



Media Statement

Greyhound Passport Scheme

Greyhounds Australasia (GA) is the national body responsible for developing the national rules of greyhound racing, called the Greyhounds Australasia Rules (GARs).

GA's members are the controlling authorities of the eight Australian state and territories and New Zealand.

GA and its members are putting animal welfare at the centre of everything we do. Controlling authorities, particularly on the eastern seaboard, have made some significant changes to their operations during 2015 with a lot more change to come. All change initiatives are being considered through the lens of how they will improve the welfare of our greyhounds.

In 2004, GA established a new rule, GAR124, in an attempt to protect the welfare of Australian greyhounds exported overseas. The rule requires all participants, when exporting a greyhound, to obtain a GA Greyhound Passport before meeting the Department of Agriculture's export requirements.

If a registered industry participant exports a greyhound without applying for, and being granted, a passport through GA, greyhound racing controlling authorities have the power to commence an inquiry and, where a breach is established, take appropriate disciplinary action.

GA recognises that without government support, it has limited powers to stop greyhounds being exported to countries with poor or unknown animal welfare standards. For the GA Passport Scheme to be effective, it requires government regulatory change. While additional export controls add to regulatory burden, GA submits that the additional requirements are appropriate and necessary to safeguard animal welfare.

GA's proposed requirements are relatively simple and would mean exporters would be required to produce evidence that they had obtained the necessary industry approvals by identifying their GA Passport number on government export documentation. This would provide a key protection to ensure greyhounds are not being exported to countries where their welfare may be at risk.

Since 2005, GA has sought federal government intervention to stop the exportation of Australian greyhounds to destinations where that movement would be contrary to the greyhound's best interests and the interests of the industry.

In August 2014, GA wrote to the Federal Minister for Agriculture, the Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP, seeking his personal commitment to strengthening Commonwealth export control legislation to minimise the current risk to the welfare of Australian greyhounds and to Australia's reputation as a responsible live animal exporter.

While appreciative of GA's efforts to proactively address the animal welfare concerns associated with greyhound exports, the Minister remains of the view that the existing regulation under the Export Control (Animals) Order 2004 is sufficient. That order requires

the exporter to demonstrate to the Department of Agriculture that the animal has been prepared in accordance with the importing country's requirements and export legislation.

The Minister noted the federal government's focus on removing regulation where possible and that they were not prepared to impose additional regulation without evidence of market failure and efforts by industry to resolve problems first. The GA Greyhound Passport Scheme is the industry's proactive response to this problem.

GA's view is that government policy should reflect general community expectations. The government's reluctance to act on industry and community concerns risks adverse welfare outcomes for exported greyhounds and threatens Australia's standing as a strong advocate for animal welfare.

In May 2014, GA concluded its two year review into Australian Greyhound Export Welfare Standards on behalf of the Australian greyhound racing industry. The review used GA's required welfare standards for countries seeking to import Australian greyhounds to assess the standards in countries with a regulated greyhound racing industry.

In June 2014, the GA Board endorsed the final report's recommendation that GA maintain the suspension of receiving and processing of greyhound passport applications where the destination was Macau. The decision to suspend passports to Macau was originally taken in March 2013 as a result of an interim report that identified Macau as not compliant with Australian animal welfare standards.

GA remains committed to seeking a federal government regulatory solution that improves greyhound welfare outcomes and acknowledges the support of RSPCA Australia and other animal welfare groups in achieving that outcome.

Scott Parker
Chief Executive Officer