



Animal Defenders Office

Using the law to protect animals

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The Animal Defenders Office Inc. is accredited by the National Association of Community Legal Centres.

Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning
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Dear Sir/Madam

Submission on the MID-1021-0543 for Greater Brisbane Greyhound Centre

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on the MID-1021-0543 for the Greater Brisbane Greyhound Centre project ("GBGC").

About the Animal Defenders Office

The Animal Defenders Office ("ADO") is a nationally accredited not-for-profit community legal centre that specialises in animal law. The ADO is run by volunteer lawyers and law students and other volunteer professionals. The ADO is a member of Community Legal Centres Australia Inc., the peak body representing community legal centres in Australia.

Further information about the ADO can be found at www.ado.org.au.

GENERAL COMMENTS

The treatment of greyhounds in the greyhound racing industry has rightly come under increased scrutiny in Australia in recent times. In 2016 the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Greyhound Racing Industry in New South Wales, led by retired High Court judge Michael McHugh QC, revealed significant animal welfare problems that were inherent in the industry around the country. As a result of Michael McHugh's report ("the McHugh Report")¹, greyhound racing was banned in the Australian Capital Territory and remains banned to the present day.² Globally, the industry has been phased out in most jurisdictions in which it was once practised.³ The industry is, however, still legal in Queensland.

The ADO shares the concerns of many in the community that the significant animal welfare issues uncovered in the McHugh Report are still prevalent in the greyhound racing industry. These include

¹ *Special Commission of Inquiry into the Greyhound Racing Industry in New South Wales. Report*, 16 June 2016, Michael McHugh AC QC, https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2016-07/apo-nid65365_5.pdf.

² *Animal Welfare Act 1992* (ACT), section 18A:

18A Greyhound racing

(1) A person commits an offence if the person—

(a) conducts, or facilitates the conduct of, a greyhound race in the ACT; or

(b) allows a greyhound kept by the person to take part in a greyhound race conducted in the ACT.

Maximum penalty: 100 penalty units, imprisonment for 1 year or both.

³ Commercial greyhound racing reportedly occurs in only seven countries around the world:

<https://grey2kusa.org/about/worldwide.php>; <https://faunalytics.org/greyhound-racing-a-winnable-issue/>.

live baiting, mass disposal of greyhounds, overbreeding, and inappropriate housing and training techniques. The greyhound racing industry has not been able to demonstrate that trainers and owners involved in these activities in the past are no longer part of the industry today.

In addition to animal welfare issues, the ADO considers that the greyhound racing industry is detrimental to the social fabric of human communities across Australia, given issues such as problem gambling and the widespread discontent with the continued existence of the industry.

For these reasons the ADO submits that this archaic and barbaric practice should be phased out in Australia, rather than expanded through projects such as the GBGC.

GREATER BRISBANE GREYHOUND CENTRE PROJECT—MINISTERIAL INFRASTRUCTURE DESIGNATION

It is unclear why the GBGC is proceeding as a ministerial infrastructure designation. According to the Queensland Government, ‘infrastructure designations allow for the delivery of critical community infrastructure and services’ and ‘a ministerial infrastructure designation (MID) - allows for the delivery of essential community infrastructure.’⁴ The designation is usually reserved for ‘essential community infrastructure’ such as ‘hospitals, schools, fire stations...’⁵

The ADO submits that a greyhound racetrack is not ‘critical’ or ‘essential’ community infrastructure and the ‘MID’ process should not have been used to circumvent usual government approval processes of what is a contentious entertainment and gambling project.

ANIMAL WELFARE

The ADO submits that the GBGC project should be rejected on animal welfare grounds. The GBGC project does not specify how it will meet animal welfare regulations and requirements, including how greyhounds will be housed, bred, rehomed or destroyed. It also does not specify how it will address common animal welfare issues associated with the greyhound racing industry, including overbreeding and ‘wastage’⁶, low rehoming rates for surplus dogs⁷, euthanasing unwanted dogs⁸, and live baiting⁹.

Fundamental aspects of greyhound racing infrastructure are critical for animal welfare. Straight tracks are regarded as safer for greyhounds.¹⁰ Any proposed new greyhound racetrack that does not include the exclusive use of straight tracks should be rejected. The number of dogs allowed to run in each race is another important welfare issue. A study by the University of Technology recommended

⁴ <https://planning.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/planning-framework/infrastructure-planning>.

⁵ <https://planning.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/planning-framework/infrastructure-planning/infrastructure-designations>.

⁶ The McHugh Report, op.cit, p1:

In the greyhound industry, th[e] mass slaughter of young and older greyhounds bred for the purpose of greyhound racing, and which are subsequently destroyed either prior to being named or raced, or upon retirement from racing, is euphemistically called “wastage” or euthanasia.

⁷ GAP Queensland rehomed 209 greyhounds in FY2019/20, after killing 30 dogs in that period deemed unsuitable for adoption (14.35 per cent). Queensland Racing Integrity Commission (“QRIC”), *Greyhound breeding, race injury and retirement*, Report for 2019/20, p8.

⁸ Ibid. In Queensland, FY2019/20, 838 greyhounds are reported as being whelped during that period, and 357, or 42%, were euthanised.

⁹ See for example: QRIC, ‘Noble disqualified for four years on five breaches’, 3 December 2021, <https://qric.qld.gov.au/news/noble-disqualified-for-four-years-on-five-breaches/>.

¹⁰ Coalition for the Protection of Greyhounds, *The Case for Straight Tracks*, March 2020, <https://greyhoundcoalition.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/The-Case-for-Straight-Tracks-Version-1.0-March-2020.pdf>.

that the number of starts per race should be no more than six.¹¹ This reduces track congestion which is a leading cause of injuries and deaths:

All the evidence reviewed to date confirms that the main cause of the Catastrophic and Major injuries is congestion i.e. traffic jam. Approximately 80% of all Catastrophic and Major injuries were caused by congestion and incidents such as checking, collision, galloping etc. ...

One of the main reasons for congestion and traffic jam zones is an excessive number of greyhounds per race.¹²

The GBGC project would also have a negative impact on animals other than greyhounds. The GBGC project states that: 'A small section of identified core koala habitat is proposed to be removed.'¹³

On 11 February 2022 the Australian Government announced that koalas have been listed as an endangered species in Queensland, NSW and the ACT rather than their previous designation of vulnerable.¹⁴ Land clearing, as proposed in the GBGC Project, is *the* major threat to koala populations. As the Australian Koala Foundation states: 'all Koala problems stem from losing their homes'.¹⁵ Given the extremely precarious situation for Queensland koalas, this is not the time for clearing any koala habitat (whether currently used by the animals or not). Even a so-called 'small section' could be devastating to a species now officially listed as endangered. Any kind of 'remedial' action such as 'offsetting' is not an acceptable proposal. Offsetting is regarded as controversial and as a method of last resort due to issues around its effectiveness.¹⁶

The ADO submits that an unnecessary entertainment and gambling project such as the GBGC does not justify clearing *any* habitat of the koala, a species which has (today) been listed as endangered in Queensland.

The impact on other potentially threatened animals is not addressed in the planning documents.

Social impact

The ADO submits that greyhound racing is detrimental to the social fabric of communities such as those affected by the GBGC, for reasons including:

- the recognition that gambling, which is the *raison d'être* of greyhound racing, preys on the most socio-economically disadvantaged,¹⁷

¹¹ University of Technology Sydney (UTS), 'Identifying optimal greyhound track design for greyhound safety and welfare', 5 June 2017,

<http://www.grnsw.com.au/uploads/GRNSW%20Phase%20I%20Report%20FINAL%2020170605.pdf>.

¹² Ibid, pp224, 229.

¹³ The GBGC Project, 'Koala Protection and Habitat Management', Racing Queensland Fact Sheet, <https://haveyoursaygbgc.com.au/>.

¹⁴ <https://minister.awe.gov.au/lev/media-releases/increased-protection-koalas>.

¹⁵ <https://www.savethekoala.com/our-work/koala-protection-act/>.

¹⁶ Offsetting essentially involves razing a section of habitat and setting aside another area of land to be preserved; <https://www.edo.org.au/publication/environmental-offsets-in-queensland/>.

¹⁷ See, for instance, an awkward acknowledgement of some of these problems by a defender of the greyhound racing industry: Duncan Stearn, "Greyhound racing has heard all these objections before," *Australian Racing Greyhound*, December 2, 2015, <http://www.australianracinggreyhound.com/australian-greyhound-racing/greyhound-betting-australian-greyhound-racing/greyhound-racing-has-heard-all-these-objections-before/71944>

- the social cost of problem gambling, which has been estimated to be almost \$5 billion a year;¹⁸ and
- growing concern in the general Australian community regarding the treatment of greyhounds and other animals used by the industry.¹⁹

The ADO submits that these factors should focus attention on the social opportunity cost of government support of projects such as the GBGC and should lead inevitably to such projects being rejected in favour of initiatives that have a positive impact on communities and social welfare in general.

In conclusion, the ADO submits that the GBGC project should be rejected given the suffering greyhound racing inflicts on countless dogs and other animals, the social distress it abets in the form of gambling and problem gambling, and how it deeply offends the conscience of so many Queenslanders and other Australians.

Thank you for taking our submissions into consideration.

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¹⁸ "Greyhound racing: following the money trail," *Animals Australia*, <http://www.animalsaustralia.org/features/greyhound-racing-money-trail.php>

¹⁹ This is evident even in relation to the GBGC project, with over 70,000 people signing a petition against it on the grounds of animal cruelty: <https://www.change.org/p/annastacia-palaszczuk-reconsider-spending-40mil-on-a-new-greyhound-racing-complex-in-ipswich>.