

# Inquiry into greyhound industry claims vile acts of dog abuse

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Damon Guppy, David Murray, Steven Wardill, The Courier-Mail

RACING Queensland's failure to police live-baiting in greyhound racing allowed rogue trainers to practise the outlawed method with "nonchalance", an inquiry has found.

Inquiry commissioner Alan MacSporrán QC this morning delivered his report into the beleaguered industry, revealing systemic failures by its regulatory body in preventing animal cruelty.

"Although there is no definitive evidence of it (cruelty) being widespread, you'd be naive in the extreme to think it wasn't widespread," Mr MacSporrán said.

Mr MacSporrán recommended a new statutory authority titled the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission, headed by a full-time commissioner, "as soon as possible".

The inquiry was ordered in February after ABC's Four Corners aired damning footage of trainers using pigs, possums and rabbits to "blood" greyhounds.

Mr MacSporrán said the alleged offenders had "behaved with nonchalance as though they know they weren't being under scrutiny".

Asked if Racing Queensland had neglected to regulate animal cruelty, he said: "yes, there were complete failures ... failure to assess and manage."

Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk said she would examine the report today and provide a detailed response in State Parliament tomorrow.

She promised to take urgent action to reform the industry and prevent "absolutely disgusting" acts of cruelty such as live-baiting.

"I want to make it clear to Queenslanders that those responsible will be brought to justice," she said.

**OVERNIGHT:** UNWANTED greyhounds are routinely bludgeoned to death in Queensland while racing dogs are often subjected to shockingly inhumane treatment to improve performance.

Queensland's inquiry into the greyhound industry has uncovered horrific claims of animal cruelty with dogs shot, hanged or electrocuted because they can't run fast enough.

The widespread claims of systemic abuse include dogs having lit matches inserted into the anus to make them run faster or being brutally killed with drills and hammers.

Inquiry commissioner Alan MacSparran QC today delivered his report to Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk who has **vowed to take decisive action to reform the industry**.

This is expected to include higher standards for trainers and stiffer penalties for people found guilty of animal cruelty offences.

Ms Palaszczuk said the revelations had shocked people across the state.

"I think all of Queensland shares with me the huge concerns with how the industry had conducted itself," she said.

"Let me make it very clear, my government will not tolerate any signs of animal cruelty and the industry must get its house in order and we will act.

"I will be making a statement to Parliament later this week after I have had a chance to read that report."



Hundreds of submissions were made to the inquiry with most condemning the sport for the live-baiting scandal and calling for stricter laws to protect the welfare of greyhounds.

Some called for greyhound racing to be banned.

In one case, handlers were accused of taking their greyhounds to a man named "\$10 Tom" to be killed.

The \$10 paid for hitting the unwanted greyhound on the head with a hammer then putting the body on a bonfire.

Alice Stafford, who works as a volunteer rehoming retired racers, said greyhounds that were not taken to veterinarians to be euthanased faced a brutal fate.

“Some are shot, some drowned, bashed, hung, electrocuted, (and) sold for bait dogs for dog-fighting rings,” she said in her submission.

“We know of one trainer that has a special drill he used to drill into the dogs’ brains to put them down.

“They then get their ears cut off and dumped in mass graves or just in the bush with the hope no one finds them.”

In his report, Mr MacSporran said public confidence in the industry may have been dealt an “terminal blow” in the wake of live-baiting revelations.

“To put it simply, if those in the industry have participated in the archaic and barbaric practice of live baiting they have let the entire industry down and have treated the public with disdain,” he said.

He said Racing Queensland’s ability to prevent cruelty was compromised by a conflict of interest because it oversaw both the commercial and integrity aspects of the industry.

He recommended an alternative business structure in which both functions were separate.

“The new model also provides for the prioritisation of animal welfare issues with input from experts in relation to policy matters,” Mr MacSporran said.

The inquiry also found problems including the overbreeding of racing dogs, which led to “wastage” and a high rate of destroyed animals.

Others alleged trainers used sickening methods to make their dogs run faster, including one who placed “a lit match in the anal canal, that makes them shoot out of the gate” and another who kept his animals locked in cages for up to 23 hours a day.

The inquiry was sparked after Animal Liberation Queensland and Animals Australia provided the ABC’s *Four Corners* with footage showing possums, piglets and chickens strapped to lures at training tracks for dogs to chase down and savage or devour.

The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) has called for the regulation of animal welfare within the greyhound industry to be controlled by an authority separate to Racing Queensland to reduce the myriad problems plaguing the sport.

“Live baiting is only one of numerous animal welfare issues associated with greyhound racing,” the AVA said.

Twenty trainers have been banned for life by Racing Queensland since the scandal was exposed in February.

The joint police-RSPCA greyhound taskforce has charged 23 people with animal cruelty offences as part of its investigation into live-baiting and dumping of dead greyhounds.