

2016/10: Should the New South Wales government have banned greyhound racing?

What they said...

'We're an industry that has changed, is changing and is ready to embrace whatever change is needed to have a respectable role in the future'

Brenton Scott of the New South Wales Greyhound Breeders, Owners and Trainers Association

'There is no commitment to animal welfare that I witnessed... I expected to see changes in the time I was with Greyhound Racing NSW. I didn't see any changes'

Dr Greg Bryant, a former Greyhound Racing NSW on-track vet

The issue at a glance

On July 7, 2016, the New South Wales premier, Mike Baird, announced that greyhound racing would be banned in the state from July 1, 2017.

Baird attributed the ban to the 'widespread and systemic mistreatment of animals', which he claimed the state cannot tolerate.

The ban has been foreshadowed after a special commission of inquiry found substantial and apparently compelling evidence of animal cruelty, including mass greyhound killings and live baiting.

The commission of inquiry was established in response to an ABC Four Corners program which exposed widespread and extreme animal cruelty and cheating through the use of live baiting to entice and train greyhounds.

In a statement Greyhound Racing New South Wales (GRNSW) said the industry was 'devastated' by the government's decision and responded to the ban by emphasising the improvements it has made to regulate greyhound racing since the live-baiting scandal came to light.

After the announcement of the intended ban, GRNSW suspended greyhound racing in the state for seven days.

Background

The Australian Greyhound Racing Association (AGRA) is divided into many state governing bodies, which regulate greyhound welfare and living conditions. Some racing authorities in Australia partly finance some of the Greyhound Adoption Groups, which house dozens of greyhounds a month.

Each Australian state and territory has a governing greyhound racing body. Greyhound Racing New South Wales (GRNSW) and Greyhound Racing Victoria (GRV) are the two largest authorities, governing over 40 racetracks. The Queensland Greyhound Racing Authority (QGRA), Western Australian Greyhound Racing Authority (WAGRA), Tasmanian Greyhound Racing Authority (TGRA), Greyhound Racing South Australia (GRSA), Northern Territory Racing Authority, and the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club (CGRC), all contribute to running and monitoring of greyhound racing in Australia.

Many adoption programs have been set up throughout Australia known as Greyhound Adoption Program or Greyhounds as Pets, GAP. They generally work with their Greyhound Racing Administration. Greyhounds are checked for parasites, malnourishment, or any other medical conditions by an on-course vet before being able to compete.

Greyhounds are usually bought and sold as puppies just after having been whelped or as racing dogs that have been fully trained. In Australia the buying and selling of greyhounds is controlled and regulated by the states and territories. A 2015 ABC television investigation revealed widespread use of small live animals as bait, to train greyhounds to chase and kill. As a result, many in the industry called for a complete overhaul of greyhound racing's controlling bodies in Australia.

New South Wales ban

On 5 May, 2015, a former Justice of the High Court, Michael McHugh, was appointed to head the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Greyhound Racing Industry in New South Wales.

On 7 July 2016, New South Wales Premier, Mike Baird, announced that greyhound racing was to be banned in the state from 1 July 2017 after the inquiry found overwhelming evidence of systemic animal cruelty, including mass greyhound killings and live baiting. After the New South Wales announcement, Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Chief Minister, Andrew Barr, stated that greyhound racing would be banned in the ACT.

Australian greyhound racing live baiting scandal

On 16 February, 2015, the ABC television current affairs program Four Corners exposed the use of live piglets, possums and rabbits to train racing greyhounds in three states. The revelation led to suspensions, inquiries and widespread condemnation of the practice.

The greyhound industry and the law provide harsh penalties for the use of live baits in training. Nevertheless, accusations of live baiting in the Australian greyhound industry have arisen from time to time.

On 16 February 2015, Four Corners exposed live baiting on training tracks in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. The program included graphic surveillance footage, filmed by pro-animal activists, which showed various small animals being tied to mechanical lures where they were chased, caught and savaged by greyhounds for up to 30

minutes. Some animals had babies taken from them and brutally killed.

The program also included interviews with many leading greyhound trainers and administrators who denied the practice of live baiting; some of them were subsequently shown to be involved in the live baiting.

The program content drew immediate and widespread criticism from animal protection groups and the wider community.

Internet information

The findings of the (McHugh) Special Commission of Inquiry into the Greyhound Racing Industry in NSW can be accessed at <http://www.greyhoundracinginquiry.justice.nsw.gov.au/>

The Commission recommended the closure of the industry.

The same site also includes information on how the New South Wales government plans to transition the industry during the year before it will be closed. The industry will be discontinued as of July 1, 2017.

On July 26, 2016, the Australian Financial Review published an opinion piece by Katherine Teh-White titled 'When social licence goes to the dogs'

The article explains the meaning of the term 'social licence' and suggests the manner in which the greyhound racing industry in New South Wales may have forfeited this licence.

The piece considers the implications for other industries.

The full article can be accessed at <http://www.afr.com/opinion/columnists/when-social-licence-goes-to-the-dogs-20160726-gqdvvtq>

On July 21, 2016, The Guardian published an opinion piece by Jeff Sparrow titled 'The greyhound ban and the working man: what exactly does "working class culture" mean?'

Sparrow argues that to champion greyhound racing on the basis of it representing 'working class culture' is to have too narrow a definition of this culture.

The full text of the argument can be found at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jul/21/the-greyhound-ban-and-the-working-man-what-exactly-does-working-class-culture-mean>

On July 20, 2016, ABC News ran an analysis by Cath Hanrahan titled 'Explained: Why NSW is banning greyhound racing'

The analysis offers a detailed breakdown of some of the major reasons offered for closing the greyhound racing industry in New South Wales.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-07-20/greyhound-racing-ban-nsw-explained/7622052>

On July 15, 2016, ABC News aired a report titled 'Greyhound racing: 82 per cent want Australia-wide industry shutdown, poll finds'

The report indicates that 82per cent of 22,000 peopled surveyed by the ABC's Lateline program indicated they believed greyhound racing should be banned Australia-wide.

The full text of the report can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-07-15/82-per-cent-want-australia-wide-ban-on-greyhound-racing-poll/7633998>

On July 15, 2016, the ABC's Lateline aired a report titled 'Should greyhound racing be banned Australia-wide?'

The report gave the views of spokespeople from the greyhound racing industry and animal welfare groups, each adopting different positions on the issue.

A full transcript of the segment can be found at <http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2016/s4501918.htm>

On July 15, 2016, ABC News aired a report featuring an interview with a former Greyhound Racing NSW on-track vet, Dr Greg Bryant. Dr Bryant reported a number of acts of cruelty and the persistent failure to make improvements.

A full transcript of this interview can be found at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-07-14/the-tail-was-torn-off-former-greyhound-vet-reveals-cruelty/7629906>

On July 12, 2016, The Advocate published a comment by Shane Yates titled 'Government decision makes no sense at all'

The opinion piece argues for what greyhound racing contributes to New South Wales and suggests the accusations of cruelty are exaggerated.

The full text of this comment can be accessed at <http://www.theadvocate.com.au/story/4026878/government-decision-makes-no-sense-at-all/>

On July 10, 2016, The Vine published an opinion piece by Tara Wilson titled 'The Time To End Greyhound Racing In Australia Is Now, As Dogs Literally Run For Their Lives' The comment presents a series of arguments as to why greyhound racing in Australia should be stopped.

The full text of the argument can be accessed at <http://thevine.com.au/society/time-end-greyhound-racing-australia-now-dogs-literally-run-lives/>

On July 10, 2016, The Daily Telegraph published a comment by Miranda Devine titled 'Why banning greyhound racing

hurts us all'

The comment outlines the harm banning will do to communities that rely on it socially and economically. It also considers the large number of dogs likely to have to be put down.

It can be accessed at <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/rendezview/why-have-we-let-vegans-with-piercings-destroy-greyhound-racing/news-story/7059d515558ea90be78364e13d0c9606>

On July 8, 2016, ABC News aired a report titled 'Greyhound racing to be banned in New South Wales, Baird Government announces'

The report includes the government's justification for its decision and the reaction of both industry spokespeople and animal welfare groups.

The full report can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-07-07/greyhound-racing-to-be-banned-in-new-south-wales/7576816>

On July 8, 2016, The Conversation published a comment by Roger Burritt, Visiting professor, Management in the International Food Industry, University of Kassel and

Katherine Christ, Researcher and Tutor in Accounting and Sustainability, University of South Australia. The authors were investigating the failure of greyhound racing to adequately self-regulate.

The comment is titled 'What other industries can learn from the failures of greyhound racing'.

The full text can be accessed at <https://theconversation.com/what-other-industries-can-learn-from-the-failures-of-greyhound-racing-62217>

On July 7, 2016, Business Insider Australia published a comment by Chris Nash titled 'These are the economic benefits of the greyhound industry being given up by NSW'

The opinion piece analyses the economic benefits that the greyhound racing industry currently contributes to New South Wales.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.businessinsider.com.au/these-are-the-economic-benefits-of-the-greyhound-industry-being-given-up-by-nsw-2016-7>

On July 7, 2016, The Huffington Post published an article by Emily Brooks titled 'NSW Greyhound Racing Ban: What Happens to the Dogs?'

The article considers the difficulties faced retraining and finding homes for compulsorily retired greyhounds and suggests that many are likely to have to be put down.

The full text of the article can be found at <http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2016/07/06/nsw-greyhound-racing-ban-what-happens-to-the-dogs/>

On March 11, 2016, Australian Racing Greyhound published a comment by Bruce Teague titled 'Queensland professor critical of greyhound commission's tactics.'

The comment suggests that the McHugh Special Commission of Inquiry into the Greyhound Racing Industry in New South Wales prejudged the industry and based its conclusions on a narrow evidence base.

The full text of this opinion can be accessed at <http://www.australianracinggreyhound.com/australian-greyhound-racing/animal-welfare-australian-greyhound-racing/queensland-professor-critical-of-greyhound-commissions-tactics/74866>

Arguments against banning greyhound racing in New South Wales

1. The extent of abuses within the greyhound industry has been exaggerated

Supporters of the greyhound racing industry being able to continue in New South Wales argue that the number of trainers involved in the abuse of animals is very small.

In a comment published in The Advocate on July 12, 2016, Shane Yates stated, 'The New South Wales government has pulled the trigger and shot down an industry full of greyhound and animal lovers, on the back of deplorable actions of a small few.'

Yates continued, 'Comments made about these exaggerated imaginary death numbers...is nothing more than scaremongering, designed to whip up support from fair-minded people who unwittingly are being used in a campaign to end the allegedly "barbaric" sport of greyhound racing.'

Defenders of the sport claim that the majority of animals are very well looked after. Shane Yates states, 'They are fed the very best quality food, walked every day, regularly exercised, and enjoy comfortable, safe and secure kennelling and have regular visits to the vet...Yet, same old story, some people want to focus on the bad apple in the orchard and crucify everyone involved in a tremendous industry. An industry of down to earth, everyday people, looking after their greyhounds in every way possible and in many cases better than themselves.'

Owner and trainer John Buttsworth has disputed the Commission's findings. Buttsworth stated, 'I've been in greyhounds for 50 years. I just can't believe the figure they've stated, they've just misquoted, unbelievable. It's horrendous to say we've slaughtered so many dogs.'

I've never seen live baiting, I've never done live baiting.'

Similar comments were made by New South Wales trainer, Trevor Thompson, who argued that it was unfair to judge the whole industry on the actions of a few.

Mr Thompson stated, 'It's like every industry, there's a few bad apples in there.'

Most of the people....they are our pets and that's what a lot of people don't get ... for 98 per cent of the people, especially in this area, they are pets, they're family.'

A comment by Bruce Teague, published by Australian Racing Greyhound on March 11, 2016, argued that the McHugh Special Commission of Inquiry into the Greyhound Racing Industry in New South Wales prejudged the industry and based its conclusions on a narrow evidence base.

Teague claims that the New South Wales Special Commission's counsel, Stephen Rushton QC, 'immediately cast aspersions on the entire industry - extrapolating from a narrow base of examples.'

Teague then accuses Ruston of using 'faulty data to claim that "many in the community, many in animal welfare organisations, and many in government are deeply concerned that the industry is breeding too many greyhounds and that too many young healthy greyhounds are being destroyed". All that is no more than hearsay, innuendo and exaggeration. And who is "many"?''

Teague notes, 'In practice, the evidence of excessive breeding is marginal at best and subject to correction. Today, the constant shortage of starters in races in all states tells us that more dogs are needed.'

Teague argues that it is wrong to ban an entire industry because of the misbehaviour of a minority. He asks, 'Should we ban motoring because some drivers get drunk and crash their cars? Should we ban football or tennis because some players take drugs?'

The Special Commission found the practice of 'live-baiting' was used by 20 per cent of trainers. Defenders of the industry claim that banning greyhound racing is unjustly punishing the 80 per cent of owners and trainers who do not use live baiting.

2. GRNSW has made substantial improvements in its management practices

Defenders of greyhound racing in New South Wales claim that the government's decision to ban the industry was taken too hastily and without recognition of the improvements the industry has made to its practices.

Brenton Scott of the New South Wales Greyhound Breeders, Owners and Trainers Association has stated, 'First of all, it was a kneejerk reaction. No industry consultation at all. The information's based on a report. Much of the information in that report is old and flawed. The decision takes into account no consideration of the progress the industry's made in the past 18 months. We're an industry that has changed, is changing and is ready to embrace whatever change is needed to have a respectable role in the future.'

Scott went on to claim that the ban decision was taken less than a year and a half after the industry had begun making widespread improvements. He stated, 'It comes 15 months after there was a line in the sand where the industry clearly became aware of the issues that had to be dealt with. Those issues have been confronted openly, with the strongest possible regulatory, supervisory and animal welfare standards [put] in place...'

Scott has further claimed that the decision taken after the report of the McHugh Commission is based on outdated information. He has stated, 'I think the industry has approached the problems, the issues, as they've become known, in an effective manner.'

The problem we're dealing with is a number of positions that have been taken as a result of the report are simply fabricated. For instance, it is now law almost that 20 per cent of participants are involved in live baiting. The last 290 investigations of GRNSW into suggestions of that have - two cases have been found. Two out of 290. That's a long way short of 20 per cent. The industry's moved on from that. The industry at grassroots level has committed that animal cruelty has no place.'

3. A ban would deny employment to those who work in the industry and have a negative economic impact on the state

It has been claimed that the Baird government's decision to shut down the \$335 million greyhound racing industry in New South Wales will potentially cost several thousand jobs and millions of dollars in annual dogwagering tax revenue.

The industry is said to employ thousands people in New South Wales, with a further 5000 breeders, dog owners and others to be indirectly impacted by the demise of the sport, which will see the closure of 30 clubs.

Estimates vary as to how many people are involved in greyhound racing in New South Wales. A State Government-commissioned report found that greyhound racing contributed more than 2,700 full-time jobs to the New South Wales economy.

A report commissioned by Greyhounds New South Wales estimated there were 1,561 full-time jobs in greyhound racing, with about two-thirds of these jobs directly related to the industry.

The two reports show that between 36 per cent and 64 per cent of the full-time jobs in greyhound racing are in regional areas outside Sydney.

However, many more people participate in the industry not classified as having full or part-time jobs, who are working as trainers, breeders, owners and volunteers. The New South Wales report puts the number of people participating in greyhound racing at more than 15,000, of which more than 13,000 are involved in producing racing dogs. Nearly three-quarters of these participants are in regional areas.

In a comment published on July 7, 2016, Business Insider Australia stated, 'NSW is giving up an industry generating a range of economic benefits and jobs in banning greyhound racing, according to the government's own documents.'

The industry is claimed to be worth \$335.7 million annually to the New South Wales economy in direct and flow-on benefits, according to estimates for the 2013-14 year.

During that racing season, 1,296 greyhound race meetings attracted more than 282,000 people, says a study commissioned by the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing on the size and scope of the racing industry in New South Wales. Racegoers generated expenditure of more than \$11.2 million, both on-course and in the community. Use of the

greyhound club facilities for non-race day purposes generated another \$3.3 million of spending.

The largest regions, in terms of customer spending are the Hunter (\$3.7 million), Illawarra/South Coast (\$2.4 million) and Northern Rivers (\$1.6 million) regions.

4. A ban would deny enjoyment to the many patrons of greyhound racing, especially in working class communities

It has been claimed that greyhound racing is a socially significant activity in many areas of New South Wales, especially within working class and rural communities.

Katrina Hodgkinson, one of four Nationals MP opposing their government's decision, has stated, 'This strikes at the very heart of the working man...

You can be as poor as a church mouse - and most country guys are - and you can still afford your own dog or become a partner in a syndicate.'

Hodgkinson further noted, 'It's a social network, the one activity to go to the local track on race night and catch up with people. It's such a harmless activity but so important for a lot of guys who wouldn't otherwise get a lot of socialising done. It keeps them sane.'

Commentator Miranda Devine, in an opinion piece published in The Daily Telegraph, stated, 'It's hard to fathom the arrogance of squeamish city dwellers killing off a quintessentially Australian pastime they don't understand.

The decision is driven by the sensibilities of [those] who loathe the culture that greyhounds represent - of male battlers in regional Australia hanging onto their dignity, whose main social interaction is a night at the doggies.'

A similar point was made by Greg Sheridan in an opinion piece published in The Australian on July 23, 2016. Sheridan argues that the decision to ban greyhound racing in New South Wales was taken by a social group that does not recognise its importance to racing fans.

Sheridan stated, 'The thought of the dogs, the races, gambling, reminds me just how vastly different are the worlds of people who make decisions like abolishing greyhound racing and the worlds of the people who actually go to the races. Horseracing has its aristocratic side and gets to all classes but the dogs were a purely working-class preoccupation.'

5. A ban would result in the deaths of very many of the dogs that are currently raced in New South Wales

It has been claimed that banning greyhound racing in New South Wales will only result in the immediate death of more dogs.

In a comment published in The Huffington Post on July 7, 2016, Emily Brooks stated 'There are more than 6,809 registered greyhounds that will either be euthanised or adopted when greyhound racing reaches a legal halt in New South Wales on July 1, 2017.'

In a statement put out by the New South Wales government, it has been explained that the options for the dogs will include: humane euthanasia; remaining in their current home; rehomed through an adoption program; or being transferred interstate or overseas to jurisdictions that have appropriate animal welfare standards.

Many greyhounds will be eligible to be fostered or adopted by Australians but RSPCA NSW CEO, Steven Coleman, has stated that a 'fair proportion' of the dogs will have to be euthanised.

Mr Coleman has claimed, 'Some dogs will never be able to be retrained or rehomed. These dogs by nature have a fairly significant prey drive and it takes significant work to re-hinge their minds to not chase.

It's not impossible but it will take work. It takes kennelling capacity and human work to detect and address this behaviour and then retrain.'

The issue is twofold. Not only do the dogs have to be retrained so that they can safely be placed in family homes, there have to be sufficient people willing and able to take the large number of dogs that will need rehoming.

On July 10, 2016, The Daily Telegraph published a comment by Miranda Devine, in which she stated, 'Retired dogs re-housed by the industry through Greyhounds as Pets can't find enough homes as it is.

We'll have a repeat of the slaughter in London when dog carting was abolished in the 1840s. In the first year the bloated bodies of 150,000 dogs choked the Thames River.'

Devine concludes, 'The upshot will be a sea of dead dogs, and devastated humans.'

Arguments in favour of banning greyhound racing in New South Wales

1. Severe animal cruelty is wide-spread in the industry

There are two primary types of cruelty accusation made against the greyhound racing industry in New South Wales. One is the use of live-baiting, that is, small live animals, such as rabbits and piglets, are tied to the lure when dogs are being trained to increased the speed at which the dogs run.

The McHugh Special Commission of Inquiry into the Greyhound Racing Industry in New South Wales claimed that the practice was 'widespread' and estimated that about 10-20 per cent of trainers engaged in it.

The other principal form of cruelty of which the industry has been accused is the large-scale killing of dogs bred each year that are found to be too slow or surplus to requirements.

On July 8, 2016, The Conversation published a comment by Roger Burritt, Visiting professor, Management in the International Food Industry, University of Kassel and

Katherine Christ, Researcher and Tutor in Accounting and Sustainability, University of South Australia. The authors were investigating the failure of greyhound racing to meet community expectations regarding animal cruelty. The researchers stated, 'Greyhounds have been treated as products of the racing industry and when the products failed to make money, they were disposed of en masse as waste products, instead of in a humane way acceptable to society...'

When announcing that greyhound racing was to be banned in New South Wales, the premier, Mike Baird, quoted the

Commission's finding that 'Between 48,000-68,000 dogs were killed in the past 12 years in New South Wales because they were too slow or otherwise unsuitable for racing.'

Premier Baird stated, 'As you will see when you go through the report, he has shone the light on an industry that has overseen the slaughter of tens of thousands of healthy dogs whose only crime was they weren't fast enough.'

Mr Baird gave animal cruelty as his government's primary reason for banning greyhound racing in New South Wales.

The premier stated, 'No Government wants to close down an industry and I absolutely want to acknowledge that there are many, many great people in the greyhound industry who will be devastated by this news.'

But there are too many of those in the industry for financial gain or for whatever other motivation they had, chose to put animal welfare as their least consideration...'

A similar point was made by Dr Jed Goodfellow from RSPCA Australia, who has stated, 'It is simply not acceptable in the 21st century to be putting thousands upon thousands of dogs to death for the purposes of sport and entertainment and gambling.'

In addition to the large number of dogs killed each year as unnecessary or too slow and in addition to live-baiting, greyhound racing is condemned as cruel because of the high incidence of injury and death racing dogs suffer.

In an opinion piece published in The Australian on July 16, 2016, the newspaper's associate editor, Caroline Overington, stated, 'Racing dogs suffer catastrophic injuries, usually at the track.'

By catastrophic, they mean broken necks, broken backs, and skull fractures. The dogs tear their muscles coming around corners, and that's expensive to treat so they get put down.'

2. The industry has not shown the capacity to reform itself

Critics of the greyhound racing industry in New South Wales maintain that it has shown no serious resolve to remove the animal welfare abuses that have brought it into disrepute.

A former Greyhound Racing NSW on-track vet, Dr Greg Bryant, has commented on the persistent animal cruelty he observed and the lack of willingness to remedy the problem.

Dr Bryant stated during an ABC News report aired on July 15, 2016, 'There is no commitment to animal welfare that I witnessed... I expected to see changes in the time I was with Greyhound Racing NSW. I didn't see any changes.'

Dr Bryant also claimed that the industry deliberately covered up instances of animal death and mistreatment. Dr Bryant stated, 'Not one of the deaths I recorded in that period between January and August of 2015 was reported in a steward's report.'

When Dr Bryant challenged why one of the dog deaths he had recorded was not reported he was told, 'they didn't report those things because they didn't want to stir up the greenies, they didn't want to bring the industry into disrepute or under further scrutiny.'

On July 8, 2016, The Conversation published a comment by Roger Burritt, Visiting professor, Management in the International Food Industry, University of Kassel and

Katherine Christ, Researcher and Tutor in Accounting and Sustainability, University of South Australia. The authors were investigating the failure of greyhound racing to adequately self-regulate. The researchers stated, 'Members of the industry argue that they need more time to adjust behaviour away from the poor practices, but clearly the mindset of those prepared to chance their arm has not changed.'

Greyhound racing relies on good behaviour from its members when seeking continuous approval for ongoing operations. In the case of greyhound racing in NSW, all acknowledge that self-regulation failed.'

ABC journalist, Caro Meldrum Hanna, who investigated 'live-baiting' for Four Corners, has similarly noted the greyhound racing industry's failure to reform. Hanna has stated, 'Even when this sport was on notice, throughout the year, we have seen doping results for ice. They are giving ice to dogs ... it was their year to fix things finally and it didn't happen.'

3. Compensation will be made available to those who have to leave the banned industry

The New South Wales government's announcement of the closure of the greyhound racing industry included the following statement: 'The NSW greyhound racing industry will be transitioned to closure over 12 months to allow appropriate management of animal welfare and transitions for industry participants. Racing of greyhounds will be permitted until 1 July 2017.'

New South Wales Premier, Mike Baird, has indicated that his Government would establish an assistance package for those who work in the industry, to help them in the lead-up to the shutdown. Premier Baird also said the transition to shut down would be partly funded by money the Government has collected in tax on greyhound betting over the last financial year, estimated at about \$30 million. It has been estimated that the government will compensate each owner \$500 per racing dog; however, the adequacy of these proposed figures has been disputed.

The extent of the compensation that may be required is not yet known. It has been claimed that the monies referred to so far are not sufficient adequately to compensate those being forced out of the greyhound racing industry. The greyhound industry has estimated the New South Wales Government could have to pay \$4 billion in compensation for its decision to outlaw racing by July next year. The estimate was made in a 23-page rebuttal document handed to the Premier's office.

New South Wales greyhound trainer, Darryl Armfield, has indicated he would be seeking compensation from the state government for at least \$250,000.

A greyhound trainer for six years, Mr Armfield has just spent \$100,000 constructing a greyhound complex including a kennel block and training area in Casino. Mr Armfield owns 10 pups in a rearing yard and 13 dogs. Each greyhound pup has a lifetime racing value of \$10,000. Mr Armfield estimates that, 'including registration costs' his losses are

approximately \$250,000.

The government will be establishing a taskforce to support the greyhound industry and its employees as the industry is shut down. The taskforce will develop a detailed industry shutdown plan during the second half of 2016 following consultation with the greyhound industry and animal welfare organisations.

The New South Wales government has stated that it 'will soon announce a detailed support package to ensure animal welfare and assist the industry in the immediate future.'

4. The popularity of greyhound racing is in decline and its 'social licence' has been disputed

Those who favour the banning of the industry claim that it is in long-term decline and that all the enforced closure in New South Wales is doing is bringing the day forward.

On July 10, 2016, The Vine published a comment by Tara Watson in which she stated, 'Let's not kid ourselves into thinking greyhound racing in Australia is the booming industry it once was, according to IBIS World's Horse and Dog Racing market research report from October 2014, industry revenue has been declining due to stagnant racing attendances and the rising popularity of alternative forms of gambling.'

The adverse publicity the industry has received as a result of the exposure of the cruel treatment of animals adopted by some owners and trainers is believed likely to hasten its decline. As an indication of the industry's declining public support, almost 22,000 people recently voted in a poll asking whether there should be an Australia-wide ban on greyhound racing, with 82 per cent in favour of completely shutting down the industry.

Australia is one of only eight countries in the world where commercial greyhound racing is still legal. Other countries include Macau, Vietnam, New Zealand, Ireland, Britain, the United States and Mexico.

Tara Watson has further stated, 'Ending the sport in Australia, will follow the lead of 39 states in the US in banning dog racing and we will join the majority of countries that don't allow the sport on ethical grounds.'

The Special Commission into the Greyhound Industry in New South Wales has claimed that the industry has lost its 'social licence'. A social licence to operate is the set of conditions that society places on a company or industry to exist and grow. The Commission's report claims that the industry's treatment of animals was in breach of accepted community standards and that it had lost community faith in its readiness or ability to reform.

In an opinion piece published in The Australian Financial Review on July 26, 2016, Katherine Teh-White summed up the nature of the greyhound racing industry's loss of 'social licence'. The-White states, 'McHugh's report has hit home the need for industry to manage their own reform process, to be transparent about its own problems, to build the culture to be able to do that, and keep up-to-date with societal expectations to resolve those tension points.'

5. Homes will be found for as many greyhounds as possible and long-term loss of dogs' lives will be stopped

The hope of the New South Wales government and animal welfare groups is that as many dogs as possible will be able to be rehomed. The Premier, Mike Baird, has stated, 'We're...very clear that we want to support the welfare of the dogs. [RSPCA NSW] is going to be contacting every single breeder and owner to try and provide support. So we'll work with them and provide the resources to them. We will do everything we can to look after them.'

The government has stated that the options for the dogs will include: humane euthanasia; remaining in their current home; being rehomed through an adoption program; or being transferred interstate or overseas to jurisdictions that have appropriate animal welfare standards.

RSPCA NSW spokesperson Jessica Conway, 'Humane euthanasia will be the last resort.'

Many of those calling for greyhound racing to be banned in New South Wales and throughout Australia acknowledge that in the short-term more dogs will die, but over time a ban will be to the advantage of the breed.

On July 10, 2016, The Vine published a comment by Tara Watson in which she stated, 'While greyhounds rescue groups, shelter groups and shelter organisations will do all they can do to find homes for as many dogs as they can, the sad reality is that many dogs will be killed...'

In time, if the sport ends, causing over-breeding to cease, we will see fewer greyhounds in shelters and more greyhounds growing up in a loving environment.'

The same point has been made by RSPCA CEO, Steven Coleman, who has stated that while many greyhounds will be eligible to be fostered or rehomed, a 'fair proportion' will have to be euthanised.

However, regrettable though the deaths of many dogs is, the RSPCA remains in favour of the banning of the industry as it will prevented tens of thousands of dogs being killed annually and others being seriously injured.

Mr Coleman stated, 'We're focused on longer term animal welfare gain. We're delighted that the NSW Government has adopted the first recommendation of the inquiry [to ban the industry] in the interest of animal welfare over financial gain.'

Further implications

Though the greyhound industry in New South Wales has promised to challenge the government's banning of the industry and though some members of the government may not vote in support of the action, it seems likely that the ban will proceed.

The short-term issue is how successfully the government will be able to manage the social and economic impact the ban will have on owners, trainers and communities and how successfully greyhounds can be either rehomed or humanely euthanised. Failures in these areas, especially those that affect dog welfare, are likely to be judged harshly by both the media and the electorate. It seems probable that closing down the industry efficiently and humanely will be quite an expensive undertaking for the government.

The larger question is whether other states will follow suit and ban the greyhound racing industry. Currently all relevant

state governments have indicated that they have no intention of doing so.

Some commentators have noted; however, that this victory is likely to be motivating for animal welfare lobby groups throughout Australia. It has been suggested that animal activists will redouble their efforts to see the industry banned Australia-wide. It has also been suggested that it will enliven campaigns to see duck-shooting banned as well as practices like live-animal export. It is also possible that Australian animal slaughter practices and the use of animals for medical research and surgical treating will attract renewed attention.

The concept of 'social licence', referred to within the report of the Special Commission into the Greyhound Racing Industry in NSW, is a very interesting one. Acting against particular industries or practices because they are judged to be unacceptable to the community at large is a powerful lever for legislative change. However, it raises significant questions. How does the government gauge what is unacceptable to the community? Will it be, as now, via putting a particular position to the electorate in the lead-up to an election or will we see ever-greater recourse to plebiscites to determine the popular will. The question must also be asked as to whether the popular will should always be the primary determinant of government action. If this is the case, can the rights of minority groups be adequately protected?

Newspaper and other items used in the compilation of this issue outline

The Australian: July 9, 2016, page 23, editorial, 'Cruelty prompts over-reaction'. [↗](#)

The Australian: July 9, 2016, page 2, comment by Ray Hadley, 'Premier takes careless swipe at the lives of ordinary people'. [↗](#)

The Age: July 9, 2016, page 8, comments by Geoff Slattery and Stathi Paxinos, 'The case against a ban [↗](#) / The case for a ban' [↗](#).

The Herald-Sun: July 8, 2016, page 34, editorial, 'Short leash on dog industry' [↗](#).

The Herald-Sun: July 8, 2016, page 8, comment by Matt Stewart, 'Sweeping welfare decision puts all animal sports on notice'. [↗](#)

Lifehacker, July 9, comment by Clive Phillips: *Why NSW Banned Greyhound Racing* [↗](#)

The New Daily, July 7, 2016, news item (photos) by James Willoughby, *RSPCA backs NSW's greyhound racing ban* [↗](#)

The Huffington Post, July 7, 2016, background (photos) by Emily Brooks, *NSW Greyhound Racing Ban: What Happens To The Dogs?* [↗](#)

The Conversation, July 18, 2016, comment (photos) by Roger Burritt, Katherine Christ, *What other industries can learn from the failures of greyhound racing* [↗](#)

The Australian: July 16, 2016, page 20, background / comment by Caroline Overington, 'The gruesome facts that damned greyhound racing'. [↗](#)

The Australian: July 15, 2016, page 2, comment by Chris Kenny, 'There'll be bark and bite in this scrap before it is done'. [↗](#)

The Australian: July 14, 2016, page 11, background by Loussikian and Hutchinson, 'Hounded off the tracks'. [↗](#)

The Conversation, July 12, 2014, comment by Elizabeth Ellis, *Greyhound ban shows need for joined-up thinking across all animal industries* [↗](#)

ABC News, July 2016, background by Cath Hanrahan, *Explained: Why NSW is banning greyhound racing* [↗](#)