THE DISAPPEARED GREYHOUNDS

GREYHOUND LIFECYCLE

To understand the size and scale of the cruelty inflicted on greyhounds in NSW, it is necessary to examine the lifecycle of a greyhound. The information below has been extracted from the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Greyhound Racing Industry in NSW.

Life expectancy
Greyhounds who do not participate in the greyhound racing industry have an approximate life expectancy of between 12 and 15 years.[1]

From birth to racer
Pups are usually weaned at around eight weeks and raised in litters until approximately six months of age. The rearing period ends when the pups are approximately 12-16 months. At this point the 'breaking-in' process begins. This involves training the dog to exit the starting box at speed and chase the lure. Following 'breaking-in' some pups are assessed as unsuitable or uncompetitive and do not progress further. The remainder will progress to pre-training. Greyhounds Australasia has reported that 40% of dogs whelped never race.

The racing greyhound
Greyhounds generally race from 18 months of age to 3.5-4.5 years. The average length of a racing career is 363 days.[2] Approximately 20% have five or less starts. At the end of their racing career greyhounds are retired. Retired dogs are retained for breeding purposes, adopted as pets or *disappear*.

The disappeared
The Special Commission's report stated that "The normal life expectancy of a greyhound is between 12 and 15 years. Over the last 12 years 97,783 dogs have been whelped in NSW. Currently, there are about 6,809 registered greyhounds. Absent death through misadventure or illness, the average life expectancy of a greyhound indicates that another 90,974 greyhounds should still be alive. Some pups that were whelped in the last 18 months may be within litters, being reared, broken in or in pre-race training and not registered. However, even assuming that none of these juvenile animals (approximately 10,253) has been destroyed, where are the remaining 80,721 greyhounds? What has happened to them?"[3]

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[1] Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Greyhound Racing Industry in NSW Chapter 11.
[2] Ibid Chapter 11
[3] Ibid para 1.2

GREYHOUNDS AS PETS (GAP)

A news release from GAP dated 27 June 2019 stated "In 2017/18 a total of 415 greyhounds were adopted. This year more than 650 dogs have been rehomed through the program. At GRNSW we have made it clear for some time now that welfare is key to us."

GREYHOUNDS AUSTRALASIA (GA)

A GA document titled Crisis to Recovery Program marked Strictly Confidential and dated 23 April 2015 stated "7,000 greyhounds per year do not make it to the track (40% of greyhounds whelped)".

The admission by GA that 40% of greyhounds do not make it to the track allows a calculation to be made of how many greyhounds whelped in NSW never raced.

GREYHOUND WHELPINGS

Non-racers
Based on the greyhound lifecycle, greyhounds whelped in FY 15/16 and FY 16/17 who were deemed unsuitable to race would have been eligible for adoption in FY 17/18 and FY 18/19.

The Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission (GWIC) published statistics showing the following whelpings:

FY 15/16   4,415

FY 16/17   3,056

40% of these whelpings are:

FY 15/16   1,766

FY 16/17   1,222

This number of dogs, deemed unsuitable to race, should have been up for adoption in FY 17/18 and FY 18/19.

Racers
Greyhounds generally race from 18 months of age to 3.5-4.5 years. For ease of calculation it is assumed that the racers retired at 4 years, thus the greyhounds whelped in FY 11/12 and FY 12/13 are the ones who should retire in FY 15/16 and FY 16/17. GWIC statistics show the following whelpings:

FY 11/12   6,906

FY 12/13   7,471

Allowing that 40% of these dogs never raced and were retired two years after whelping, the number of dogs whelped who went on to race was:

FY 11/12   4,144

FY 12/13   4,483

Approximately 100 dogs per year are killed during a race. Allowing for these deaths the number of racing dogs who should have been up for adoption in FY 17/18 and FY 18/19 was:

FY 11/12   4,044

FY 12/13   4,383

Total number of greyhounds up for adoption
The number of non-racing and racing dogs which should have been adopted in FY 17/18 and FY 18/19 was:

FY 17/18   4,044 + 1,766 = 5,810

FY 18/19   4,383 + 1,222 = 5,605

GREYHOUND ADOPTION

The GAP figures state that in:

FY 17/18   415 greyhounds were rehomed by GAP

FY 18/19   650 greyhounds were rehomed by GAP.

Where are the dogs?
In FY 17/18 5,810 should have been adopted but GAP only adopted 415, a discrepancy of 5,395. The GRNSW 2018 Annual Report stated "In 2017/18, there were 1,395 greyhounds reported as having been rehomed by independent rehoming organisations, owners or trainers." Thus, the total rehomed by both GAP and private rehomers was 1,810. This leaves 4,000 dogs unaccounted for. Where are they?

In FY 18/19 5,605 should have been adopted but GAP only adopted 650, a discrepancy of 4,955. Even if private rehomers adopted the same number of dogs that they achieved in FY 17/18 that accounts for 2,045. That still leaves 3,560 dogs unaccounted for. Where are they?

Future plans
The GRNSW 2018 Annual Report advised "In October 2018, GRNSW finalised its Strategic Plan 2018-2021, which included as a key measure rehoming 1,000 greyhounds per year within the next 3 years through GAP and 1,500 through other rehoming providers. Pursuant to its Operating Licence, GRNSW is required to report against this target as part of its 2018/19 Annual Report". Thus, GRNSW had a rehoming target of 2,500 which included GAP and private rehomers. What is their plan for the remaining 2,544?

Summary
In FY 17/18 there were 4,000 greyhounds who have disappeared. In FY 18/19 there were 3,560 greyhounds who have disappeared assuming the private rehomers achieved the same number of adoptions as the previous year. In FY 19/20 GRNSW has planned to rehome approximately 2,500 greyhounds. What is the future of the remaining dogs whelped in the preceding two and four year periods?