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Greyhound racing: Landmark report recommends sweeping industry changes

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Christine Dorchak from Grey2K USA: the Australian public is only just starting to learn about practices in the greyhound racing industry. A landmark report into the embattled greyhound racing industry has recommended sweeping changes to the way dogs are treated throughout their lives while also warning the "culture" of the sport must change if it is to regain public confidence.

The report has found the industry still has unacceptable animal welfare practices and is suffering from the "significant and abiding weakness" of a low knowledge base among individual breeders and trainers and a lack of formal education programs.

It said it would be "beneficial to change industry perception from animals as a racing commodity to performance athletes" by refocusing on the welfare and performance of the dogs.

The review was commissioned by industry regulator Greyhound Racing NSW and developed by Working Dog Alliance Australia.

The 163-page report has outlined numerous changes and warns that the "wastage" or the killing of dogs no longer required or not up to racing represents one of the most significant threats to the industry's sustainability and public licence to operate.

"Strategies to proactively reduce the wastage levels in the industry must be given a much higher priority by GRNSW," the report found.

The report which comes after revelations on the ABC TV *Four Corners* program this year that live animals were being used as lures forcing a shake-up of the industry and its regulator, found that there was "no evidence" to support the "widely held belief" that it is necessary to use either a live animal or an animal-derived product to teach a greyhound to chase.

It said any lure used should not resemble an animal shape and that was "key" to the cultural change required in the industry to assist with regaining public confidence.

But Greens MP Dr John Kaye said it appeared to him that the report was trying to do the impossible – define welfare practices in an industry hostile to looking after animals properly.

"Nothing in this report has convinced me of the possibility of introducing proper welfare reforms and keeping an economically viable industry," said Dr Kaye.

The world's leading greyhound protection group has also called on the NSW government to ban the \$144 million a year greyhound racing industry and follow the lead of 39 states in the US in banning dog racing.

Grey2K USA Worldwide has made a submission to the current Special Commission of Inquiry into the Greyhound Racing Industry in NSW warning that evidence of illegal practices such as live baiting and humane and animal cruelty issues such as "wastage" or mass killing of unwanted dogs had been given to a previous parliamentary inquiry but not acted on.

The upper house parliamentary inquiry was set up in 2013 following a series of stories by *The Sun-Herald* about problems within the greyhound racing industry.

It made 18 recommendations for change but the deputy chairman of the inquiry Dr Kaye had criticised the final report saying it had "glossed over" critical evidence on the mistreatment of dogs.

Christine Dorchak from Grey 2K told Fairfax Media that the Australian public is only just starting to learn about the problems that have already been exposed in the greyhound racing industry in other countries.

"It's clear that this industry puts profit ahead of animal welfare, and dogs suffer as a result," said Ms Dorchak.

Ms Dorchak said that "all over the world, dog racing is a dying industry. Since our formation in 2001, more than two dozen American dog tracks have closed or ended live racing."