

NEWS POLITICS

Mike Baird won't budge on greyhound ban

Updated: 6:37 pm, Tuesday, 2 August 2016



NSW Premier Mike Baird is refusing to back away from a ban on greyhound racing, despite dissent in coalition ranks and pleas from hundreds of protesters.

Greyhound racing supporters turned out in force in Sydney's Hyde Park on Tuesday, warning of disastrous consequences for NSW if the ban goes ahead as planned in 2017.

But Mr Baird told parliament that animal cruelty in the industry would be impossible to police if greyhound racing continues.

'It is time we drew to an end the animal cruelty we have seen,' he said.

He reminded MPs during question time of the finding by Michael McHugh, who investigated the NSW greyhound industry, that cruelty 'is entrenched and the behaviour is unlikely to change'.

'Live baiting was banned over 60 years ago and it's still going,' Mr Baird said.

Earlier at the rally, Opposition Leader Luke Foley told the crowds the ban would mean nothing less than a 'mass slaughter' of greyhounds.

But Mr Baird referred to the 68,000 'uncompetitive' greyhounds euthanised in the past 12 years as evidence of endemic cruelty.

Deputy Premier and Nationals leader Troy Grant told MPs the government was determined to help owners, trainers and breeders get other work and to keep their dogs.

'We will give every dog the best chance of survival in partnership with animal welfare agencies to rehome them wherever possible,' he said.

Protesters at the rally said the ban would put their livelihoods at stake.

Pet meat producer Bec Pace said a ban could spell the end of her family's business, which derives most of its earnings from the greyhound industry.

'My husband and I have never owned or trained a greyhound, but Mr Baird has decided that as of July next year he's going to take away our family legacy and he's going to put us on the unemployment line, along with all our staff,' she told the crowd.

Ms Pace warned of knock-on effects, including an overpopulation of kangaroos, normally destined for the pet meat industry, which could impact on farms, as well as rising unemployment across several associated industries.

Christian Democratic Party leader Fred Nile promised the rally to propose a parliamentary inquiry into the industry.

Mr Baird and Mr Grant spent much of Monday trying to ease tensions within their parties over the ban as they prepared to introduce legislation outlawing the sport in coming days.

Several Nationals MPs have been furious about the lack of consultation about the ban.

Liberal MP for Queanbeyan Peter Phelps warned banning an entire industry because of the actions of a 'small sector' is dangerous.

'It's just become typical, unfortunately, of both this (Baird government) and the O'Farrell government to treat the backbenchers as a rubber stamp,' he told ABC Radio.

AAP