



# **Review into Greyhound Racing in New Zealand**

**Hon Sir Bruce Robertson  
30 July 2021**

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# Background

## The Hansen Report

1. In 2017, the Hon Rodney Hansen CNZM QC was asked by the then New Zealand Racing Board to inquire into and report on welfare issues affecting greyhound racing in New Zealand (the Hansen Report). This was the second report commissioned by the industry to consider areas in which animal welfare could improve. The first was the WHK report commissioned in 2013.
2. The Hansen Report covered a range of issues, including governance, welfare standards, racetrack safety, and population management including data collection, wastage, euthanasia, and rehoming. The report contained 20 recommendations for the racing industry to improve the standards of greyhound racing in New Zealand.
3. Greyhound Racing New Zealand (GRNZ) accepted the recommendations made in the report. GRNZ began producing quarterly reports to the Government providing commentary on its progress in implementing the recommendations.
4. In June 2020, GRNZ submitted a final report to then Minister for Racing, Rt Hon Winston Peters, and then Minister of Agriculture, Hon Damien O'Connor, on the latest progress against the Hansen Report recommendations. It stated that all 20 of the recommendations made by Hon Rodney Hansen had been successfully implemented, and progress reporting would no longer be presented to the Government.
5. The National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC), the advisory committee to the Government on animal welfare matters, expressed its concern that information provided by GRNZ to determine that the Hansen Report recommendations had been completed was insufficient. This concern was voiced by the Hon Meka Whaitiri in her capacity as Associate Minister of Agriculture (Animal Welfare) in a letter to GRNZ and echoed in later communications between GRNZ and the Hon Grant Robertson as Minister for Racing.

## The announcement of further review

6. Following this correspondence, and incidents resulting in the deaths or injuries of racing greyhounds, Mr Robertson informed GRNZ that the continued incidents impacting dog welfare were unacceptable and the industry's social license was increasingly at risk.
7. The Minister then sought advice from officials at the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) regarding a further review of the greyhound racing industry.
8. On 16 April 2021, the Hon Grant Robertson announced that he would be commissioning an independent review of the greyhound racing industry.
9. This announcement followed several months of discussion between the Government and industry representatives regarding incidents that many New Zealanders considered

unacceptable, and evidence of the industry having a long way to go to meet animal welfare expectations.

10. After consulting with officials and with the Hon Meka Whaitiri, the Hon Grant Robertson asked that I conduct this independent review. The review was established with the target completion date of 1 August 2021.
11. Following my appointment, I met with officials from DIA, the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), and again with the Minister for Racing, to finalise a Terms of Reference to guide the review. The following Terms of Reference for the review were determined:
  - how Greyhound Racing New Zealand has progressed towards or met each of the recommendations from the two independent reviews;
  - areas in which welfare reform has stalled or regressed or where new issues have emerged since the reviews above;
  - recommendations to further improve the welfare of greyhounds through all stages of life, including retirement from racing; and
  - whether a more fundamental review of the greyhound industry is necessary.

## Timeline and process

12. Submissions for the review opened to the public on 13 May 2021 and closed on 11 July 2021. I invited key organisations involved directly with the industry as well as other organisations with the stated interest of monitoring the industry and the welfare of greyhounds to submit on the review.
13. I was provided with all submissions to the review, as well as a summary of public form submissions. I was also provided with an analysis of key submissions, as well as issues highlighted by the wider public, noting the major issues facing the greyhound racing industry and areas which required attention.
14. Over the course of the following few weeks I met with a number of people with an interest in the greyhound racing industry. This included representatives from GRNZ, the rehoming industry, trainers, and breeders. A full list of those from whom I received key submissions and those I met with are in **Appendix A** and **Appendix B**.
15. This allowed me to gain a comprehensive picture as to the many vested interests and perspectives fuelling debate on the efficacy of greyhound racing. Those I met with shared their knowledge of perceived issues within the industry and their potential solutions to them, if any. Throughout this process I sought assistance from DIA and MPI officials.

## Progress against the 2017 Hansen recommendations

16. Submitters were invited to discuss how they believed GRNZ progressed in implementing the recommendations from the two previous greyhound reviews (the 2013 WHK report, and the 2017 Hansen Report). Little was submitted specifically about the WHK report.
17. Concerns around the progress made against the Hansen Report recommendations appear to have increased following GRNZ's cessation of regular reports to the Minister on its progress.
18. Thirteen recommendations from the Hansen Report were highlighted as areas of concern. The remaining recommendations from this report were not raised to any substantive level, nor were specific concerns made with regard to their progress.
19. GRNZ submitted that all recommendations have been sufficiently met and progress reports were no longer necessary. This stance has become a critical issue within the industry, with organisations such as NAWAC maintaining there is not enough evidence to support GRNZ's position.
20. Several of the recommendations have been met to a standard deemed acceptable by even some of the industry's biggest critics. However, it has also been argued that many new policies have not been sufficiently implemented to the extent that means they can be declared as complete. Some recommendations have been partially implemented and others have not been sufficiently audited or enforced to mean they can be treated as effective at this time.
21. **Recommendation 1** of the Hansen Report related to the implementation of welfare standards. GRNZ developed Health and Welfare Standards, with licensed persons required to sign a declaration they read and understood them. GRNZ advised that the Racing Integrity Unit (RIU), oversaw the investigation and enforcement of these standards.
22. GRNZ, alongside its Health and Welfare Committee, developed the GRNZ Health and Welfare Standards, published in 2018. These standards supplement the Code of Welfare for dogs and specify the duty of care required to meet the physical health and behavioural needs of greyhounds at all times until they are rehomed after retirement.
23. The standards apply to all persons licensed by GRNZ, and failure to follow them may be used as evidence to support a breach of the GRNZ Rules of Racing or associated regulations. MPI was of the view that the RIU did not have the resource or expertise in assessing animal welfare to make such judgements. The animal welfare function of the newly established Racing Integrity Board (RIB) could enforce these standards which are more specific to greyhound welfare than anything covered in the Rules of Racing.
24. **Recommendation 2** suggested regular kennel audits where greyhounds are being trained, bred or reared. GRNZ noted that the RIU audited kennels on an annual basis. Submissions made to the review suggested that inspections did not occur annually, and

kennel visits occur only when a greyhound has an important race coming up. Comprehensive information is not available on the regularity of audits and the outcome of these audits.

25. There was an often-expressed concern with the effectiveness of the RIU as an entity that was owned by the racing codes and TAB NZ, and whether this could be a truly independent entity that upholds the integrity of the industry. This belief is pervasive throughout issues which related to the RIU. I note that as from 1 July 2021, the RIU no longer exists and the work which it had undertaken is now the responsibility of the RIB.
26. **Recommendation 3** related to the dissemination of educational material and training assessments, with an emphasis on the Health and Welfare Standards. GRNZ shares new veterinary information regularly on a variety of topics.
27. Some submitters to the review were concerned that the Health and Welfare Standards were not satisfactorily disseminated amongst the racing industry. They were also confused with racing rules, GRNZ policies, and GRNZ guidelines. Some submitters indicated they were not aware what rules, standards, or policies applied and when. It is also not clear if or when these standards have been enforced and what active role GRNZ plays in ensuring the industry complies.
28. I have not been made aware of any assessments or tests having been made to ensure a licensed person has not only read and understands these standards, but fully comprehends and is continually aware of the expectations placed upon them. GRNZ has accepted that a planned programme of work scoped to implement formal education and qualifications for licensed persons has not progressed.
29. Educational information has also been criticised. While GRNZ does update the industry on new requirements regularly, outdated information is still available. GRNZ's information on muzzles was alleged to have been inaccurate despite continued contact from MPI to inform them outdated advice can be found on the GRNZ website.
30. **Recommendation 5** suggested GRNZ considers whether ear branding is appropriate, and if it is, then a topical anaesthetic must be used. GRNZ has now required that a topical gel is used prior to ear branding but has not ceased the practice all together, despite the widespread use of microchipping of greyhounds.
31. GRNZ's decision was not reached due to the efficacy of ear branding, but a refusal to stop ear branding until Greyhounds Australasia (GA) mandates the change. This is justified by GRNZ as necessary for the purposes of information sharing between GRNZ and Australian racing bodies, and for allowing New Zealand greyhounds to race in Australia. Consideration should be given by GRNZ as to whether this fits the definition of 'appropriate'. Many of those who raised the issue of ear branding noted it was no longer necessary in New Zealand. GRNZ has advised it is working with GA to end ear branding.
32. **Recommendation 7** stated "[GRNZ] should take steps to ensure that its database is revamped so as to ensure that up-to-date, easily accessible and accurate information is available on every greyhound born in New Zealand or imported into New Zealand until it is deregistered." This has been raised as a critical issue.

33. GRNZ has from time to time updated its database to track the greyhounds that fall within its purview. Puppies are registered shortly after they are whelped. Ear brand and microchip information, and who their owners are, is among other information recorded until they are rehomed.
34. However, this data is difficult to access for anyone not immediately involved with GRNZ or the dog in question. Those tasked with monitoring the industry, such as members of the GRNZ Health and Welfare Committee, or NAWAC, have advised it is incredibly difficult to obtain even the simplest information. On reviewing what data is held by GRNZ, it appears to be comprehensive and able to track dogs through key life-stage points – from birth through to pre-racing, racing, and post-racing stages but sharing of the information is not as clear. There does not appear to be any reason why information regarding the welfare of greyhounds should be outweighed by reasons of privacy, commercial confidentiality, or otherwise.
35. GRNZ could be viewed as ‘data rich but information poor’ for although information is held on individual animals and their racing lives, the opportunity to proactively portray how well the industry is performing as a whole is relatively underdone. This leads to unnecessary scepticism by critics and animal welfare monitoring agencies that could be assuaged by a greater focus on transparency. A contrast can be made with the NSW Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission, which produces regular reports and statistics as part of its commitment to transparency and information sharing. The Welfare and Integrity Commission releases reports and statistics on breeding and whelping, injury reports, retirement and end of life, and regular Race Injury Review Panel reports.
36. **Recommendation 8** suggested the RIU verifies the database. GRNZ has advised there is an audit conducted by GRNZ triggered by greyhounds shown on the database as registered but not racing. Owners are then asked to update the records and where this has not happened, I have been advised the RIU have followed this up, but it is not an ongoing and comprehensive audit as the Hansen recommendations contemplated.
37. Anecdotal comments were made as to whether this process was in fact occurring, and whether verifications have been performed to an acceptable standard. It is clear there is further work to be done in ensuring audits are full and thorough. This is an issue that will fall under the purview of the RIB following the dissolution of the RIU.
38. **Recommendation 9** echoed a recommendation from the WHK report, that dogs privately rehomed should be audited to verify their whereabouts. While I have been assured the RIU had undertaken these checks, some submitters alleged these were not thorough enough for any true assurance to be made on the welfare of the dogs. Some are concerned retired greyhounds who are privately rehomed are used for the breeding of pig hunting dogs. This also conflicts with **Recommendation 10**, that dogs must be de-sexed prior to deregistration.
39. **Recommendation 13** suggested the requirement for approval prior to the use of euthanasia. This was to ensure owners and trainers take responsibility for euthanising greyhounds for good reason, i.e. approval to euthanise a healthy animal following proof

that qualified behavioural assessments have taken place showing a greyhound is unsuitable for rehoming. Approval by a veterinarian is now needed for euthanasia to occur. However, in some instances it has been suggested the process to decide whether euthanasia is needed has caused unnecessary delay and suffering for the greyhound in question due to the time taken to gain approval.

40. I have been advised by MPI officials that veterinary approval does not ensure euthanasia is performed for good reason, and a veterinarian has no power to prevent an owner/trainer from requesting euthanasia for 'unreasonable' circumstances (e.g. barking or other inconvenient behaviours, not fast enough, excess to requirements, minor injury).
41. **Recommendation 15** stated "[GRNZ] should continue to increase rehoming opportunities for greyhounds while recognizing that rehoming alone cannot solve the problems created by excessive numbers of greyhounds entering the industry each year." GRNZ's rehoming programme has been a flagship policy for the industry credited with increasing the quality of life for many dogs and giving them a second chance. Since the Hansen Report the rehoming process has shown clear improvement.
42. Some submitters were concerned that rehoming is being used to offset the cost of excess greyhounds and by the lack of evidence of major initiatives or policies designed to reduce the number of dogs being bred each year. GRNZ continues to expand its rehoming programme but has not established any form of public reduction targets, population projections, or estimated the number of dogs needed for the industry each year.
43. GRNZ advised that the number of dogs bred per annum is around 800, which is what the industry requires to maintain racing at current levels. This was augmented by 150 imports per year at its peak in 2018/19 – which has substantially reduced since COVID-19 shutdowns in Australian states. From the most recent data provided, 78 per cent of dogs bred between 2017 and 2018 have gone on to race. During that same period 843 dogs were reported to have been bred in New Zealand. This suggests 185 dogs during that time never made it to the race track.
44. While limits have been placed on the number of times a single dog can be bred, there does not appear to be an overall limit on the number of dogs being bred across the industry due to the perceived breeding equilibrium of 800 greyhounds a year. Efforts to rehome retired dogs have been successful, but whether GRNZ has recognised rehoming alone is not sufficient remains uncertain.
45. Similar comments apply to **Recommendation 16**, which suggested population projections, regulations, and education to ensure the population is not exceeded.
46. **Recommendation 19** suggested GRNZ records the veterinary care of all greyhounds in a central database. In its current format, this information is only required to be supplied on request from GRNZ and the RIB. This means a central database cannot identify widespread issues in the industry, but rather only in specific instances. Critics of the industry have argued it is difficult to monitor the health and injuries of greyhounds as statistics are unavailable outside the annual reports and steward reports.



47. While data exists at an individual level there is no comparable information at an aggregate level. Use of a standardised classification system would allow GRNZ to compare its own progress with other jurisdictions.
48. **Recommendation 20** suggested ways to improve track safety. GRNZ has taken steps to investigate or trial all of these. Most notably is the suggestion that straight race tracks should be investigated. While GRNZ's Board has advised it is studying the use of straight tracks in Australia, other experts involved with the industry have said there is already sufficient proof that straight track courses are safer. New Zealand research data indicates that almost half of injuries occur on the first bend of a track, compared to less than 20 per cent on a straight section. However, no substantive or widespread changes to courses in New Zealand have been made as a result of their investigations.

## Comment

49. It has become apparent during this review that there is a significant divergence in opinion as to whether the greyhound racing industry, and consequently GRNZ alongside the associated integrity bodies, are doing enough to address the Hansen Report recommendations and to uphold the overall health and wellbeing of greyhounds – racing or otherwise.
50. I have not attempted to determine whether GRNZ was right in ending regular reports or declaring the Hansen Report recommendations complete, but there is no doubt as to the ongoing concerns of those looking to the industry for change.
51. Within the timeframe of this inquiry it was not possible to reach a firm conclusion as to whether all recommendations made in the Hansen Report have been met to a sufficient degree. The answer varies significantly depending on the perspective of the person or organisation involved.
52. What has become clear is there are three factors underpinning the divergence of views. First, the reticence to provide all relevant and critical data about all animals at all times and in all places. Flowing from this is the absence of transparency about the information which does exist and the accessibility to it. Lastly, the lack of sensible communication of data to those interested, without it first being filtered and prepared for advantageous presentation. Until there is a change regarding that transparency and communication, there will be suspicion and distrust, and a rational robust and reliable assessment cannot be made.
53. The issues and criticisms identified in this report are rooted in these failures surrounding data availability and transparency. As identified by GRNZ, as well as the many other submitters involved in this review, where the industry has not been transparent the worst is often assumed.

## New issues since the 2017 review

### Rehoming

54. The rehoming process has been widely regarded as an area in which GRNZ and the wider industry has shown its ability to reduce the negative animal welfare impacts of the racing industry. The Great Mates programme was and is continually commended for its success.
55. However, there are major limitations to rehoming as a viable 'solution' to the industry's issues. Criticisms were made that the rehoming of dogs gave well-meaning adopters a significant personal and financial burden. Many dogs were not suitable for rehoming, due to behaviours that made them unsuitable for pet life and a lack of socialisation training to ameliorate these behaviours at a time when the dog is young enough for these to be effective. Furthermore, the negative impacts of racing on overall health often do not present until a dog is settled into a new home.
56. Because of this, rehoming has been criticised by some as being the 'ambulance at the bottom of the cliff' that masks the greyhound racing industry's flaws. Rehoming largely deals with the symptoms of the industry's problem rather than the problem itself. More effort needs to go into population management and projection so that only the number of dogs needed for racing are produced. As GRNZ does not appear to practice active population management, then the information and justification as to why needs to be supplied to those who request it. Otherwise, doubts will continue to surface.

### Euthanasia

57. There has been an obvious effort by GRNZ to reduce the reliance on euthanasia when dealing with injured dogs, or dogs that are difficult to rehome. However, it was alleged during the review that the extent to which euthanasia is being avoided (an implicit 'no euthanasia policy') is also negatively impacting the welfare of greyhounds.
58. Some suggested that dogs were being kept alive despite catastrophic injuries, or where dogs cannot be rehomed due to the risk of harm to people or other animals and are facing a lifetime in kennels. Further suggestions were made that the avoidance of euthanasia has meant the industry is approving dogs for rehoming despite being unsuitable.
59. GRNZ mentioned the Queensland approach, where "no dogs are euthanised unless it is inhumane not to". This is a difficult test to meet, as any dogs euthanised (particularly for the purposes of gambling and entertainment) will be subject to public challenge. As such, it has become easier for the industry to implicitly ban euthanasia despite risking poorer animal welfare outcomes. While it seems counterintuitive to suggest euthanasia rates increase, GRNZ and the industry must consider whether the reputation of the industry based on a single metric is being prioritised over animal welfare standards.

60. Away from the racetrack, the role of euthanasia is unclear. GRNZ's own data from 2017 to date gives the following reasons and information for euthanasia that does not occur at the racetrack:
- Medical Euthanasia – aggression: 57 deaths;
  - Medical Euthanasia – illness: 119 deaths;
  - Medical Euthanasia – accident/injury: 285 deaths; and
  - Non-Medical (No reason given): 462 deaths.
61. The number of greyhounds euthanised has reduced significantly over the last four years, from an annual total of 348 down to 103 in the current year to date (7 months). However, the inability to justify euthanasia in 462 instances in four years was an issue raised many times by submitters monitoring the industry. 'No reason given' for euthanasia is the most common reason by a significant margin. This raised concern regarding the detail in which information is kept, and in some cases, it was submitted that this suggested GRNZ was intentionally obscuring the data.

## Database accuracy

62. It has been apparent throughout this review that it is difficult to access accurate information regarding injuries, euthanasia, rehoming numbers, population projection, whelped puppies, and health statistics. Publicly available statistics are often vague and limited to general euthanasia and injury statistics.
63. GRNZ has commissioned PhD candidate Anna Palmer to investigate race-track injuries for greyhounds. Articles released by Ms Palmer relating to this research has shown that injury rates are a good indicator of animal welfare and that injury information can be recorded with great detail, such as the causation of injuries, where on the track they occurred, the age of the greyhound, and what box they started in.
64. Ms Palmer's data is from 2014 to 2019, meaning the data is readily available to GRNZ. Should GRNZ be of a mind to do so, it could produce this information on an ongoing basis, and in a way that is readily accessible to interested parties.
65. Tracking of dogs post-racing career is limited, and there is little available information regarding dogs that never make it to the track. Furthermore, many of the available statistics largely rely on an honesty-based system without independent audit. For example, owners are required to complete forms needed to retire the greyhound, or otherwise indicate its status which the RIU could validate.
66. Independent entities who have this task or have taken it upon themselves to keep the greyhound industry honest cannot be fully effective in the current settings. Organisations monitoring the industry, such as GRNZ's Health and Welfare Committee, or NAWAC, cannot verify claims made by the industry, or against the industry.
67. Issues often arise well after a greyhound's time spent racing. This raises concerns regarding the qualifications and experience of those responsible for the care of

greyhounds. It also begs the question as to whether these are symptoms of poor care while under the supervision of GRNZ. This may not be the case, but without clear evidence to say otherwise this will be assumed by critics of the industry.

## Training, breeding and population control

68. Restrictions on the frequency and period in which a breeding bitch can reproduce have been put in place, however, it is unclear if any population projections have been done to ensure that there is not an excess of greyhounds being bred for the industry.
69. There is concern during the breeding and training period of a young greyhound's life that socialisation amongst dogs and humans is poor, and novel stimuli is not regularly introduced. This is crucial during a racing greyhound's first few months, and to the success of rehoming.
70. It is also unclear what education and experience standards are in place for individuals employed to assist with breeding and managing kennels.

## Makeup of the breeding industry

71. On the information available, it is clear there are a handful of owners and trainers who dominate the greyhound racing scene. A brief look at race results prove the scale at which a single kennel can produce racing greyhounds, often having multiple dogs bred and trained by the same person in one race. Serious disquiet has been raised as to the extent to which animal welfare can be fully appreciated and applied on a large-scale operation.
72. Many who participated in the review flagged concern regarding the welfare of these dogs, the monitoring of these kennels for compliance, as well as the sway these kennels had over the industry.
73. Considerations have also been made as to whether large kennels invest the same amount of time into socialisation and care for the animals as smaller kennels do. Some within the industry were concerned that major kennels had well in excess of 100 greyhounds on their property at any one time.
74. When there are large numbers of greyhounds on one property, it is unclear what the ongoing consequences will be when rehoming presumably occurs. Whether a single organisation can easily attend to and care for over 100 dogs on a single property, to a standard that the public would find appropriate, has been challenged by submitters to the review.
75. Invitations to meet personally with some of these people were not responded to thus making arguments in favour of these organisations harder to comprehend. Based on the evidence I have been provided, there is a need to assess whether animal welfare is in

any way more threatened or jeopardised when there are substantial numbers of greyhounds on one property.

## Governance of the industry

76. The role of the RIU in upholding the integrity of the industry has been criticised as ineffective and as having a significant conflict of interest with the wider racing industry. As a result, much of the alleged blame for poor auditing and monitoring of the industry has been directed towards the RIU. The interrelationship between the RIU and GRNZ has not been easy to follow and hopefully with the new RIB (a totally independent entity operating outside of the Code's influence) a better position can emerge.
77. GRNZ plays a pivotal role in setting industry standards, pushing for compliance, and working with integrity bodies to support the industry. However, some submitters have alleged that GRNZ has maintained a culture of silence to those who are pushing for greater reform or publicly challenging decisions or lack thereof by GRNZ. These submitters argue in instances where the RIU's enforcement has failed, and GRNZ has not ensured widespread change across the industry, voices in opposition have been afraid to criticise the governing body in fear of reprisal.
78. GRNZ has also been criticised widely for merging the roles of Animal Welfare Officer and the Racing Operations Manager. GRNZ stated this would lead to faster and more effective responses to incidents of animal welfare concerns. This was seen by many involved with the industry as a move that downgraded the importance of welfare.
79. This decision conflicts with the recommendation made in the WHK Report to employ a full time professional welfare officer. This was initially met with great satisfaction by those with animal welfare concerns, but since its undoing in 2019 it now no longer meets this recommendation or the approval of industry critics.

## Health and Welfare Committee

80. The functionality and effectiveness of the Health and Welfare Committee proved to be an area of significant concern. As the only internal body of GRNZ that encompasses views in opposition to many aspects of the industry, it poses an opportunity for GRNZ to lead the way in highlighting animal welfare concerns within the sport.
81. Clear communication failures and distrust have undermined the usefulness of this committee. While GRNZ has pointed to the Committee as providing necessary input that has enacted visible change, members within the Committee have disagreed and have lamented the limits placed upon its ability to enact positive change.
82. Concerns were raised by submitters regarding the independence and effectiveness of the Committee, and whether recommendations and minutes from their meetings were being considered by the GRNZ Board. The Committee has not met since November 2020, despite several animal welfare incidents of concern.

83. Other jurisdictions, such as New South Wales, have a Race Injury Review Panel reporting to the New South Wales Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission which provides a mechanism for the systematic review of serious and catastrophic injuries to greyhounds on their tracks. This allows for an independent assessment of how to prevent future occurrences. This sort of mechanism would have been particularly useful following the series of deaths at the Whanganui racecourse early this year.

## Whether a fundamental review is necessary

84. Some submitters noted that the Hansen Report, like the earlier WHK Report, were set up by the New Zealand Racing Board, funded by them and the agendas were under their control. Notwithstanding this reality it is generally accepted that the Hansen Report and its recommendations were a careful and professional assessment of the state of the industry and identified areas where change was required, and where different approaches needed to be implemented. It is undoubtedly the best starting point.
85. There can be no doubt that the Hansen Report was taken seriously by GRNZ and changes to improve animal welfare have occurred. However, there remains frustration at the inability to access base data and comprehensive records of the overall greyhound operation. In a nutshell many submitters, both agencies and individuals, were of the view that what they could see or were told was carefully orchestrated for presentation.
86. In their perception there was an inability to view and therefore assess all relevant data. Coupled with this is the strong view that the industry has done a lot of talking but not produced commensurate action on policies, protocols, and rules being implemented and operated. This lack of transparency and robust communication has led to suspicion and distrust.
87. As evidenced by the petition which I am advised will shortly to be presented to Parliament, there remains a significant view in the wider community that greyhounds are merely a commodity which are exploited in an effort to feed an appetite for gambling.
88. For this section of society, the problems will only be removed if New Zealand ceases to be one of the seven places in the world where greyhound racing still occurs. Anything less is seen as tinkering and the improvements are human centric and do not grapple with underlying issues of animal welfare.
89. Whatever I recommend, or the Ministers decide because of this review, the Government may decide to respond immediately to the thrust of the petition.
90. However, that possibility aside, if such a step is otherwise to be seriously contemplated, then a full-scale inquiry will be required to assess all consequences of the actions which are wider than greyhound welfare.
91. I have concluded that point has not yet been reached where immediate action must be taken.
92. There may be a way forward for the industry, if there is:
  - comprehensive accessible data available on the position of all animals from birth to death;

- a focussed and professional assessment of the number of animals required and the avoidance of over breeding;
  - a rationalisation of GRNZ's rules, policies, and standards, MPI Codes of Welfare and Regulations, and the GRNZ Health and Welfare provisions so there is a simple transparent and accessible structure which covers all aspects of dog welfare throughout the industry;
  - comprehensive socialisation programmes for all greyhounds so they can have the potential to be meaningfully rehomed later in life;
  - thorough professional kennel visits;
  - continuous surveillance of tracks including a serious assessment of the introduction of straight tracks;
  - a rigorous assessment of animal welfare in large scale operations;
  - a reintroduction of a standalone Animal Welfare Manager whether within GRNZ or in the RIB;
  - a Health and Welfare Committee with full participation of all relevant stakeholders and the ability to implement and effect change as required; and
  - a continuation, as promised, of the quarterly reports to both the relevant Ministers and the RIB on operations and progress.
93. As noted by Rod Hansen in his report the greyhound racing industry, by its nature, is inherently dangerous. If there is to be a perpetuation of the social license, it is essential that there are accurate and comprehensive records kept of all relevant activities and that the data acquired is accessible to everyone with an interest. Further simple, direct, and unedited communication of this material to all those within the industry and to those who are concerned about the consequences of continuation of greyhound racing is needed.
94. Without such changes the alternative of abolition must be addressed. A period of 18 months should be permitted to see if change can be affected and the RIB should report on the position in early 2023. There is much disquiet because of a perceived culture where animal welfare is not front and centre in the operation. That must change if the social license is to be maintained.



## Conclusion

95. This review has been an interesting exercise into not just the progress made against the Hansen Report, but also the wider considerations and perspectives of the greyhound racing industry.
96. From those who seek the immediate shutdown of the industry, to the avid trainers and breeders who believe their greyhounds love to race, there has been no shortage of heated and passionate submitters who had something important to say.
97. It has become clear that no matter the outcome of this report, or any reports henceforth, the social license of the industry will continue to be challenged for the foreseeable future. If GRNZ wishes to secure a future for the industry it governs, then it must set out to demonstrate the decency of the greyhound racing industry at every possible opportunity.
98. GRNZ has made its job harder by unnecessarily obfuscating information and pushing back against those with an interest. All information should be recorded, and it should be available. Arguably GRNZ has data to support its stances on the issues raised in this report but is seen as unwilling to share this.
99. Meaningful and proactive responses from the industry to its criticisms, especially amongst those it has invited to participate in the process, such as the members of its Health and Welfare Committee, would give credence to claims that animal welfare is the biggest priority.
100. It is in the interest of GRNZ to embrace the scrutiny as an opportunity to show progress and be transparent, ground-breaking, and the leading voice for animals that it often claims to be.
101. In 2013 the then Minister for Racing said:

*“The [WHK] report notes that, overall, greyhounds appear to be very well cared for during their racing lives. However, it does raise some concerns with the potential to impact on the industry’s reputation.*

*The reviewers identified the need for:*

- *greater transparency, especially around what happens to dogs that do not end up racing or are retired;*
- *better ways to manage ‘excess’ animals, so that the number of unwanted animals being euthanised is reduced;*
- *improved industry standards and rules, and better awareness and enforcement of them;*
- *improved track safety standards, by building on current safety initiatives, undertaking more research and making links with international racing bodies;*
- *improved injury reporting, so that trends or specific welfare issues can be identified and investigated further if necessary; and*

- *a better industry welfare governance structure and better management of welfare activities.*

(...)

*I know that many of you here today own and race greyhounds and care deeply about their welfare, both on and off the track. It is important to show the public that you take these issues seriously and are making real changes.*

*There is work to be done in some key areas:*

- *greyhound population management;*
- *welfare standards;*
- *track safety standards;*
- *injury reporting; and*
- *welfare governance and management standards.”*

102. Should the RIB consider the industry’s progress in 2023, it will have been ten years and a further two reports since that Minister’s comments were made. Frustratingly, while the symptoms are different, the fundamental issues within the industry remain the same.
103. An unrelenting focus on data recording, transparency of all activities, and animal welfare generally could see this industry continue despite vocal pressure. If these factors, for any reason, cannot be significantly improved, the industry will cease to have the social license necessary for its existence.

# Acknowledgments

I am particularly grateful to Department of Internal Affairs officials Andrew Lee and Murray Johnson for their ongoing support and advice during this review.

I also extend my thanks to the Ministry for Primary Industries for providing expert insight into the status quo of the greyhound industry.

Thank you to the many individuals and organisations who volunteered their time to meet with me or submitted to the review to share their valuable knowledge and perspectives on the state of the industry.

**Hon Sir Bruce Robertson**

**30 July 2021**

## Appendix A: Key Submissions

Organisation	Expertise
Chairman of the GRNZ Health and Welfare Committee	Animal welfare
Greyhounds as Pets	Greyhound adoptions
Grey2K USA Worldwide	Animal advocacy
Greyhound Racing New Zealand	Racing body
Greyhound Protection League of New Zealand	Greyhound adoptions and advocacy
Harness Racing New Zealand	Racing body
National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee	Animal welfare
New Zealand Animal Law Association	Animal law
New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing	Racing governance
Harness Racing New Zealand	Racing governance
New Zealand Veterinary Association	Animal welfare
Nightrave Greyhounds NZ	Greyhound adoptions
Racing Integrity Unit	Racing governance
Save Animals from Exploitation	Animal advocacy
Southern Cross Greyhound Adoptions	Greyhound adoptions
Royal New Zealand Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals Incorporated	Animal welfare and advocacy

## Appendix B: Meetings

Name	Organisation(s)
Department of Internal Affairs Officials	Department of Internal Affairs
Ministry for Primary Industries Officials	Ministry for Primary Industries
Glenda Hughes	CEO, Greyhound Racing New Zealand
Michael Dore	Racing Operations and Welfare Manager, GRNZ
Mark Harrison	Head of Finance and Administration, GRNZ
Candice Robbins-Goodman	Rehoming Manager, GRNZ
Sue Walls	Head of Information Technology, GRNZ
Jim Edwards	Chairman, GRNZ Health and Welfare Committee
Malcolm Jansen	Chief Veterinary Advisor, GRNZ Health and Welfare Committee
Arnja Dale	SPCA GRNZ Health and Welfare Committee
Helen Beattie	New Zealand Vets Association GRNZ Health and Welfare Committee
Gwyneth Verkerk	Chairperson, National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee
Marie McAninch	Secretary, National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee
Aaron Cross	Greyhound Protection League
Emily Stevens	University of Auckland
Debra Ashton	SAFE
Clare Marks	SAFE
Lucy Sandford-Reed	General Manager, Greyhounds as Pets
Alastair Donald	Chair, Greyhounds as Pets
Pam Madgwich	Board, Greyhound as Pets
Trainers and breeders	Racing Industry