

The NSW Greyhound Breeders, Owners & Trainers' Association



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Mr. Adam Rutter
Racing Operations Manager
GRNSW
PO Box 170
Concord West NSW 2138

Dear Adam,

The NSW GBOTA provides the following feedback to GRNSW's Non TAB Race Date proposal for 2016/17.

1. EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

The NSW GBOTA intends to lodge an Expression of Interest (EOI) for TAB racing in both the New England and Riverina regions. The NSW GBOTA does, however, note that EOI Terms of Reference and application process details were distributed 48 hours prior to the close of responses to the 2016/17 Non-TAB race dates proposal. Therefore, limited understanding and clarification has been able to be achieved on the overlap between this feedback and EOI applications. The NSW GBOTA view the EOI information and process as critical to the wider Non-TAB considerations, and how both may affect NSW GBOTA venues. We believe the outcomes of the EOI process should be determined prior to the finalisation of non TAB dates for 2016/17.

2. EQUITY IN 2016/17 TAB v NON TAB DATE ALLOCATION

The NSW GBOTA notes that the quantum of dates that will be granted to the NSW TAB tracks in 2016/17 is basically unchanged, as compared to the 2015/16 quantum. This presumably will allow for strategic decisions arising from recommendations of the Special Commission to be undertaken over a reasonably period of time with appropriate

consideration and consultation timelines.

The NSW GBOTA believes the same principle should apply at non TAB level.

3. IMPACT OF PROPOSED REDUCTION IN NON TAB RACING

In correspondence, dated March 11, 2016, GRNSW advised of its intention to reduce Non-TAB dates in 2016/17 by 25% and funding by 10%. The Association provides the following feedback:

a. Animal Welfare

The NSW GBOTA is concerned at the possible animal welfare impact of the proposal. Non TAB racing provides, in many cases, a vital racing opportunity for greyhounds at the lower end of the ability scale.

Greyhound racing jurisdictions throughout Australia are recognizing the importance of catering for low class racing as the national greyhound industry grapples with the optimum product supply model. In summary, the optimum product supply model involves (a) controlling breeding quantity and improving the quality of greyhound breeding and pre-race development/education and (b) providing maximum opportunity for greyhounds so that more are able to race for longer, thus (c) stemming the flow of greyhounds into the pool that require post racing rehoming.

GRNS, GRSA and GRV have sought to increase racing opportunities by the introduction of various initiatives, including Masters racing, grade seven racing, pathway racing etc. Against this light, it seems illogical to reduce non TAB racing in NSW, given this tier of racing seeks to cater for greyhounds that are often simply not competitive at TAB level. Feedback provided by regional members confirms that there is a connection between reasonable provision of racing opportunity within close proximity and base level participant viability.

History has shown that where the provision of race meetings falls beyond 25 meetings per year, it becomes increasingly difficult for clubs to retain customer and stakeholder interest and loyalty. Both Temora and Gunnedah are currently conducting 20 meetings per year. If this is reduced to 15 meetings, there is no doubt that some participants will struggle to justify the time, effort and cost of continuing to participate and certainly to train the lower class greyhounds. It follows that this will increase the number of greyhounds flowing into the rehoming pool, which is already under enormous pressure.

Specific to the NSW GBOTA venues of Gunnedah and Temora, the Association believes the issue of decreased racing opportunity will have a significant effect on participants and greyhounds in the region. Any reduction in participation levels has a cascading impact on club viability.

Both tracks currently maintain strong nominations. During the past 12 months, Temora has

only once struggled to get 10 races, while on all other occasions they have been able to run 11 full races, often with reserves. At Gunnedah, nomination flow continues to remain in the order of 150 nominations per meeting. The NSW GBOTA cannot see any justification for reducing racing activity against this reality.

b. Club sustainability

The NSW GBOTA believes that it is not sustainable for a non tab venue to only race 15 times a year. It simply places the clubs on a slow burning deck. Such a scenario requires that the venue still be generally maintained for the remaining 37 weeks of a year. In the experience of the GBOTA, without regular use, venues often increase general dust and dirt, which becomes more time consuming to clean around racing periods.

The reduction in racing also creates difficulties with stock management, increasing the likelihood of wastage of bar and catering stock. In addition, without cohesion of dates, attracting a crowd to a race meeting again becomes more difficult, and centralized regional programming of dates does not have regard for local staff and contractor availability. The NSW GBOTA has experienced in recent years the effect of lack of race date continuity; with regards to both nomination recruitment and patron attraction. The more you reduce, the tougher it gets.

c. Volunteer and employee sustainability

Currently, both the Temora and Gunnedah venues have a high proportion of volunteers. The NSW GBOTA believes that a reduction in overall racing will make it more difficult to retain volunteers and, even more so employees.

Both venues currently have strong engagement at volunteer level as the venues offer a routine which is consistent, without being taxing. Whilst accepting that volunteers are increasingly difficult to maintain, the NSW GBOTA would suggest that those that are still willing to contribute are driven by a sense of purpose. This purpose declines in proportion with race meeting reductions.

From an employee perspective, they often rely on this income and a reduction would potentially see both Clubs loose access to some of their employees who would seek more regular work elsewhere.

Both Temora and Gunnedah take great pride in the effort and time placed in training both staff and volunteers of the Clubs. Whilst both clubs currently conduct the vast majority of their race meetings at non TAB level, both have employee/volunteer structures that have shown themselves completely able to provide TAB meetings. Of this both clubs are proud and they would resist race meetings reductions which would potentially erode their current structures. And, of course, any reduction in volunteers would further increase costs to the already tight financial trading environment before non TAB clubs.

d. Industry reform and breeding decline

The NSW GBOTA is supportive of the NSW greyhound industry confronting reform. The reform process, however, must be holistic and fair. As previously mentioned, the 2016/17 TAB Race Dates have remained at the same quantum as 2015/16 so to allow a fuller review for 2017/18 and beyond. It is simply unacceptable that reform is being forced upon the non TAB sector without a full consideration process and certainly where this process effects clubs currently securing adequate nomination and participant support.

The NSW GBOTA notes that GRNSW cite a decrease in breeding as one of the rationale for a reduction in overall racing. The fact remains that the true impact of this downturn is not likely to be felt for a further 12months, given there is still considerable greyhounds aged between 2-4 years which are still fit for racing.

4. FUTURE ROLE IN THE INDUSTRY

Both the Temora and Gunnedah Clubs are owned by the NSW GBOTA. Both are currently greyhound racing hubs.

Both are positioned to make significant contributions to greyhound racing in their respective regions. Both have first class facilities, are able to conduct, and have conducted, TAB racing.

The JWG report under consideration by GRNSW, proposes a Centre of Excellence framework for NSW greyhound racing in the future. Both Temora and Gunnedah are well positioned to be developed as racing centres of excellence or to contribute substantially to centre of excellence requirements in their regions.

The NSW GBOTA believes that strategic considerations around Centre of Excellence racing should take place before any substantial reduction of racing in each region.

5. CONNECTION TO INCREASED ANIMAL WELFARE COSTS AND INTEGRITY COSTS

The NSW GBOTA notes that GRNSW has cited variations to veterinary and integrity services at the non TAB meetings as part of the reasoning for reducing non TAB meetings. While the NSW GBOTA recognises and welcomes the need for improved animal welfare and integrity services, more information is required on the actual costs and how they impact. On face value, it is difficult to justify a 25% reduction in racing activity in order to offset the improvements.

6. STRAIGHT TRACK OPPORTNITIES

The NSW GBOTA notes that within the Joint Working Group paper, substantial discussion was undertaken with regards to access to straight track racing opportunities, importance of drag lure opportunities; particularly as part of education, and access to coursing

opportunities. Straight track racing also received support during the Public Hearings at the Special Commission of Inquiry.

In this regard, the NSW GBOTA wishes to place before GRNSW consideration of the use of Appin, for funded Non-TAB racing or drag lure coursing. At the current time, the NSW GBOTA maintains the venue for trialling opportunities only. The Association is not in a position to undertake self-funded meetings at the venue, however believes the location and facilities of the venue make it suitable for consideration of straight track / coursing opportunities.

7. SUMMARY

- (1) The NSW GBOTA objects to the across the board nature to the proposed non TAB race date reduction.
- (2) The NSW GBOTA believes the decision will impact on racing opportunity for greyhounds unable to compete at TAB level. This in turn will lead to reduced viability for participants and is likely to lead to more greyhounds entering the already congested rehoming pool.
- (3) The NSW GBOTA preferred position is for the non TAB race date quantum to remain unchanged in 2016/17 and that future race date consideration take place as part of a holistic consideration of industry reform in 2016/17 for effect in 2017/18.
- (4) In the event that GRNSW does undertake reductions to the non TAB sector in 2016/17, that the circumstances of Temora and Gunnedah being re-considered, given their current nomination and participation levels.
- (5) Both tracks currently meet all performance expectations for registration, have strong support bases and are well positioned to be significant players in the future of greyhound racing in NSW. A reduction in their racing footprint prior to a holistic consideration of the industry's future is considered short sighted and unjustifiable.

The NSW GBOTA appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback and senior management and regional Directors are available should further discussion be required.

Yours sincerely,

Ellen Harris
Operations Manager
NSW GBOTA