

Submission to GRNSW

2010 Strategic Plan



Submitted by the
NSW GBOTA
June 2010

1. Introduction

The NSW GBOTA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Strategic Planning process of GRNSW with regard to the Industry Strategic Plan for the period 2010-2020.

The NSW GBOTA is a significant stakeholder in the NSW Greyhound Industry with both racing and participant representative functions.

Its racing operations are as follows:

- Wentworth Park
- Gosford
- Maitland
- Lismore
- Bulli
- Bathurst
- Gunnedah
- Temora
- Appin

In addition, it currently has a membership of 1100 members who form 28 branches. All branches meet monthly for the purpose of discussion with a view to improving Industry outcomes.

The feedback of branches is received by Directors of the Association and therefore this contribution has taken into account the view of the Directorate, management and generally the feedback of the membership.

2. Format

GRNSW has circulated two papers (1) Review and (2) Future Directions Paper.

The NSW GBOTA submission comments to the future Directions Paper having regard for the information outlined in the Review.

3. Submission

a. Growth

Drive sustainable growth in order to maximize returns to Industry and community participants.

- **How do we generate and drive revenue growth?**

Product Expansion Strategy

The NSW NSW GBOTA supports the GRNSW Product Expansion Strategy. Whilst the Australian wagering market appears reasonable mature, the Product Expansion Strategy has distributed increased prizemoney to areas of the NSW Industry that have been only fairly funded predominantly by non-TAB meetings. It has also ensured that the NSW Industry protects or grows its market share which will be important should improved Intercode funding arrangements be negotiated in 2013. And, the additional product has and will ensure NSW remains a major player in the increasingly de-regulated Australian wagering market. The NSW GBOTA notes that the north west zone remains un-serviced by regular TAB meetings and believes that this must be addressed as part of future growth strategies. Whilst consideration has

been given to development at Tamworth, the case for Gunnedah to also be addressed as the major greyhound racing venue in the region is considered strong.

Metropolitan racing

The NSW GBOTA believes that the image and impression of greyhound racing in any particular state is driven by the projected by the metropolitan track or tracks. Wentworth Park remains the most important brand for NSW greyhound racing but the status of this brand will deteriorate without ongoing attention to the customer and participant facilities provided at Wentworth Park. The NSW GBOTA, GRNSW and the Wentworth Park Trust need to continue to work co-operatively in up-grading the site to the point where it is considered the equal, if not the best greyhound racing venue in Australia. At the current time, the aforementioned parties have concentrated on improving the aesthetics of the venue and its customer services. Ultimately, however, the current track will need to be re-constructed and other services required by owners and trainers will need to be addressed. Wentworth Park currently races twice per week with the Saturday night meeting carrying more prizemoney than the 'second' meeting. This is compared to Victoria where there are two metropolitan meetings per week at the same level of prizemoney as Saturday nights at Wentworth Park. This shortcoming should be addressed by lifting the second Wentworth Park meeting to the same prizemoney level as in Victoria (for graded events) and, if at all possible, maintaining parity with Victoria.

One Turn racing

It is accepted that greyhounds generally have a preference to either race on tighter two turn tracks or larger one turn tracks. The Victorian greyhound industry appears to have commercially benefitted by the significant concentration of big track (one turn) racing that it provides. The NSW greyhound industry should assess whether the Bulli and Maitland tracks could be used more creatively to cater for two turn specialists. Considerations should include the possibility of more dates, additional prizemoney and complimentary programming.

NSW brand

Although brand is being considered under a separate pillar, there appears to be considerable scope for improved branding of the NSW product. Victoria, and to a lesser degree SA, have attempted to brand their product via common colour schemes, standards and generic marketing which has branded its racing product as elite. Obviously, wagering customers are likely to support the product which has been branded in a manner that they feel most comfortable with. Considerable opportunity appears available to the NSW greyhound racing industry with regard to how it positions itself in the eyes of the national and international wagering customer.

Intercode Agreement and taxation reform

The intercode agreement and the ongoing possibility of taxation reform must be pursued as key negotiating opportunities for the NSW racing industry, central to future growth.

- **What Industry revenue model will facilitate sustainable growth?**

Current structure

The NSW GBOTA supports the continuation of the current structure in terms of track numbers. The current structure is central to the high levels of participation and

breeding activity in NSW. The current approach of maintaining the non TAB tracks at basic levels and developing the more important 'gateway' tracks is supported. More incentives need to be provided to retain NSW bred greyhounds in NSW. Considerations in this sense include prizemoney distribution, race dates and programming and, importantly, a complete re-think of the Blue Paws incentive scheme.

- **How do we take advantage of new technology to enhance product delivery?**

Broadcasting costs likely to reduce

Currently, Sky Racing uses fibre optic links for the broadcasting transmission of its products. There are now other broadcasting transmission options in the market place and this will enable more meetings to be broadcast cost effectively. This should enable GRNSW to convert more of its non TAB product to TAB status.

Enhancement of vision

Connected to the aforementioned point regarding branding, is the opportunity to improve the quality of NSW vision. Greyhound Media Services (GMS) currently hold the rights for most NSW TAB meetings. GMS should take steps to gather the rights for all TAB racing in NSW and simultaneously assess options for improving vision via extra camera works, interviews etc. This could be achieved cost effectively by entering into arrangements with current vision providers or GMS assuming the role of vision provider itself.

Web site and communication

GRNSW is to be commended on the progression of web-site and communications strategies. GRNSW must remain at the cutting edge on ongoing developments in this field.

But what about the basics?

Whilst taking advantage of technology advancements is supported, it is important that the basics are not forgotten. Customers service levels, provision of form, audio and at times vision with the Sky Racing 1 and 2 issue remains very poor in far too many pub/club TAB outlets. Pressure must be brought to bear to correct what must be a front line turn off for many wagering customers at the moment.

- **What markets and customers present growth opportunities?**

Participation

The NSW GBOTA believes that efforts must be made to target ownership and participant recruitment in the 18 to 30 year age bracket. Syndication efforts need to be increased and entry level information requires attention.

Wagering customers

Properly branded and presented, greyhound racing can be made trendy and attractive to the younger age. Future growth is therefore connected to the 18 to 30 age group. The GRNSW view that customers currently supporting other codes are a potential conversion market is strongly supported. The greyhound product has many advantages and marketing strategies that focus on converting support from other codes are supported.

- **How do we drive growth in on-course revenue and attendances?**

Presentation

Consistent with previous comments regarding the presentation and image of the NSW greyhound industry, our major 'gateway' tracks must be made as appealing as possible to potential customers. This starts at Wentworth Park, then the major TAB tracks and so on. Clubs also need to have customer focused service strategies in place.

Quality of racing

Obviously, the better the product, the greater the incentive for people to attend. GRNSW and clubs need to continue to work together in developing high interest carnivals. The success of the 2010 Golden Easter Egg is a shining example and similar partnerships could apply to all major racing carnivals in NSW.

Loyalty programmes

Loyalty programmes are now a major influence in buying decisions in all walks of life. It remains a poorly exploited opportunity in the racing industry.

On course advantage

Legendary bookmaker Bill Waterhouse suggested, at the time of his recent retirement, that the introduction of wagering benefits for on course patrons would re-invigorate on course interest. The concept has merit, particularly with high valued customers and should be explored, even if it was underwritten by the NSW greyhound industry.

b. Image

Perception is reality – portraying a positive image of greyhound racing to the wider public.

- **How is greyhound racing perceived by those outside of the sport?**

By potential participants

Greyhound racing does not appear to be as inviting as it could be to would be participants. Information on syndicates, training costs, contact points etc are not the easiest to find. GRNSW would appear best positioned to overcome this problem. Participants too have a role to play in the professionalism and presentation they apply to themselves and their training facilities.

By wagering customers not currently supporting the code

Probably seen lotto on legs. Perhaps viewed, wrongly, as under-regulated. Most issues could be overcome with an appropriate branding strategy which would obviously address market place misconceptions.

- **Does our sport require a brand or particular image?**

Yes.

- **What type of brand and image will generate continued growth of economic and social capital?**

Inviting

The interest in greyhound racing in Britain reminds us that if the product can be presented as professional yet hip, trendy and inviting, then 'they will come'. These

qualities should be the cornerstone of the NSW greyhound brand.

- **What are the community expectations in the sport and how do we meet these?**

Animal welfare

Increasingly, the wider community will expect the greyhound industry to put the needs of the greyhound first. This will mean appropriate standards being place from birth to the death of a greyhound. Rearing facilities will need to meet standards, as too will professional trainers, animal cruelty in any form will need be to be pro-actively stamped upon. Efforts will need to be made to pro-long the racing life of greyhounds (shorter course racing for veterans etc.) and the adoption of greyhounds needs to take on a far greater presence and profile than that currently enjoyed in NSW. GRNSW should consider using a property such as Appin to fully develop its Adoption programme. Open days need to staged, the bringing together or retired greyhounds needs to be promoted as do field days for past champions. Clubs too can assist by showcasing retired greyhounds at feature meetings.

c. Governance

Quality, transparency and innovation

- **What goals and objectives should GRNSW strive for in the area of governance and integrity?**

Housekeeping

Obviously, appropriate stewarding and regulation of the industry is required as a base level. The industry is viewed as currently being adequately regulated. The NSW GBOTA would favour swabbing procedures including the return of the marble draw following each race.

Transparent processes

All processes, including race meeting allocation and categorization of meetings must be transparent and fair. Arbitrary decisions, with proper process should be avoided at all times.

GRICG

As the Board of GRNSW moves to an independent structure, the role of GRICG in providing expert industry level advice and recommendations to GRNSW will become more important. GRICG's role must be viewed seriously and the body should be properly empowered, highly informed in terms of information required from GRNSW and appropriately resourced, independent of GRNSW administration.

d. Sustainability

To ensure NSW greyhound racing is alive and well in 2020 and beyond.

- **What is the biggest threat to the sustainability of our sport?**

Lack of Owners and animal welfare

The costs of the greyhound industry are considerably more than the prizemoney dividend paid. Accordingly, participation in greyhound racing at a macro level is financially negative. Owners, therefore, need to be enticed and encourage to participate bases on the thrill and excitement as much as possible financial return. This ties back to presentation and branding issues previously mentioned.

- **How do we attract the next generation of administrators, owners, trainers and breeders?**

Image and accessibility

Again, image, branding and presentation are essential requirements to ongoing interest.

Increasing viability

Maximising the potential for financial return for owners and trainers ties back to prizemoney focus, increasing the opportunity for NSW greyhounds to remain in NSW and for an improved breeding incentive scheme.

- **How do we encourage ongoing investment and participation in the sport?**

The experience

Again, the experience must be the key attraction... the industry must be presented as one which the general public want to be part of. Secondly, we must promote its affordability and accessibility must be made as easy as possible.

- **How do we remain competitive with the other racing codes?**

Continued attempts to present greyhound racing as a better value option for wagering customers. Our costs are lower and, with a commitment to improved presentation of tracks and vision for wagering customers, greyhound racing can maintain and grow its current interest level.

- **How do we embrace community concerns regarding greyhound welfare?**

Key focus

As previously discussed, animal welfare is a key threat to the racing industry and particularly the greyhound industry. Ascertaining the issues from birth to death and pro-actively countering these concerns must be a central component of future strategic direction. (See prior comments)

- **What is a sustainable infrastructure model?**

Current structure

The NSW GBOTA supports the current structure in terms of tracks and clubs. Clearly, not all tracks can be presented to the same standard but this is not seen as essential. Metropolitan racing must remain our most impressive gateway, followed by the best attended TAB tracks. The rest must be maintained to an acceptable level. All tracks, no matter their customer facilities, must present with similar standards in off course vision.

e. Racing

Our product is our life blood – it is affordable, attractive and admirable.

- **How do we capitalize on the strengths of our product?**

Participant strategies

Involvement is affordable. Currently not as inviting as it could possibly be. Information and promotion needs to be enhanced and all stakeholders need to

uphold standards that are professional and acceptable to the outsider.

Wagering customer strategies

Branding and presentation up-grade as previously progressed. Special event marketing and co-ordinated race programming.

- **How can our product be improved?**

Brand the NSW product

Assess presentation standards including re-build of the Wentworth Park track

Capitalise on safe tracks and improve vision

Special event and distance event promotion

- **What type of support, information and education will participants require in the future?**

All of the branding and marketing strategies determined by GRNSW will need to be supported by communication strategies. Participation seminars and ongoing development of electronic circulation of information would also seem needed.

- **What will greyhound racing look like in the future (5 years, 10 years and so on)?**

Hopefully, GRNSW will have combined with Clubs and other stakeholders to develop a racing product in NSW that is recognized for its professionalism, presentation of metropolitan and other major gateway tracks, quality of racing product and is in turn considered highly attractive by wagering customers, leading to sustainable prizemoney growth.