



MARCH 2019

# HISTORY OF GREYHOUND RACING IN NSW

# FACT SHEET

## NSW GBOTA - Since 1939

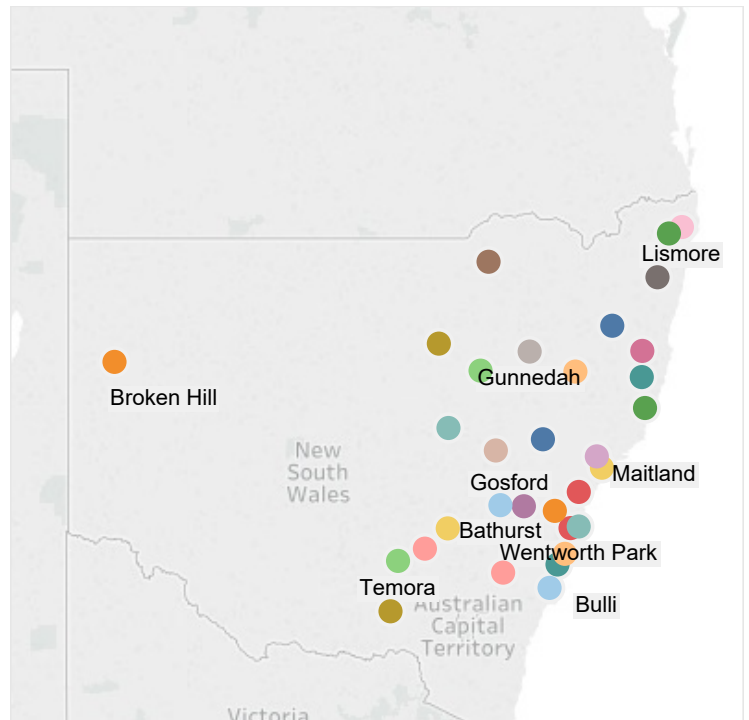
The NSW Greyhound Breeders, Owners & Trainers Association was formed in 1939 after an enthusiastic group of greyhound owners and trainers formed a body to support and sustain Greyhound Racing in NSW.

NSW GBOTA has two functions; Advocacy for members and Racing operations. Within the industry there is hundreds of years of experience in owning, breeding, training, and administering the sport. It is this experience and knowledge that can develop and shape the future of greyhound racing.

Despite our history, the working man's sport is under threat. With the amount of money being spent (rightfully so) on animal welfare and administration, the economics of the industry is being pounded.



## NSW racing venues



## First steps

The first recorded "sporting use" of greyhounds in Australia was in the 1860s. The exact date of the first greyhound race is however not known.

In 1927, 'Tin Hare' racing was approved by the then Lang Labor Government. The first race meet was held at Epping Racecourse. In the same year the *Greyhound Coursing Association* was formed by Fredrick Swindell.

'Tin Hare' racing was enabled by the Lang Government's amendment of the *Gaming and Betting Act 1912* that changed the nature of "coursing" to include a mechanical or live hare.

This racing form utilises a mechanical lure which encourages greyhounds to race around the track. This form of racing remains popular today.

In 1928, amendments to the *Gaming and Betting Act* prohibited gambling after sunset and the issuing of new racing licenses. The greyhound industry was constrained.

## "Working man's racehorse"

In 1931, the recently elected Lang Government reversed the constraints on greyhound racing. Lang coined the term that greyhounds were the "working man's racecourse", evidencing the increased popularity and growth of the industry largely within the Australia's working class.

In 1932, a "non-propriety" basis was mandated throughout the greyhound industry as a result of the findings of a Royal Commission into greyhound racing.

As a result, greyhound race meets could only be organised and held by associations and clubs with voting members. Private businesses and individuals were thus excluded.

In 1936, The Dapto Greyhound Club obtained a license to conduct 40 race meets a year under the administration of the Dapto Agricultural and Horticultural Society.

In 1936, a small group of trainers and owners in the greyhound industry provided financial support to the emerging racing code.

## GBOTA is born

The NSW Greyhound Breeders, Owners and Trainers Association Limited was established as a company on July 31st 1939 to oversee the organisation of various district association and branches as representatives of the industry in NSW.

The NSW industry is evidenced by thirty branches and seven districts, which in total account for 1,200 active members across the state.

In the period immediately following the inception of GBOTA the state experienced the establishment of multiple new racing venues.

In 1948, GBOTA NSW initiated a petition with the intention of attaining a license to conduct race meets at Harold Park. The NSW Trotting Club relinquished the license to the greyhound industry until September 1987.

Harold Park was considered the leading race course in Australia and subsequently contributed to the industry's success during this period.

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## THE BAN & INTROSPECTION

### Special Commission of Inquiry

In response to a Four Corners report, the Baird Government launched a *Special Commission of Inquiry into the Greyhound Racing Industry in NSW* in May 2015.

The commission was directed by Justice Michael McHugh and aimed to examine the practises in the NSW Greyhound Industry. The Commission report was released on July 7th 2016. The findings of the report suggested a high proportion whelped greyhounds were not able to develop into racing prospects and were subsequently killed.

Tracking of all greyhounds born however was inadequate and a true picture could not be established. The Commission also had evidence of live baiting. In response the NSW GBOTA maintains that the illegal practices were not regularly occurring.

### The ban

Following the publication of the Commission's report on July 7th 2016, the then NSW Premier Mike Baird announced the plan to ban greyhound racing in NSW from the 1st of July 2017.

This decision was made on the basis of Justice Michael McHugh's assertion that the industry was unable to reform itself to address animal welfare concerns.

On August 24th of that year, a bill to ban greyhound racing in NSW passed the lower house of state parliament by 48 votes to 35. This debate followed highly unusual tactics of declaring the legislation "urgent" and putting the legislation first into the upper house for a vote. Legislation is normally initiated in the lower house.

### The community speaks

The ban was met with a strong community backlash. A survey released in September 2016 revealed that Mike Baird's approval rating had dropped from 61% to 39%. This led to media speculation of a potential backflip.

On 26 November 2016, the NSW National Party lost the seat of Orange to the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party. The Nationals held the seat for 69 years. The greyhound ban was seen as a key issue in the result.

On 10 Oct 2016, Mike Baird confirmed his intention to repeal the greyhound racing ban, admitting he "got it wrong" following widespread backlash from the public, media and within his own government.

### Never again and moving forward

The ban was reversed on April 6th 2017 after the passing of legislation through the NSW Parliament.

The passing of the *Greyhound Racing Bill 2017* included major reforms aimed at enhancing animal welfare and the racing code's integrity, alongside significant amendments of the industry's controlling body.

In addition, industry leaders committed to ensuring that animal welfare would be promoted and safeguarded and the industry put on a sustainable path.

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## COMMITMENT TO REFORM & THE FUTURE

### The Greyhound Industry Reform Panel

When the government announced the reversal of the ban, it established the Greyhound Industry Reform Panel to provide recommendations on potential new animal welfare and governance arrangements to reform the industry.

The reform panel made 122 recommendations to the government. A key recommendation was to separate the commercial and regulatory functions carried out by GRNSW. GRNSW would retain the commercial arm, while the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission (GWIC) would administer welfare and regulatory functions. Disappointingly, the Government did not accept the recommendation to increase and improve funding arrangements for the industry.

### Code of Practice for the Welfare of Greyhounds

The Greyhound Industry Reform Panel recommended establishing an enforceable code of practice containing the minimum standards of care for greyhounds throughout their life. GWIC is developing a code of practice in close consultation with the Animal Welfare Committee.

The code of practice will be based on the five domains of animal welfare. These include nutrition, environment, health, behaviour and mental state. The code of practice will contain standards for the keeping, treatment, handling and care of greyhounds.

The code will also include standards for the facilities, equipment and conditions at premises where greyhounds are kept, trialled, trained or raced. In addition, the code will contain standards for the procedures and practices to be adopted for keeping, trialling, training and racing greyhounds.

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## SOME OF OUR PROGRAMS TODAY

### Greyhounds As Pets

This is a not-for-profit initiative coordinated by Greyhound Racing NSW. The program aims to promote the merits of greyhounds as a pet to the wider community. There are a range of stakeholders involved.

This is done through facilitating the adoption of greyhounds through responsible rehoming practices and educating industry participants about the options available to their greyhounds after racing.

Greyhounds As Pets operates out of facilities on the Central Coast and in Western Sydney. The qualified and experienced staff at Greyhounds As Pets endeavour to match greyhounds that are most suited to each individual adopter.

### Greenhounds

The Greenhounds Program allows for pet greyhounds to go muzzle free in public places after they successfully complete a re-training program and are deemed suitable by an approved Greenhounds assessor. Once approved with their muzzle exemption, all Greenhounds must wear a special green collar with a certified ID tag at all times when in public.

There are currently more than 1,000 certified Greenhounds with a muzzling exemption in NSW. A key benefit of the program is that has assisted in changing the perception that greyhounds are an aggressive breed.

The Greenhounds program is fully funded and administered by GRNSW.