

Greyhound racing ban: New South Wales Upper House passes bill

By Siobhan Fogarty

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A bill to ban greyhound racing in New South Wales has passed the state's Upper House despite a barrage of failed amendments from the Labor Opposition and some un-parliamentary language from Minister Duncan Gay.

Labor attempted unsuccessfully to delay a vote on the Greyhound Racing Prohibition Bill by six months and also failed to have it referred to a standing committee for inquiry in a further attempt to hamper its passage through the Parliament.

Leader of the Government in the Upper House Mr Gay outlined a timeframe for an industry assistance package.

"We recognise that people who are affected need to know what will be available to them so they can plan for the future," he said.

"To that end the Government commits that it will announce its package of measures of help within three months from the passing of this legislation.

"We are consulting on options like payments related specifically to the costs of moving dogs out of the New South Wales industry or supporting the RSPCA and other animal welfare services in re-homing and fostering greyhounds."

But during his address, Mr Gay labelled an interjector a "smart arse" and, amid laughter from the chamber, was asked to withdraw his comment.

In withdrawing, the Minister added: "Point is made, he's an idiot."

He was then asked to make a subsequent withdrawal and complied.

The State Opposition has introduced its own bill, which would set up a greyhound racing integrity commission as an alternative to the shut down of the industry.

Labor deputy leader Michael Daley said the ban would be a stain on the Government.

"Mr Deputy Speaker, this bill, our bill, provides for Labor's response to the McHugh report," Mr Daley said.

Government warned of public backlash

Earlier, speakers from the Government, Opposition and cross benches made impassioned speeches.

"Out of nowhere, with no attempt to bring those responsible for abuses of dogs, the Government has shut down the industry, leaving thousands of people and thousands of dogs in limbo," Labor's Lynda Voltz said.



PHOTO: Opponents say voters will punish the Government for its bill. (AAP: David Moir)

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Liberal MLC Scot MacDonald claimed the greyhound racing industry had "laughed in our face for 15 or more years".

"The report when you read it leaves you in no doubt whatsoever that they are beyond rehabilitation," he said in reference to an inquiry into the industry.

Robert Brown of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party warned the Government it faced a backlash at the ballot box over the ban.

"I think you've done the wrong thing. I wish that the Premier had of reconsidered, he hasn't. I'm not stupid, I can count," he said.

"I know this bill is going to get up but I just say to you all, you know, karma is real. What goes around comes around."

Labor moved a further amendment to restrict the Government's ability to sell Crown land formerly used for greyhound racing.

Opposing the amendment, Greens MLC Mehreen Faruqi claimed Labor wanted to preserve greyhound tracks in order to re-open the racing industry at a later date.

The amendment was defeated, with the bill passing through the Upper House.

The bill was introduced into the Lower House on Thursday morning, but debate was adjourned until Parliament resumes later this month.

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