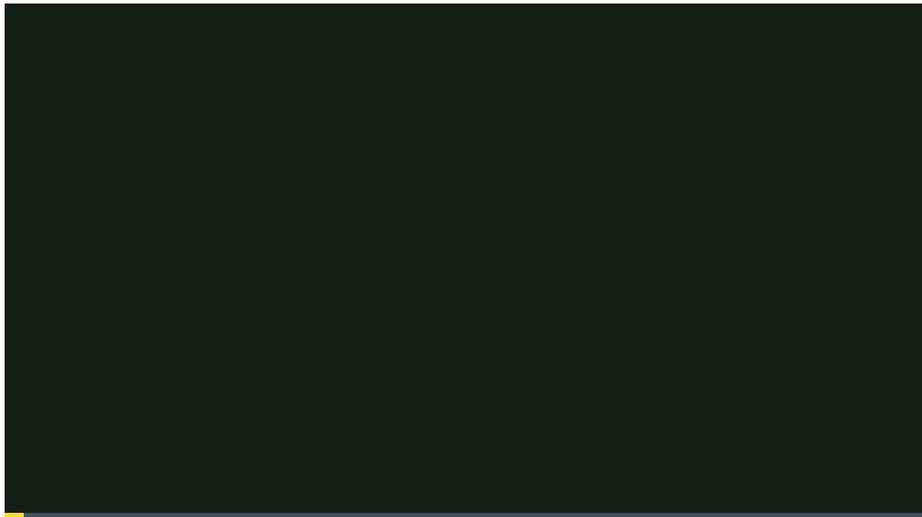




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The Greyhound Racing Industry Is Australia's Largest Puppy Farm



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This "working class" sport takes more than their dignity, it takes their lives.

I picked up my second greyhound, Opal, directly from her trainer's property. She lived in a cage in the garage and slept on the concrete floor in winter, with no bedding or toys. Her only exercise was on a 'running machine'.

The day that my partner and I picked her up, Opal's tail beat back and forth against the bars when she saw us. We attached her to a lead we had brought with us, and once she was released from her cage, she walked quickly and determinedly away from the property. As we walked her down the street to our car, she explored every smell in the vicinity, her eyes wide with curiosity.



The author's two rescues, Opal and Rosie. Image: Supplied.

'Should greyhound racing be banned?' is the type of issue explored in persuasive speech units in English classrooms or on debating teams alongside 'Should Australia become a republic?' It's the perfect issue to teach year after year, as nothing much changes, and both sides are emotive in very different ways.

NSW Premier Jack Lang referred to greyhounds as the "working man's racehorse" in 1931. In doing so, he verbalised that which mostly seems to go unsaid: greyhound racing is generally for the working class, and this is often drawn on to sentimentalise the industry.

which Baird responded to by launching a Special Commission of Enquiry to examine the industry and its related welfare issues.

Greyhound racing: What are you really betting on?



Miranda Devine wrote a furious response to the ban in her column for NewsCorp. “The decision is driven by the sensibilities of vegan GetUp! activists, with nose piercings and psychological hangups, who loathe the culture that greyhounds represent – of male battlers in regional Australia hanging onto their dignity, whose main social interaction is a night at the doggies.”

Leaving her description of activists aside, although I do have to acknowledge Devine for describing me quite accurately, I think there is something worth exploring in her depiction of male ‘battlers’ and their dignity. Why is dignity always linked to age, gender and class? Why is it rarely linked to ethics?

The “doggies” that Devine refers to are the ones with no dignity.

In October 2016, three months after banning greyhound racing in NSW, Baird caved in to pressure, announcing a backflip on the ban and declaring that he was “sorry” that he had made the “wrong call”. In January 2017, he resigned as Premier.

“

If it is not financially possible to adhere to these very basic standards of living for the greyhounds, who have been bred solely to make money for the trainer or owner, it is not a sustainable or ethical industry.

Considering it is a profit-based and gambling-oriented industry, the government should not be providing funds from the public purse.

Amber Cullinan, Adoptions Coordinator for [Greyhound Rescue Victoria](#), describes the greyhound industry as “Australia’s biggest registered and condoned puppy farm”.

Cullinan explained that the industry produces “more dogs than they can sustain... these dogs effectively have a use-by date, and are often unable to rehabilitate into domestic life – there are a great many who do not make it into rescue programs, and that is the most horrific and needless loss of life.”

I asked Cullinan her thoughts on the NSW government’s large contribution to the upcoming Million Dollar Chase. “The industry creates a lot of revenue for the government and the TAB. The government is trying to provide incentives for the

Martina Best, the Founder and Managing Director of [Amazing Greys](#), described the way that greyhounds are “exploited and squeezed for every last dollar” and then “killed on the race tracks or when they retire”. Others were sold to trainers in China and raced at the deadly [Canidrome](#) in Macau, which was ordered closed in July. Only a very small number of greyhounds end up in a loving home through rescue groups.



Best said that when the live baiting scandal hit the media in 2015, “I thought surely this is the end of greyhound racing. What more does the public need to see to believe what we have been saying all along?”

She is particularly regretful that Baird’s backflip has “put any hopes of a greyhound racing ban to rest. Greyhound racing funded adoption programs have deep pockets and can afford paid media to spread their message.” She told me that these programs receive a lot of media attention, recalling the time that Eddie McGuire asked radio listeners to name his [next racing greyhound](#) on his morning show. This sort of attention allows the industry to depict greyhound racing as a fun, family-friendly ‘sport’, hiding the rampant cruelty, mistreatment and the routine killing and burying of thousands of greyhounds.

euthanasia. Between April, when the ban was repealed, and the end of December 2017, around 330 greyhounds were euthanised because they were considered unsuitable for rehoming, a rate of 1.3 deaths a day. In the three months following, from January to March 2018, 37 dogs were killed or euthanised directly at greyhound racing tracks in NSW.

Documents obtained under freedom of information laws indicate that many retiring greyhounds are being euthanised with only vague rationales provided. In some cases, there are absurd reasons provided, including the dog being timid, anxious or nervous around cats, or because the dog chases lizards.

To add insult to injury, the NSW Minister for Racing, Paul Toole, announced that the government would be contributing \$500,000 of taxpayer dollars to the "Million Dollar Chase" in October.



Josh Butler 
@JoshButler



In July 2016, the NSW government banned greyhound racing, premier Mike Baird calling an 800-page report into the sport "chilling" and "horrific"

today, July 2018, the NSW government announced it would give \$500,000 of taxpayer money to a greyhound series



Chris O'Keefe  @cokeefe9

\$1.7m greyhound racing series announced by NSW Government. \$1m first prize for final race on October 20th. NSW taxpayers donating \$500,000 to the prize money for the series. @9NewsSyd

10:29 AM · Jul 31, 2018



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The \$500,000 contribution follows closely on the heels of the RSPCA uncovering a mass grave in NSW containing the remains of nine greyhounds as well as encountering 12 emaciated and diseased greyhounds on the property of their trainer.

In April 2018, while the ACT Government banned greyhound racing and trialling, the Victorian Minister for Agriculture approved the Code of Practice for the keeping of Racing Greyhounds. The Code, due to commence in 2020, aims to improve animal welfare in the racing industry.

When the Victorian State Government opened submissions for public comment on the Code back in 2017, many greyhound trainers made indignant public statements claiming that the costs of providing bedding, toys for mental stimulation and a minimum amount of exercise would put them out of business. Some claimed that the Code was an attempt to ban racing in

Greyhound racing: What are you really betting ...



Both Cullinan and Best emphasised that euthanasia of healthy greyhounds is widespread. As Best explained, thousands of greyhounds are killed by industry-funded greyhound adoption programs.

“

Their adoption program is aimed to cherry pick only those greyhounds who are very placid and friendly so they can hand them out to any family who applies to adopt... The other greyhounds are killed.”



Image: Getty

Cullinan has seen many greyhound cruelty cases, “from severe life-threatening emaciation to crippling anxiety... every dog that comes into our care has been affected in some way by the industry.” She told me that these are not one-off incidences, but are endemic.

“

“We see reports of trainers getting off with light bans, and there seems to be no real big picture repercussions for

there's complacency in the industry and there's public complacency."

After speaking to Cullinan and Best, I thought about dignity again, this time in relation to my greyhounds. Rosie was extremely anxious after her racing career, and was fortunately taken in by Greyhound Rescue Victoria. Cullinan told me that this gave Rosie time to rehabilitate, and that she most likely would not have passed the Temperament Assessment Test used by Greyhound Adoption Program (GAP) in Victoria as she was so anxious.

GAP is funded by Greyhound Racing Victoria (GRV), which in turn is funded by the Victorian State Government to support and strengthen the racing industry. By taking dogs and making space for more, they perpetuate the industry. Their marketing, which contains a strong pro-racing stance, is clever and effective.

Some greyhound trainers seek out independent rescue organisations for their retired greyhounds. Several independent rescue organisations accept funding from greyhound racing governing bodies, while others deliberately do not.

I asked Cullinan why Greyhound Rescue Victoria does not accept funding.

"Accepting funding is blood money; they're giving out band aids to patch the bloodshed they've caused – they're trying to purchase goodwill. It's blood money because those funds come from the exploitation of greyhounds for entertainment."

Statistically speaking, the chances of our dogs entering our home were slim to none, because across Australia, up to 40 percent of all greyhound puppies that are born do not make it to the track and many are killed. Five dogs are killed every week on the race track, and only 10 percent of greyhounds born into the industry live out a natural life span.



THE UGLY TRUTH ABOUT GREYHOUND RACING

UP TO **7,000** PUPS BORN EACH YEAR WILL NEVER RACE AND ARE KILLED*

WHEN DOGS AREN'T RACING, MOST LEAD LIVES OF DEPRIVATION⁽¹⁾

5 DOGS EVERY WEEK ARE KILLED ON THE RACE TRACK**

UP TO **17,000** HEALTHY DOGS ARE KILLED EVERY YEAR***

PIGLETS, POSSUMS, RABBITS, KITTENS - ALL VICTIMS OF BRUTAL LIVE BAITING

MOST WILL DIE BEFORE THEIR 5TH BIRTHDAY

* 40% of all puppies born "do not make it to the track" - Greyhounds Australasia internal memo
 ** Estimated from Australian industry data and stewards' reports.
 *** Greyhounds Australasia internal memo.

Animals Australia
 the voice for animals

1. Off the track, their 'home' is typically a pen / crate / kennel.

Image: Animals Australia

When I look at Rosie and Opal curled up on their beds, often with a squeaky toy under a paw for safe-keeping, I feel both immense love and sadness.



Rosie. Image: Supplied

Rosie is now a very calm and affectionate dog, and it is horrifying to think that she could have been euthanised due to her temperament.

Opal, who was about to be advertised for free on Gumtree before we picked her up, could have ended up with a few possible fates. She might have been lucky or could have been used as a 'bait dog' for dog fighting rings, or picked up by a hunter and either used for pig or rabbit hunting, or cross-bred with a larger breed, which often leads to physical injury or death during birth.



Opal. Image: Supplied

Greyhounds are often admired for their athleticism and grace, but these traits are separated from the dogs' welfare and rights. After their races, the dogs are quickly forgotten about; until we do something about it, they will continue to be seen as disposable objects for human entertainment.

Feature image: Getty

[#greyhound-racing](#)



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