

The Disappeared Greyhounds NSW, FY19/20



Introduction

In FY19/20 there were 3,554 greyhounds who should have been adopted. Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission (GWIC) statistics show that only 1,405 were retained by their owner, rehomed privately or accepted by GAP or an animal rescue or adoption agency. This is a discrepancy of 2,149 greyhounds. These greyhounds have disappeared.

Greyhound Racing NSW (GRNSW) had a rehoming target of 2,500 which included the industry adoption program (GAP) and private rehomers. In FY19/20, the total rehomed by GAP and animal rescues or adoption agencies was 619. GRNSW failed to achieve its own target by 1,881. What is their plan to rectify this shortfall?

Greyhound Lifecycle

To understand the size and scale of disappearing greyhounds in NSW, it is necessary to examine the lifecycle of a greyhound. The information on the greyhound lifecycle 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

¹ Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Greyhound Racing Industry in NSW Chapter 11.

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

Greyhounds requiring adoption

Non-racers

A Greyhounds Australasia (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.

Based on the greyhound lifecycle, greyhounds whelped in FY17/18 who were deemed unsuitable to race, would have been eligible for adoption in FY19/20.

GWIC published whelping statistics show that 3,975 greyhounds were whelped in FY17/18. 40% of these whelpings are 1,590 greyhounds. This number of dogs, deemed unsuitable to race, should have been adopted in FY19/20.

² Ibid Chapter 11

³ Ibid para 1.2

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 four years, thus the greyhounds whelped in FY15/16 are the ones who should retire in FY19/20. GWIC statistics for FY15/16 show that 4,415 greyhounds were whelped in FY15/16. Allowing that 40% of these dogs never raced and were retired two years after whelping the number of dogs whelped in FY15/16 who went on to race was 2,649. This number of dogs, having completed their racing careers, should have been adopted in FY19/20.

Total greyhounds for adoption before reported deaths

The number of greyhounds requiring adoption in FY19/20 is 1,590 non-racers plus 2,649 racers making a total of 4,239. This figure must be modified by subtracting the number of greyhounds reported to GWIC as having been euthanased or had died.

Greyhound euthanasia

Due to injury	192
Due to illness	188
After a private veterinarian certified that the greyhound was behaviourally unsuitable for rehoming (typically aggressive)	59
At owner's request after rehoming attempts failed	28
Emergency	10
Euthanasia total	468

Greyhound deaths

Due to injury or accidental causes	81
Due to illness, age or natural causes	136
Death total	217

Total euthanasia and deaths all causes FY19/20 685

Total number of greyhounds requiring adoption in FY19/20

The number of non-racing and racing dogs which should have been adopted in FY19/20 is 4,239 less 685 greyhounds reported as dying in FY19/20, making a total of 3,554 greyhounds eligible for adoption in FY19/20.

Greyhound retirements and adoption

GWIC published numbers for greyhound retirements in FY19/20 are:

Retained by owner or trainer	524
Gone to another registered participant as a pet	23
Rehomed to a non-participant privately by owner or trainer	239
Accepted by Greyhounds As Pets	246
Accepted by another animal adoption or rescue agency	373
Total	1405

Where are the dogs?

In FY19/20, 3,554 greyhounds should have been adopted but GWIC published figures show that only 1,405 were retained by their owner, rehomed privately or accepted by GAP or an animal rescue or adoption agency. This is a discrepancy of 2,149 greyhounds. **These greyhounds have disappeared.**

Future plans

The GRNSW 2018 Annual Report stated "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 rehoming providers. In FY19/20 the total rehomed by GAP and animal rescues or adoption agencies was 487. GRNSW failed to achieve its own target by 2,013. What is their plan to rectify this shortfall?