




Speech By
Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Greyhound Racing Industry

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.36 am): Like all Queenslanders, indeed like all Australians, I was appalled at the sickening allegations and undeniable photographic evidence uncovered earlier this year in relation to our greyhound racing industry. The allegations of animal cruelty, of widespread overbreeding and euthanasia of dogs, and in particular the allegations that live animals were used in the barbaric and repellent practice of live baiting, turned our stomachs and sent shivers down our spines.

These are vile allegations. They are among the most upsetting we have ever witnessed against innocent animals and, damningly, against those people charged with the responsibility of caring for the animals at the centre of their industry. In many ways it taints this industry not only for alleged past practices but also into the future. In fact, the perception of the industry may have been dealt a terminal blow, particularly by the exposure of the horrific practice of live baiting.

Once this evidence was aired, my government instituted a commission of inquiry into the greyhound industry. Yesterday we became the first state to receive the advice of the commission. Today we become the first state to act. Yesterday I received the final report of this commission, which was presided over by widely respected QC Mr Alan MacSporran, and today I table the report for the parliament.

Tabled paper: Queensland Greyhound Racing Industry Commission of Inquiry: Final report, 1 June 2015 [\[488\]](#).

Mr MacSporran has delivered to government a damning report which demands the greyhound industry and the racing industry clean up its act. My government is more than willing to help this industry to do that, as I will outline. Mr MacSporran's recommendations demand that integrity is restored to this industry and that public confidence, which has been dealt a significant blow, particularly by allegations that live animals were used to bait dogs, be restored.

The commission's report highlights shocking details about the greyhound industry—details which cannot be ignored. Among the most confronting findings, Mr MacSporran uncovered evidence that between 2003 and 2013 more than 24,200 greyhound pups were born but only 16,968 were named and registered with Racing Queensland. That means that more than 7,200 pups—30 per cent of all of these animals—are unaccounted for.

Over the same period, 1,462 greyhounds were registered as retired when the actual number should have been as high as 8,500, meaning that 7,000 animals are unaccounted for. The average number of greyhounds which die after being retired is 76 per cent. In 2013 alone, 74.4 per cent of retired animals were reported as euthanased while 6.8 per cent were reported as dead, but many of these deaths simply could not be explained. Mr MacSporran's final report contains 15 recommendations in response to the fact that he found the racing industry's efforts to self-regulate

have been a failure. His report shows Racing Queensland has operated in an environment in which it could not adequately assess and deal with the risks to integrity and animal welfare. His report shows this industry has dismally failed those animals it relies on for considerable profit.

My government has acted swiftly on the findings of Mr MacSporran's inquiry. In particular, we have acted immediately on the report's raising of significant concerns around the performance of the current CEO of Racing Queensland, Mr Darren Condon. Accordingly, I have asked my Minister for Sport and Racing to take immediate action in this regard. Today I have instructed the minister to write to Mr Condon asking him to show cause why he should not be removed from office. Mr Condon now has five days to respond. In the meantime, Mr Condon will be stood down on full remuneration, as legally required, pending the outcome of the show-cause process. An interim administrator will be seconded to Racing Queensland to ensure that day-to-day operations of racing are not jeopardised whilst this process occurs.

Ultimate responsibility for the conduct of Racing Queensland lies with the board of that organisation. The Queensland All Codes Racing Industry Board has obligations under the Racing Act as the peak control body for the industry. Further, the Queensland Greyhound Racing Board has obligations to the greyhound industry, including managing Racing Queensland and upholding confidence in that sector. As Mr MacSporran said yesterday, it is clear that Racing Queensland has failed, and that starts with the boards. Today I have directed the minister to abolish all of the boards associated with the racing industry in Queensland—namely, the Queensland All Codes Racing Industry Board, the Queensland Greyhound Racing Board, the Queensland Harness Racing Board and the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board. Today we are starting with a clean slate. We have appointed Mr Ian Hall from KPMG to advise on implementation of interim administrative arrangements and to ensure effective ongoing management of Racing Queensland.

One of the most significant recommendations proposes revising the structure of the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission by establishing a new statutory authority to oversee the integrity of the entire racing industry. This new authority would be distinct from Racing Queensland and not be part of the Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing. Mr MacSporran makes further recommendations around current breeding incentive programs and changes to licensing arrangements for owners and trainers to require verification of greyhound information and thorough records in relation to training and other activities. Importantly, the report recommends that there is a more accurate, consistent program of monitoring dogs from birth to maturity to ensure that no animal will be able to disappear off the map. These recommendations are now under active consideration by my government. All Queenslanders want a racing industry that is based on integrity and proper animal welfare, not one that is characterised by cruelty, dishonesty and at best dubious regulation and in an environment in which there is a failure of simple compliance measures. My government will deliver that. Anyone who has taken part in acts of animal cruelty will be thoroughly investigated by police and will be brought to justice.

As a final note, the very fact that we are having an open discussion about this industry is thanks to Animal Liberation Queensland and Animals Australia prompting a joint police and RSPCA investigation followed by a hard-hitting report from the ABC and *Four Corners* which exposed the evidence which led to the commission. Today I place on record my thanks to my government, to the RSPCA and to the Queensland police, and to the animal welfare groups for their action. I also thank the ABC for the fearless, uncompromising journalism that *Four Corners* continues to deliver.