry on ABC's *Four Corners* program.

It found as many as 68,000 greyhounds were slaughtered as "wastage" in the past 12 years "because they were considered too slow to pay their way or were unsuitable for racing", leading to the government decision to close the industry.

The Steirn report was initially due to be completed by March – prior to the commission of inquiry report.

Mr Newson said the delay was due to the complicated nature of the investigation and obstacles including the discovery of asbestos on the property.

"The timing of the report is unfortunate, coming after the Special Commission report and the NSW government decision," he said.

"However, GRNSW must continue to safeguard animal welfare and integrity and take immediate action whenever misconduct and serious wrongdoing is revealed."



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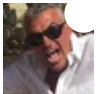
**Sean Nicholls**



Sean Nicholls is the State Political Editor of The Sydney Morning Herald.

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