

Funding for NSW Greyhound Rehoming Providers



Introduction

As a result of the Four Corners program exposing the cruelty and corruption in the greyhound racing industry, the NSW Government established the Special Commission of Inquiry into Greyhound Racing in NSW and following on from that Inquiry, the Greyhound Racing Review Panel.

Background

NSW Inquiry and Review

One of the major welfare concerns identified by the Special Commission of Inquiry and the Greyhound Racing Review Panel was 'wastage'. Wastage is the industry term for the killing of healthy dogs who are no longer profitable. The Special Commission established that the major contributor to wastage was overbreeding and shortfalls in re-homing. The greyhound racing industry business model presently depends on killing those dogs who are no longer profitable. As a result of the Inquiry and the Review, new legislation - the Greyhound Racing Act 2017 - was passed by the Parliament and new regulations adopted. As part of this process GRNSW was established as the commercial operator and GWIC was established as an independent State regulator.

GWIC Greyhound Rehoming Policy

The GWIC greyhound rehoming policy is issued under the authority of section 12 (b) of the Greyhound Racing Act 2017 and is enforceable by the GWIC. The new policy took effect on 1 December 2019 and gives industry participants the options of retaining a retired greyhound, transferring it to an associate, who may or may not be an industry participant or offering the dog to Greyhounds as Pets (GAP) or a private rehoming organisation.

If the industry participant does not wish to retain the retired greyhound, cannot find anyone who wishes to take it and cannot get it accepted by either GAP or a private rehoming organisation, the owner can have the dog euthanased. The full rehoming policy can be viewed at https://www.gwic.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/297144/Greyhound-Rehoming-PolicyApril-2020.pdf

Rehoming

Rehoming of greyhounds in NSW occurs through the industry-funded GAP program and private rehoming providers which are funded by private donation.

Rehoming numbers

GRNSW and GWIC Reports show the following rehoming figures:

Greyhounds as Pets

The number of greyhounds rehomed by the GAP program are:

FY14/15	179
FY15/16	324
FY16/17	498
FY17/18	415
FY 18/19	249

Private rehoming providers

In addition to the GAP program, there are several independent greyhound rehoming organisations in NSW and, along with owners and trainers, these groups play an active and major role in the rehoming of greyhounds. In FY17/18, there were 1,395 greyhounds reported by GRNSW as having been rehomed by independent rehoming organisations, owners or trainers. This is over three times the number of greyhounds rehomed by the industry-funded GAP. In FY 18/19 GWIC reported that 390 greyhounds were accepted by another animal rescue or adoption agency.

Greyhounds accepted for rehoming FY19/20

GWIC has reported that GAP accepted 249 greyhounds for rehoming in the period 1 July 19 to 31 March 20. During the same period private rehoming organisations accepted 390 greyhounds.

Greyhounds as Pets vs private rehomers

As can be seen from these reports, private rehomers accept many more dogs than GAP. In accordance with the re-homing policy adopted on 1 December 2019 these private rehomers are an integral part of the government mandated re-homing process. Because the government has included private rehomers in its policy the government has a responsibility to ensure that these private rehomers are adequately financially compensated for this task.

Rehoming Assistance Schemes

Homing Assistance Scheme

With effect 1 June 20 GRNSW introduced a financial support scheme to provide protection for retiring and rehomed greyhounds against infectious disease and to cover the costs of desexing and any required medical or dental treatment. The Homing Assistance Scheme is a financial rebate scheme for NSW industry participants who have retired their greyhounds and are preparing them for life as pets in their own home, with friends or family or through Greyhounds As Pets NSW and other approved rehoming organisations. The scheme is capped at \$950.

The scheme is designed for owners to have this work carried out by a vet prior to attempting to re-home the greyhound. There are two options for payment to be made under the scheme. The veterinarian performing the procedures can invoice GRNSW directly or the owner of the greyhound can pay the veterinarian and claim a reimbursement from GRNSW. The scheme application form provides for both options.

Rehoming Grant Scheme

The Greyhound Rehoming Grant Scheme (Scheme) is available to eligible rehoming providers who rehome greyhounds. Applicants are invited to apply for a grant of up to \$10,000 for goods and services directly benefitting their rehoming activities. Grants are assessed and awarded by GRNSW three times a year, at the end of February, June and October to the successful Applicant. GRNSW will provide the Grant Recipient with a Grant of up to \$10,000.

Under the scheme, eligible organisations have the opportunity to apply for up to \$10,000 towards the cost of an item or service that directly benefits their rehoming activities. Grants will be assessed and awarded tri-annually at the end of February, June and October.

Grants will not be awarded by GRNSW for:

- Salaries
- Legal fees
- Cash prizes
- Advertising material (including signage on premises)
- Political, religious or military pursuits
- Consultant fees

Grants may be awarded by GRNSW for:

- Dog trailers, where a tax invoice is provided
- A veterinary account, where a tax invoice is provided
- Kennel renovations or extensions, where a tax invoice is provided
- Education campaigns, where a tax invoice is provided
- Motor vehicles to transport the dogs, where a tax invoice is provided

Problems with GRNSW Assistance Schemes

The problems with the GRNSW Assistance Schemes are: funding amount and morality.

Funding Amount

The amounts available are limited to veterinary costs and the cost of an item or service that directly benefits their rehoming activities. The amounts available are not adequate to meet all veterinary costs nor the costs of operating a private re-homing organisation. The schemes completely ignore all other costs associated with the day to day running of a greyhound rescue.

Morality

Many private rescue providers regard the greyhound racing industry as corrupt, cruel and based on a business model that involves the killing of dogs who are no longer profitable. For these reasons, the vast majority of independent rescue groups find accepting money from the industry to be against their moral code.

A just assistance scheme

A just and acceptable assistance scheme must eliminate the problems identified with the current scheme. A just scheme must be based on the following criteria:

Funding amount

All veterinary costs, regardless of the amount, must be covered. In addition, the day-to-day cost of operating the rescue facility must be included. The day-to-day operations must also include the cost of a salary for full-time workers. Advice from RSPCA NSW is that it costs \$19 per day per dog for a dog in their shelters. This covers all costs including salaries for workers but not the cost of constructing the facility.

Morality

The money provided to the private rehoming groups cannot come directly from the greyhound racing industry as this is considered by most outside of the industry, to be money that is tainted by cruelty and corruption. The private rehoming groups consulted by the Coalition for the Protection of Greyhounds (CPG) have advised that they will accept funds from the NSW State Government. Legislation already exists in the Betting Tax Act 2001 for the NSW Government to tax the gambling industry to fund greyhound welfare.

CPG recommends that the monies raised by NSW Government via this tax be used to fund the private rehoming groups. Depending on the amount of funds required, the Betting Tax Act may require amendment to raise additional funds. This arrangement allows the private rehoming providers to be at arms-length from the industry's commercial operator.

Recommendations

1. All private rehoming providers be funded by the NSW Government using funds raised by the Betting Tax Act 2001.
2. This funding to be at the rate of \$19 per day per dog, which will cover all veterinary costs and the costs of day-to-day operations of the rescue organisation, including staff salaries.