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Our INTERVIEWEES...

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ET Communicator Solreta Antaria

COLUMNIST articles...

Freedom to Love **by Vivian Tong**
Paranormal Investigation + Case File **by D.U.S.T**
Weekend with James Gilliland **by Mariana Flynn**
What Is It About Old Hospitals? **by James Gilbert**
Shut It Down End Greyhound Racing Protest Rally Review

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Star Children the ET Connection **by Mary Rodwell**
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COLUMNIST ARTICLES

SHUT IT DOWN End Greyhound Racing Protest Rally Review



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In late January this year I was invited to attend and review (by Veronica Lim) the 'Shut It Down End Greyhound Racing' Protest Rally scheduled for 7th February in the picturesque Southbank Parklands in Brisbane. Having had a friend (OeC

Talk for Hounds

About 30 minutes later we arrived at the large expanse of grass next to the Boardwalk directly in front of the Queensland Performing Arts Centre, it turned out to be the perfect size for around 600 protesters. A small stage and sound system had been setup, and the magnificent backdrop of Brisbane city would ensure that every photograph of the coming speakers would look amazing.

The MC for the rally (and its first speaker) was Lisa White, who apart from organising the protest rally is also the founder of 'Friends of the Hound'.



Lisa White (Founder Friends of the Hound) (Left) and a board of collars depicting the daily death-toll of Greyhounds in Australia

Lisa spoke at length in regard to the treatment of greyhounds in Australia, and I found myself in shock due to the detail of a Greyhounds quality of life and life-span. To force her points home further she displayed a board of dog collars to show approximately how many Greyhounds die each day in Australia due to their treatment - this was the moment that I really got angry, and yet again pondered peoples greed vs empathy in today's society.

The second speaker of the day was ex-Democrat Queensland Senator Andrew Bartlett. I was a little surprised by

Columnist Jen Gallagher) recently adopt an abused Greyhound, and already in the know about how they have been treated, I had to say YES.

Here is a little background on why over 600 Brisbanites protested on the day:

Between 2010 - 2014, 76% of Queensland greyhounds that left the racing industry were killed. These dogs are commonly known as 'wastage', and nothing more than a revenue source for their unkind owners.

Do you think this is appalling? I certainly did.

The protest rally was organised by Veronica Lim in conjunction with Lisa White (Friends of the Hound) and Inez Hamilton-Smith (Gone Are The Dogs). What a courageous and empathic trio of women, determined to bring this insidious industry to not just its knees, but to its end.



Inez Hamilton-Smith, Veronica Lim & Lisa White

One of the main reasons for the protest in Brisbane (apart from the obvious) was to bring attention to the fact that a new greyhound gambling racetrack is being pushed through local government (to be located in Logan). On hand to discuss the development with the crowd were Councillors Luke Smith and Steve Swenson, and Community Campaigner Graeme Palmer.



his speech - I was expecting something very dry with lots of statistics, and the usual politician avoidance of issues, however, what we got on this day was a passionate plea to help these animals, and a follow-up plea to not forget this message once the protest was over. Message received Andrew.



Andrew Bartlett (ex-Democrats Senator)

At this point I turned around and surveyed the audience, and what an eclectic mix of people they were - young, old, varied race, some obviously prosperous, others not so - but all with the same love of animals, and the Greyhound in particular.

The skies above looked like they were about to rain down on us, and I could see some of the audience eyeing cover across the park. I prayed that the next speaker would be engaging, inspirational and able to drive their message home competently to keep everyone on the field - and fortunately for the rally organisers that is exactly what Councillor Luke Smith (and current Logan Mayoral Candidate) did superbly.



Cr Luke Smith (Logan Mayoral Candidate)



Councillors Luke Smith (left) and Steve Swenson (right)

Prior to the rally we were all asked to wear our anti-racing and/or rescue group shirts and to bring along signage! I'm sure the organisers were not disappointed as their supporters did them proud.

Meeting Point: River Quay Green Southbank Parklands

Around 5:00pm the protest supporters assembled at the River Quay Green, to hear the welcome address by one of the event organisers, Lisa White (Founder - Friends of the Hound).

Inspirational words and instruction flowed seamlessly from the mouth of a seasoned public speaker, and it wasn't long before we were all energised and being ordered to form a marching group behind ex-Senator Andrew Bartlett (and the large protest banner) to kick-off the 'Walk for Hounds'.

I made a mad dash to the front of the group to ensure that I would be able to catch the 'Walk for Hounds' start, and I also wanted to see the reactions from the general public as the varied signage and protesters sang out their songs as they passed.

Wow - if this guy is not Lord Mayor in the next eight years I'd be surprised. He's got that enviable 'gift of the gab' that my Irish grandmother used to say 'could get any girl into bed' - he was an exceptionally good speaker. Articulate, had his facts triple-checked, and was most importantly charismatic. I could see the audience around me leaning in to hear more - an excellent choice of speaker. And as it happens an excellent Councillor who has heard the people of his area protesting against a new Greyhound Gambling Track at Logan and is willing to stand with them - I doubt this track will go ahead with such a crusader at its helm.

Could the next speaker Graeme Palmer, a Logan Community Campaigner and Electrician maintain the audiences attention?

Well Graeme took the podium and microphone and didn't give it back for quite some time. He spoke of his experience with Greyhound trainers (not very nice), his community in Logan, and the detrimental effect a new Greyhound Gambling Track would have on his area. He spoke of his long fight to gain public support, and of the various stumbling blocks that are thrown into a communities path (when they act as a community). I loved this guy, and so does Logan I'm sure!



Graeme Palmer (Logan Community Campaigner)

The last two speakers were from Animal Liberation Queensland, Rebecca Russo and Chay Neal (President). Both spoke well, discussing the 'Live Baiting' scandal of a year ago (highlighted by the team at the ABC's Four Corners). If these two individuals are a typical example



River Quay Green Southbank Parklands

Our own OeC Natural Living Columnist Jen Gallagher (below) turned up with Ruby, her greyhound. You should note the 'SAVED' coat on Ruby that indicates that instead of being discarded or sent OS for other purposes, she was rescued and given a loving home. Jen you are truly a lovely person, and Ruby is not only gorgeous but fortunate in her owner.



OeC Natural Living Columnist Jen Gallagher and her saved greyhound 'Ruby'

of millennials then we have nothing to worry about - their passion, empathy and search for justice were truly memorable.



Rebecca Russo (Animal Liberation Queensland)



Chay Neal (President Animal Liberation Queensland)

Conclusion

Without a doubt the day was a great success for all of the protest groups present and their many supporters. Lets hope that the new Greyhound Gambling Track at Logan is voted down, and that the industry is outlawed by our government.

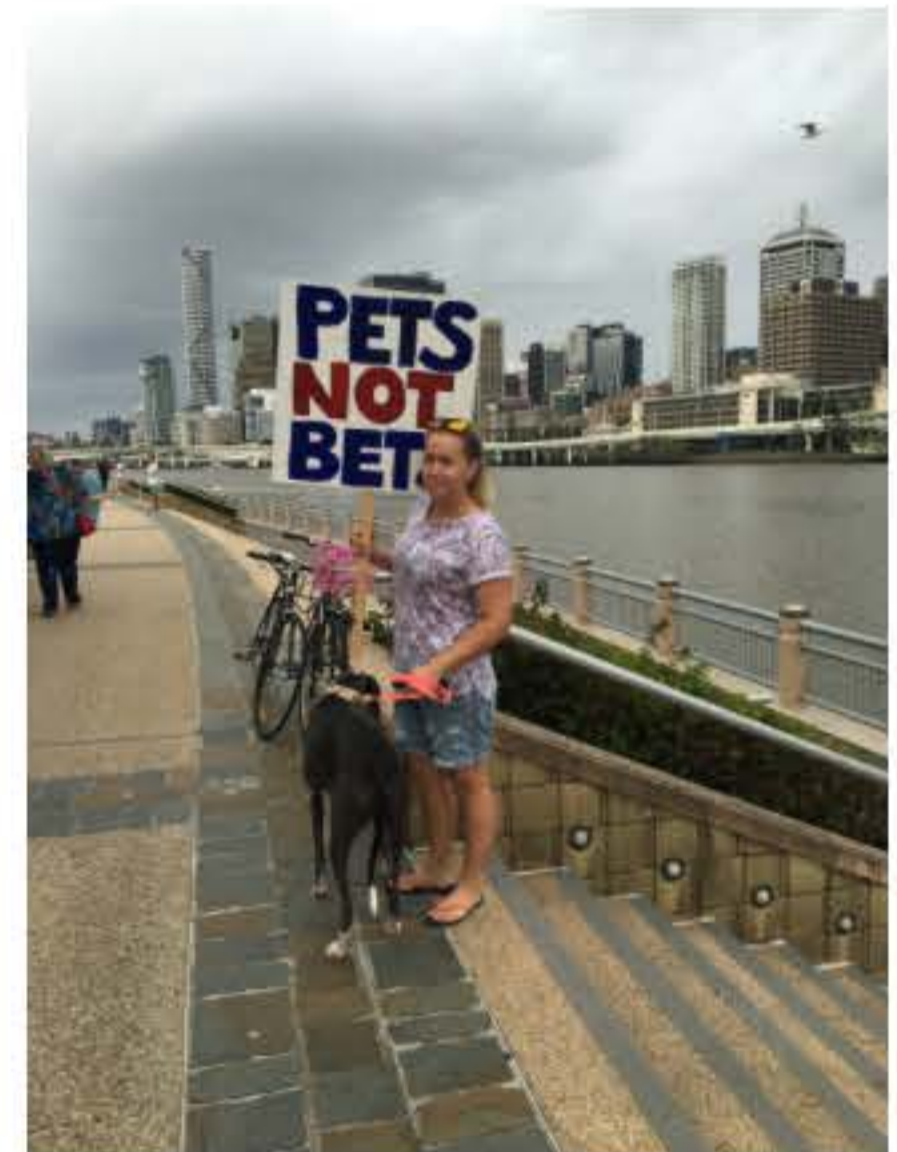
Walk for Hounds

I've never been so proud to be a Queenslander as I was on this day, the amount of support through cheering, waving and people generally giving the 'thumbs up' was wonderful. I had at least five people ask me about the Protest as I filmed - all horrified at the treatment that is currently being dolled out to these sentient creatures.



ex-Senator Andrew Bartlett led the Protest March

There was a particularly lovely moment just at the start of the 'Walk for Hounds' when the greyhound of one of the protest banner holders, moved unexpectedly in front of the banner and the gentle hand of ex-Senator Andrew Bartlett reached out and stroked its excited head for a good minute or two. Andrew could have pushed the dog to one side to start the walk on time, but instead decided to be present and enjoy the moment with this beautiful animal - magical.



Over 600 Brisbanites came out in support



Oddities e-Club Magazine Video of the 'Shut It Down End Greyhound Racing'

