

Tabled
L. HISCOTT
12.09.2024

2/16 att.

RESPONSE TO PETITION

Petition No. 45-24

Parliament of Tasmania Legislative Council

That your Petitioners draws to the attention of the Legislative Council:

The wholly unacceptable rates of violent on and off-track deaths, cruelly injured and prematurely euthanised dogs in the publicly funded Tasmanian greyhound racing industry.

It is because of these fatalities and ongoing suffering that RSPCA, Dogs Homes of Tasmania and multiple other mainstream animal welfare organisations deem greyhound racing to be inherently and irredeemably cruel.

A record e-petition to Parliament opposing this State-subsidised cruelty was presented in 2022 but the deaths, injuries and welfare breaches have continued. The voices of the 13.5k petitioners have now been joined by 80 per cent of Tasmanians who oppose taxpayer funded greyhound racing. (EMRS state-wide poll October 2023).

Amidst the ongoing cost of living crisis in Tasmania the community is entitled to expect that essential government services will be prioritised ahead of handouts to an increasingly marginalised, declining and scandal ridden industry that treats sentient beings as disposable commodities.

Your petitioners request the Legislative Council, seek the agreement of the House of Assembly, to establish a Joint Select Committee to independently and thoroughly examine the economic and welfare implications of the industry subsidy ahead of any renewal of the current 20-year taxpayer funded Racing Deed, due for expiry in 2029.

GOVERNMENT POSITION:

The Government accepts that people will have differing views on the greyhound racing industry in Tasmania. The Government knows the racing community and more broadly the Tasmanian community want a racing industry that is fair, humane, and sustainable. The Government wants to rebuild trust and restore faith in racing across all three codes.

The Government is a proud supporter of Tasmania's racing community and the thousands of people who are part of it. It supports the longevity and sustainability of an industry that generates close to \$208 million in economic activity for Tasmania, and which involves more than 6,400 people across the State.

The *Racing Regulation and Integrity Bill* introduced by the Government and now passed by both Houses of Parliament will provide the Tasmanian racing industry with a modern, effective and fit-for-purpose model for regulation and integrity. This legislation was the Government's response to the Monteith Review that required the creation of a new Act, and the repeal of the existing *Racing Regulation Act 2004*.

Through this the Government is delivering the largest integrity reforms in decades, based on evidence and industry best practice as recommended in the Monteith Review.

While the principal legislation for animal welfare is the *Animal Welfare Act 1993*, these reforms support and strengthen regulation and oversight of animal welfare in greyhound racing. The Bill establishes a Commissioner with the power to set Integrity and Animal Welfare Standards, including the power to set standards relating to animal testing, care, and traceability.

The establishment of the Integrity and Animal Welfare Advisory Committee will provide a forum for consultation and advice to the Commissioner on any matter relating to animal welfare.

The Government and Tasracing are investing more money than ever before into animal welfare - ensuring that racing animals are treated with dignity and care, before, during and after their racing days.

To improve transparency on animal welfare, Tasracing is providing information monthly on track injuries, euthanasia, retirement and rehoming statistics.

There have been significant investments into the Greyhound Adoption Program, including new facilities, and increased funding to the Greyhound Recovery Rebate Scheme, providing financial support for the assessment and rehabilitation of greyhounds.

RESPONSE:

- Animal welfare is a high priority for the Racing Minister. The Government has progressed reform in the Tasmanian racing industry with a modern, effective, and fit-for-purpose model for animal welfare standards, regulation and integrity.
- As part of its 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania, the Government will implement an enforceable Greyhound Welfare Code of Practice, containing important provisions in respect of minimum standards for the care, housing and health of dogs in the industry.
- The industry Funding Deed was implemented from 1 July 2009 in preparation for the sale of the State TAB, TOTE Tasmania. The Deed has a term of 20 years, ending on 30 June 2029. The Government will continue to honour the deed that was introduced in 2009.
- The Government supports the longevity and sustainability of the broader industry that generates close to \$208 million in economic activity for Tasmania, and which involves more than 6,400 people across the State.
- The Government will review future funding to the Tasmanian racing industry or Tasracing through the normal budgetary and parliamentary processes.



Hon Jane Howlett MP
Minister for Racing

12 SEP 2024