

Greyhound End of Life and Retirements, Tasmania 2020



Introduction

Based on whelping figures provided by the Tasmanian Office of Racing Integrity (ORI) and an estimate of the number of greyhounds imported from other states, 287 greyhounds should have been retained by their owner, rehomed privately or accepted by GAP or an animal rescue or adoption agency in FY19/20. However, the Tasracing Annual Report 2020 shows that 341 were retained by their owner, rehomed privately or accepted by GAP or an animal rescue or adoption agency.

The Coalition for the Protection of Greyhounds (CPG) has analysed end of life and retirement figures for NSW, VIC and QLD. In all these states the number of greyhounds requiring adoption exceeds the number that were adopted. In Tasmania, this situation is reversed. The CPG analysis used publicly available data from Tasracing Annual Report 2020 and an ORI response to a Request for Information.

The conclusion drawn by CPG is that Tasracing and ORI are not publicly reporting all the relevant data. They do not report how many greyhounds are registered to race in Tasmania nor do they report how many greyhounds are imported into Tasmania from other states. This conclusion assumes that the Tasracing figures for greyhound whelping, end of life and retirement are accurate.

Greyhound lifecycle

To understand the size and scale of the greyhound end of life and retirement in Tasmania, 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 conducted in 2015/16.

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

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 requiring adoption

In response to a Right to Information (FOI) request form from Let the Hounds Run Free Inc., the Tasmanian Government Office of Racing Integrity (ORI) provided the following figures in April 2020.

Whelpings and litter numbers

	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of litters	43	38	44	41
Number of pups born	273	266	298	249
Number of pups deceased at birth	19	13	10	42
Number of dogs from litters in these years subsequently registered to race	201	186	188	0 to date

Non-racers

Based on the greyhound lifecycle, greyhounds whelped in Tasmania in 2018 and who were deemed unsuitable to race would have been eligible for adoption in 2020.

ORI whelping statistics show that 298 greyhounds were whelped in 2018. 10 of these were deceased at birth and 188 were registered to race. Thus, of the greyhounds whelped in 2018, 100 greyhounds were never raced. This number of dogs, deemed unsuitable to race, should have been adopted in 2020.

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 2016 are the ones who should retire in 2020. Information provided by ORI shows that in 2016 273 greyhounds were whelped with 254 surviving whelping. Of this figure the number of dogs whelped in 2016 who went on to race were 201. This number of dogs, having completed their racing careers, should have been adopted in 2020.

Imports

Tasmania does not breed sufficient greyhounds to maintain the racing calendar. This shortfall is rectified by importing greyhounds from other states. Let the Hounds Run Free Inc. has estimated that 50% of the greyhounds racing in Tasmania are imported. Thus, the number of greyhounds imported into Tasmania in 2016 is estimated to have been 201.

Total greyhounds for adoption before reported deaths

The number of greyhounds requiring adoption in 2020 before taking into consideration the number of deaths is non-racers 100, plus racers 201, plus imports 201 making a total of 402. This figure must be modified by subtracting the number of greyhounds reported in the Tasracing Annual Report FY2019/20 as having been euthanased or had died.

Greyhound deaths 2020

Medical euthanasia all causes	90
Natural or unknown causes	24
Other	1
Total deaths all causes 2020	115

Total number of greyhounds requiring adoption in 2020

The number of non-racing and racing dogs which should have been adopted in 2020 is 402 less 115 greyhounds reported as dying in 2020 making a total of 287 greyhounds eligible for adoption in 2020.

Greyhound retirements (adoption)

The Tasracing Annual Report 2020 published the following numbers for greyhound retirements in 2020:

Retained for breeding	8
Rehomed privately by owner, trainer or adoption agency	195
Greyhounds as Pets (GAP)	138
Total	341

Whelpings versus adoptions

Based on the number of greyhounds whelped in Tasmania plus an estimation of the number imported from other states 287 dogs should have been eligible for adoption in 2020. However, Tasracing figures state that 341 dogs were retained for breeding or adopted. CPG has calculated figures for NSW, Queensland and Victoria. In all these states the number of greyhounds born in the two and four year periods prior to FY19/20 exceeds the number that died or were adopted. In Tasmania there were more dogs adopted than were born in the preceding two and four year periods. There are two possible explanations. There was a significant number of greyhounds imported into Tasmania from other states that went unreported or the Tasracing whelping, death and rehoming figures are wrong.

Imports from other states

NSW claims that it is an exporter of greyhounds to other states. Figures for greyhounds imported into Tasmania in 2016 and 2018 are not publicly available. Because these figures are not publicly available the number of greyhounds requiring rehoming in 2020 could well exceed 287. To calculate the number of greyhounds requiring adoption in Tasmania, Tasracing or ORI must publish the number of greyhounds imported into Tasmania from other states.