

Racing Integrity Bill 2015

Submission from the Australian Veterinary
Association *to*
Queensland Parliament's Agriculture and
Environment Committee





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Submission by The Australian Veterinary Association Ltd 2016

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The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) is the national organisation representing veterinarians in Australia. Our 8500 members come from all fields within the veterinary profession. Clinical practitioners work with companion animals, horses, farm animals such as cattle and sheep, and wildlife. Government veterinarians work with our animal health, public health and quarantine systems while other members work in industry for pharmaceutical and other commercial enterprises. We have members who work in research and teaching in a range of scientific disciplines. Veterinary students are also members of the Association.

Submission

The response by the Queensland government in responding to the horrific allegations of cruelty in the greyhound industry is to be commended. The primary driver of this reform has been animal welfare and the Australian Veterinary Association makes the following comments with regard to the stated purposes of the Racing Integrity Bill.

Establish the new Qld Racing Integrity Commission responsible for the management of animal welfare and integrity matters within the racing industry.

The AVA fully supports the establishment of an independent integrity commission. With regard to animal welfare, the Bill has given powers for authorised officers to give a written direction to provide care or treat a licensed animal or an animal that may become a licensed animal. Penalties for failing to comply with a direction are substantial which the AVA supports.

However, there is no provision for authorised officers to deal with cruelty cases. The proposed *Animal Care and Protection Act* (ACPA) amendments specify that the ACPA does not affect the application of the *Racing Integrity Act 2015*. This leaves the ability to deal with cruelty cases in doubt. Presumably they would be referred to the police or Biosecurity Queensland to investigate. A clearer scenario would be for officers of the Racing Integrity Commission to be appointed as inspectors with limited powers if need be under the ACPA.

Amend the Racing Act 2002 to: reform the structure of the Queensland All Codes Racing Industry Board, including renaming the Board as the Racing Queensland Board; and to dissolve the three racing code boards, the Racing Animal Welfare Integrity Board and the Racing Disciplinary Board

The AVA supports these changes and is pleased to see that a person with animal welfare expertise is now one of the criteria on which membership is reviewed. However, the Australian Veterinary Association believes that a broader overview of animal health and welfare is required to ensure the interests of racing animals are appropriately protected. As such, the AVA recommends that a registered veterinarian be part of the composition of the Board.

Amend the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001 to provide improved information sharing capacity and broaden authorised officer powers to investigate and respond to animal welfare matters and breaches of the Act related to the racing industry.

The proposed changes to the ACPA go some way to improve linkages with the Racing Integrity Act. However, it is still unnecessarily complex with offences across 3 acts and no transparent pathway for an offence to be

investigated. The AVA recommends reviewing these acts to ensure animal welfare offences are appropriately investigated and enforced. As mentioned above, officers under the Racing Integrity Commission could be appointed as inspectors under the ACPA thus ensuring consistency of process and penalties.

General comment

This bill addresses the first three recommendations made from the enquiry. Presumably other recommendations particularly around wastage would be addressed in future legislation, possibly through compulsory codes of practice under the ACPA. As this is integral to having a greyhound industry having overall acceptable standards for the welfare of racing animals and would inform the actions of authorised officers, the AVA strongly recommends that the second suite of recommendations is addressed without delay.