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17 October 2022

Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs  
Legislative Council Committee Office, Parliament House  
4 Harvest Terrace  
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Committee

Please find enclosed a written submission regarding the issues raised in **Petition No. 064 - Ban Greyhound Racing in WA** tabled by Hon Brad Pettitt MLC in the Legislative Council on 20 September 2022.

We urge the Committee to please investigate our issues further and open an inquiry into racing here in our State.

There are many more topics that could be addressed and two pages is not sufficient to express these concerns.

Your time is greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Melissa Harrison  
President  
Free the Hounds

## 1. Sale of the TAB

- 1.1 The sale of the TAB will see the introduction of virtual greyhound, thoroughbred and harness racing throughout TAB stores and pubs. This will increase wagering income for the State and alleviate financial pressure from the loss of income caused by live greyhound racing being banned. Virtual greyhound racing will ultimately be a better return on investment than current live greyhound racing, particularly because there will not be a need for kenneling, rehabilitating and rehoming injured and retired greyhounds which the State currently pays for via Racing and Wagering WA (RWWA). Unlike the harness and thoroughbred racing codes, the WA Greyhound Association (WAGRA) is a government entity, so there is no comparison to the other codes if greyhounds are removed from the sale of TAB. Of the approximate 1,000 participants involved in the “sport” of greyhound racing, less than 20 of them claim this as their source of income, with the clear majority being mere hobbyists. The savings from expenditure derived from their prize money, trainer subsidies or breeding bonuses could then be funnelled into other codes or far more important State matters.

## 2. Injuries

- 2.1 RWWA's method of injury reporting masks the prevalence of greyhound injuries. RWWA does not count injuries across individual greyhounds, but injuries across 'starters', such that 855 injuries to 1,545 individual greyhounds (with some greyhounds injured multiple times and overall 641 individual greyhounds injured), is reported by RWWA as a 3% injury rate.<sup>1</sup> In fact, in any given financial year, approximately 40% of greyhounds sustain an injury, with some sustaining multiple injuries in the same year. This figure does not represent the number of greyhounds which sustain at least one injury over their entire racing careers, which Free the Hounds estimates to be well over 40%. RWWA collects the injury data from post race examinations of impacted greyhounds by the on track veterinarian (OTV). Given that there is no diagnostic (i.e. imaging) equipment at any of the tracks and greyhounds are full of adrenalin post-race, injuries no doubt go undetected. The grading of the injury however is taken at this time and not what a trainer/owner may find/report back to RWWA days after the event. This therefore masks many of the injuries and their significance. Further, injuries which do not occur on track (e.g. at practice) are not reported at all. RWWA's current injury rates therefore cannot be relied upon as accurate.

## 3. Injury recovery schemes

- 3.1 RWWA has two injury subsidy schemes for (predominantly) major injuries. The scheme enables owners/trainers to surrender an injured greyhound to RWWA which pays for its medical treatment (this occurs at the time of the event). The second scheme enables owners/trainers to retain the greyhound, and RWWA pays a fee for medical expenses plus \$50 per week for 13 weeks for rehabilitation. The purpose of these schemes is to incentivise owners and trainers not to kill their greyhounds because they cannot afford to pay for their medical expenses or to keep them while they rehabilitate. Whilst any saving of life is a great initiative, there is no data on the long term effects or costs of these methods of rehabilitation and surgery on greyhounds. The public ultimately pays the long term price as the greyhound grows older with plates, healed fractures and arthritis, and dogs with amputated limbs. Historically, greyhounds have never lived long enough for data to be collected. Greyhounds still suffer through months of rehabilitation, confinement in small areas, lack of exercise to maintain their new implants, and medications to fight off infection and pain. Since the commencement in mid-2019 of the first of these schemes, over 130 dogs have been through this due to a major on-track fracture. Of these, more than 10 have subsequently died in RWWA's care due to infection, heart-attack during surgery, unknown causes and other surgical problems. These schemes purely exist to disincentive the mass-killing of greyhounds and maintain greyhound racing's dwindling social licence.

## 4. Over-breeding

- 4.1 In order to try and keep the social license of greyhound racing, the community is relied upon over and over to adopt all greyhounds discarded by the industry. If the public did not adopt them, the simple fact is that these dogs would be killed. Less than 3% of dogs are kept by their owners/trainers at the end of racing. Whilst RWWA has its own rehoming unit (GAP), of the 600 dogs retired each year, GAP only rehomes approximately half of these with the other half being rehomed by volunteer community rescues. Volunteers have devoted their lives and homes to rescuing greyhounds. As this population of volunteers ages, and it becomes harder to find younger people to replace them, their capacity to help will diminish. RWWA has just had to purchase their first kennels (their current one is leased from a former racing participant) due to the volume of dogs in their care. RWWA calls on the community to foster dogs in their homes and volunteer at its kennels to walk the greyhounds (some volunteers have reported having to clean out kennel space when it is dirty on their arrival). If volunteers are not able to attend, dogs do not get walked. There are only approximately 5 people employed to care for the 38 dogs the leased kennel is licensed to house. Why is RWWA not using racing income to employ enough employees to look after the animals in its care? Why do they need volunteers at all, considering the other community rescues are also screaming out for help? This does not even include the other dog breed rescues that are having to halt intake lists and are also in the midst of a rehoming crisis.
- 4.2 Inexplicably, RWWA has increased its Westchase Bonus by 20% this year. This will increase the breeding of greyhounds at a time when rehoming groups are in crisis. The owners of these dogs do not even have to live in WA, but the dog needs to be born here and place in certain races only. According to RWWA, “*The boost in prize money is crucial to improving the viability of participating in WA greyhound racing and therefore strengthening ownership and involvement*”.<sup>2</sup> Clearly, RWWA does not care for the financial and emotional strain it puts on the wider community in discarding greyhounds, but its priority is the money.

## 5. Self-regulation

- 5.1 RWWA has total jurisdiction over all aspects of greyhound welfare. Whilst RWWA insists that this does not mean that it is self-regulated, there is no power by any other authority, with the exception of RSPCA WA, to investigate any reports of abuse.

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<sup>1</sup> RWWA Annual Report FY2019-20.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.rwwa.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/163-The-Dogs-WA-JUNE\\_2022.pdf](https://www.rwwa.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/163-The-Dogs-WA-JUNE_2022.pdf).

Despite this, and quite unfortunately, RWWA and RSPCA WA have a Memorandum of Understanding (**MOU**) which states: *"RWWA will refer any complaints where it does not have jurisdiction to investigate or penalise under the rules of racing immediately to the RSPCA to investigate"*. R11 of the Rules of Racing provides that RWWA *"shall be the sole decider of whether any matter, issue, question, contingency or circumstance is or is not provided for in these Rules"*, including as to whether a welfare complaint falls within RWWA's jurisdiction. The effect of the MOU is that RWWA is given exclusive jurisdiction to deal with its own welfare issues. It is paradoxical that RWWA should assert that *"The RSPCA has not had a single prosecution against any licensed person in greyhound racing"*<sup>3</sup> in circumstances where it does not actually refer cases to the RSPCA for investigation. RWWA's former CEO Richard Burt suggested that ultimate control and responsibility for greyhound racing fell with the Racing and Gaming Minister. However, when questioned by Free The Hounds, Minister Buti acknowledged that RWWA was independent from his role and functioned as it saw fit, with minimal oversight by him and his office.

- 5.2 RWWA's ability to self-regulate comes into question when instances of misconduct and animal abuse are inadequately punished. Recently, the WAGBOTA President was found to have hit his greyhound and fined a mere \$1,500:

#### FROM THE STEWARDS

On Thursday 8 September 2022 RWWA Stewards completed an Inquiry into the conduct of Mr Julien at Greyhounds WA Mandurah on 5 July 2022.

Mr Julien was found guilty to a charge under GAR156(f)(ii) for the improper handling of a greyhound in the kennels.

Subsequently Mr Julien was issued a fine \$1500 with \$250 suspended for 24 months pending no further related offences of this nature.

- 5.3 Less than two weeks later, a trainer was found to have hit his greyhound and fined a mere \$300.

#### FROM THE STEWARDS

On Tuesday 20 September 2022, RWWA Stewards completed an Inquiry into the conduct of T1 Trainer Mr Andrew McLaren at Greyhounds WA Mandurah on 23 August 2022.

Mr McLaren pleaded guilty to a charge under GAR156(f)(ii) for improper behaviour and was subsequently fined \$300

- 5.4 A trainer was fined \$1,000 for the poor condition of his kennels. Free The Hounds understands that this is a continuing issue for this trainer.

#### FROM THE STEWARDS

On Thursday 4 August 2022, RWWA Stewards completed an Inquiry into the condition of 2 kennels at T1 Trainer Mr Shane Beard's

property and the failure to produce a medication logbook on request, at an inspection on 23 June 2022.

Mr Beard pleaded guilty to charges under Rule 21(3) and 151(2) and was subsequently fined \$1000 and \$300 respectively.

- 5.5 Free The Hounds believes that higher fines and longer suspensions for misconduct and contraventions of the rules would alienate participants from greyhound racing, and this may be a consideration when the fines/suspensions are being imposed due to the already small number of participants in the industry.
- 5.6 Further, following numerous instances of Free The Hounds sharing with the public RWWA's race footage showing injuries in the catching pen, RWWA has now stopped filming and publishing that part of the race.

## 6. Other

- 6.1 Not only is Australia 1 of 7 countries in the world with legalised commercial greyhound racing, some of the largest animal welfare advocates in Australia and WA, such as the RSPCA WA, Animals Australia, Coalition for the Protection of Greyhounds, Dogs Refuge Home, Greens and Animal Justice Party, all publicly support Free The Hounds' petition and condemn greyhound racing as animal cruelty. Some of the largest (national and international) businesses operating in Australia have withdrawn support and publicly distanced themselves from greyhound racing.<sup>4</sup>
- 6.2 RWWA markets greyhound racing as family friendly, uses photos of children in its promotions and publications, and has approved the upgrade of the children's playground at the Mandurah track. It is unethical and unacceptable that RWWA allows children to be spectators to animal suffering and gambling. RWWA have withheld uploading race replays due to the upsetting nature of the event, however continually condone children trackside.

<sup>3</sup> Submission from Hon Reece Whitby MLA dated 30 August 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Notably, ANZ, Arnott's, Audible Australia, Citibank Australia, Coca-Cola, Coles, Colorbond, Flight Centre, Samsung and Unilever: [Stopping sponsors - Coalition for the Protection of Greyhounds \(greyhoundcoalition.com\)](#).