

The Hon. Jane Howlett MLC
Minister for Racing
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Dear Minister,

I write to you regarding your proposed review of the Racing Regulation Act 2004 and what this review will encompass. This review provides for an unprecedented opportunity to strengthen the role of animal welfare in the racing industry, to align it more with public expectation – and to position Tasmania as the leading state in Australia in the protection of racing animals.

RSPCA's core purpose is to protect animals and advocate for better animal welfare laws. Presently, in the community, more and more people are awakening to the concept that animals are sentient beings and react to external stimuli – both physical and emotional.

Our world is changing – and community attitudes to acceptable behaviours are also changing. Activities involving human-animal relationships, especially when animals are used for entertainment, will have to move with these changes. Although we are seeing this happen in some states across Australia, many states, including our own, are lacking in transparency and foresight to look after these animals, especially once their racing career has ended.

We therefore welcomed your recent announcement of a review of the *Racing Regulation Act 2004*.

This Act has not been substantially reviewed since its inception.

Probity and integrity are critically important in the racing industry and underpin confidence in racing across all three codes in the state – thoroughbred, harness and greyhounds. Public trust in these functions is key.

For many years, RSPCA Tas has held serious concerns about the extensive animal welfare problems associated with both horse and greyhound racing, including the lack of transparency in the industries, the lack of independent animal welfare oversight, and the amount of public money being invested into the industries.

Over recent years, there has been a significant amount of time and money spent in jurisdictions across Australia on strengthening and improving legislative requirements of both equine and canine racing to improve the welfare of animals, both during and after their racing careers. Currently there is no perfect model but elements from several different jurisdictions, if combined, would be a start.

A lot of good and in-depth work has been done, and it makes no sense to reinvent those wheels.

Many serious animal welfare issues are associated with both equine and canine racing, and these require urgent corrective action. These issues include significant overbreeding, high euthanasia rates, low rehoming rates, excessive number of injuries suffered during training and racing, poor housing conditions and a lack of socialisation and environmental enrichment.

Without sufficient resourcing, ORI is incapable of effectively managing these issues. This is unacceptable – especially in an industry that relies entirely on the health and wellbeing of animals for its existence.

The lack of transparency of both industries - in particular the inability to provide reliable “cradle to grave” tracking of animals, especially after the animals have been retired - is simply unacceptable. There should be an expectation and stringent regulations in place to ensure that each individual standardbred/thoroughbred and greyhound born, will become a companion pet when they leave the racing industry (whether they race or not).

Programs such as Off the Track (OTT) and Greyhound Adoption Program (GAP) are a good start, but it is the many animals that never make it into these programs that need independent regulatory oversight. This necessitates fundamental cultural change within the industry and this review is the ideal time for this to happen.

Furthermore, the RSPCA does not support continued public funding for the racing industry.

It is our view that public funding of the racing industry should sunset in 2029 with the expiry of funding 20-year funding arrangements put in place after the sale of the TOTE. The racing industry needs to be planning for an orderly transition to self-sufficiency at that time.

We urge you to use the opportunity this review provides to consider these issues and take a strong stand and improve welfare outcomes for all racing animals in Tasmania.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'J' followed by a series of connected loops and a final horizontal stroke ending in a small dot.

Jan Davis

CEO

1 October 2021