

LETTER TO MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL 8 December 2025

RSPCA Tasmania – Rebuttal to Industry Submission on the Greyhound Racing Phase-Out

Thank you for the opportunity to clarify several matters raised in a submission currently circulating among Members of the Legislative Council regarding the Greyhound Racing (Prohibition) Bill. I write as the CEO of RSPCA Tasmania and as an advocate for evidence-based animal welfare policy.

Across the world, jurisdictions are moving away from greyhound racing in recognition of persistent and inherent welfare risks that regulatory systems cannot eliminate. The United States—once home to more than 40 commercial tracks—has now effectively ended the industry, with only two tracks remaining following widespread closures driven by public concern, repeated breaches, and declining wagering revenue. In the United Kingdom, calls for a statutory phase-out have intensified, and Scotland confirmed in 2024 that no operational tracks remain. Closer to home, the ACT banned greyhound racing in 2018 with independent reviews confirming **no negative effects** on dog welfare, rehoming, or community safety. Tasmania is now at a similar crossroads, with an opportunity to adopt a contemporary, globally aligned policy that reflects the expectations of our community.

Below is a response to the key claims presented in the circulating submission. These rebuttals are grounded in Tasmanian law, operational experience, and the forthcoming reforms outlined in NRE Tasmania’s Position Paper on Amendments to the Dog Regulations.

Claim: Greyhounds will move from “one of the most regulated welfare frameworks” into “one of the least regulated areas of animal management.”

Rebuttal:

This is incorrect. The **welfare protections for \*all\* dogs** in Tasmania—including greyhounds—are provided by:

- Animal Welfare Act 1993 (AWA93)
- Dog Control Act 2000
- Dog Control Regulations 2016

These laws impose enforceable obligations related to:

- Minimum standards of care (AWA93 ss 7–10)
- Veterinary treatment
- Exercise, enrichment and shelter
- Identification, microchipping, and registration
- Dangerous dog controls

The companion-animal sector is not “unregulated”; it is governed by binding statutory law rather than industry-specific racing rules.

The RSPCA's operational experience demonstrates the strength of this framework. Our inspectorate conducted more than 1,900 welfare checks in the 2024–25 year, supported by the state's only Animal Cruelty Helpline. In the same year, we managed the rehoming of 239 Labradoodles surrendered due to welfare concerns—further evidence that oversight in the companion animal sector is robust and active.

- Claim: Greyhounds currently receive stronger protections than pet dogs, including mandatory vet checks and inspections.

Rebuttal:

These provisions exist because **greyhound racing is a commercial, high-risk activity**. They are \*industry regulations\* designed to mitigate risks created by racing—not baseline welfare standards.

When racing ceases, these risks disappear. What remains is the statutory welfare framework that applies continuously to all dogs in Tasmania. For example:

- AWA93 ss 7–8 already require owners to obtain veterinary treatment when needed—\*at all times\*, not only on race days.
- AWA93 s 10 requires ongoing exercise and behavioural needs to be met.
- Breeding controls are being strengthened under NRE's Dog Regulation Amendments (2024–25).

State law does not weaken when an industry ceases to operate. The protections continue uninterrupted.

Claim: Pets only require “adequate shelter,” and inspections will decline.

Rebuttal:

**This misrepresents the law.** Under AWA93 s 7, “adequate shelter” must protect an animal from injury, heat, cold, weather and distress—far more robust than suggested.

RSPCA inspectors may enter premises without a complaint where there is reasonable belief of welfare risk (ss 15–17). Tasmania has a proactive inspectorate model, not a passive or complaint-based one.

Claim: Greyhound welfare will decline because there are no mandatory pet-sector vet checks.

Rebuttal:

Again, **welfare law already imposes a higher ongoing standard**. AWA93 ss 7–8 make failure to provide veterinary care an offence at any time. This is enforceable and regularly enforced. Last financial year, RSPCA Tasmania provided more than \$157,000 in interest-free micro-loans to 440 people for emergency veterinary treatment, ensuring that financial hardship does not undermine welfare outcomes.

Claim: Without racing inspectors, greyhounds will have no proactive oversight.

Rebuttal:

**Enforcement responsibilities will continue** through:

- Local councils under the Dog Control Act
- RSPCA Tasmania inspectors under AWA93
- Biosecurity Tasmania as required

Greyhounds will be regulated like all other dogs—subject to containment laws, microchip compliance, dangerous-dog controls, and penalties. Oversight does not disappear; it simply transitions from a racing compliance model to Tasmania's standard statutory system.

Claim: Greyhound breeding will become “unregulated.”

Rebuttal:

This ignores the **current enforceable protections and the extensive reforms** already underway. NRE Tasmania’s Position Paper on Dog Regulations proposes:

- Mandatory breeder registration
- Strong penalties for unregistered breeding
- Mandatory desexing (with defined exemptions)
- Improved microchip database integrity
- Tighter controls on advertising dogs for sale

The regulatory environment is strengthening, not weakening.

Claim: Traceability will decline and greyhounds will “disappear” into the system.

Rebuttal:

Mandatory microchipping, council registration, and owner-detail updates **ensure companion-animal traceability**. Planned reforms will further improve interoperability across databases. RSPCA policy does not support breed-specific regulatory distinctions, and separating greyhounds as a unique regulatory class serves to reinforce their treatment as gambling products rather than companion animals.

Claim: Rehoming is unregulated and greyhounds may be abandoned.

Rebuttal:

The Dog Control Act and AWA93 already **regulate abandonment**, ownership responsibilities, and welfare obligations. Alongside the industry-run GAP program, Dogs’ Homes of Tasmania, RSPCA Tasmania, and rescue groups rehome hundreds of greyhounds annually. Retired greyhounds are among the most successfully rehomed breeds in Australia, supported by strong foster-care programs.

Claim: There is no area where pet regulation exceeds racing regulation.

Rebuttal:

This is **not an appropriate or meaningful comparison**. Racing rules are designed around a commercial activity involving high-speed racing, transport, and wagering. Welfare laws are designed to protect dogs throughout their entire lives.

Examples where statutory requirements exceed racing rules include:

- AWA93 s 10 – continuous exercise and behavioural needs
- AWA93 s 8 – cruelty offences covering all forms of abuse
- Dog Control Act – dangerous-dog controls applying equally to greyhounds

Industry rules are *\*additional\** controls required solely because racing creates unique risks.

Claim: Ending racing will create a “welfare vacuum.”

Rebuttal:

There is **no welfare vacuum**. Welfare protections remain intact through:

1. AWA93
2. Dog Control Act
3. Dog Control Regulations
4. Strengthened dog-sector reforms (2024–25)
5. RSPCA and council enforcement
6. Existing successful rehoming pathways

Ending greyhound racing removes racing-specific risks—such as high-speed injury, over-breeding, and performance-based euthanasia—not welfare protections.

In the past year, no dog at RSPCA Tasmania was euthanised for space. Dogs were euthanised only where they had intractable medical conditions, including untreatable mental illness. Our inspectorate conducted 31 facility inspections under the Facilities section of the Dog Regulations and more than 1,900 welfare checks overall.

Charities that undertake rehoming services do so without dedicated industry funding and rely heavily on community donations. Nearly 10 years after the 2015 exposé revealed systemic cruelty, the industry has not rebuilt public trust. Its social licence continues to erode.

Tasmania now has an opportunity to adopt a modern, evidence-based approach that aligns with global trends, strengthens community confidence, and prioritises the welfare of dogs. The legislative framework governing companion animals is robust, enforceable, and improving. There is no factual basis for claims of weakened welfare protections following the phase-out of greyhound racing.