

## INQUIRY INTO THE PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP ROSEHILL RACECOURSE SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

Hearing: 9 August 2024

Dr Rosemary Elliot, President, Sentient

Dr Andrea Harvey, Associate Professor, Sydney School of Veterinary Science, Sentient

- (1) Do you believe greater transparency and accountability measures need to be implemented with respect to Racing NSW and the racing industry generally? If so, please explain what measures you would like to see introduced

We agree that greater transparency and accountability measures must be implemented with respect to Racing NSW and the racing industry generally. Whilst the public are aware of many of the potential welfare issues in the racing industry globally, we also understand that there are sectors of the industry that may be addressing some of these issues. However, without transparency it is impossible to know what potential welfare issues are being addressed, and how, or not. It is therefore also impossible to know what the key welfare issues currently are across different sectors of the industry specifically within NSW.

Sentient advocates public reporting of the following metrics:

- The number of foals bred, the number who enter racing and the whereabouts of those who do not make it to a racing career
- Deaths on track and during racing, including the cause of death and whether the horses were euthanased
- Injuries on track and during racing, including cause, injury type and outcome
- Incidence and outcome of colic, casting, gastric ulceration and exercise-induced pulmonary haemorrhage (bleeding from the lungs)
- Number of foals born for every mare, including the time between each foaling
- Outcomes after racing for all horses, including details of rehoming

Whilst these types of metrics are the most discussed, and would be very informative, they still provide little information about the overall welfare of individual horses throughout their lives, or in other words their well-being/quality of life over their lifespan. Sentient believes that this would be the most informative information that could result in real on-ground action to improve overall quality of life in racehorses. To do so, a comprehensive welfare strategy is required that involves scientifically and systematically assessing welfare in Thoroughbred horses across NSW, at different stages of their lives from foals through to yearlings, through training, their racing career, retirement, breeding and rehoming. This is the only way to conclusively identify the actual welfare impacts and their prevalences that are impacting the quality of life of Thoroughbred horses, leading to strategies to optimise quality of life across their lifetimes.

- (2) At the moment, there is very little public reporting on horse breeding numbers, deaths and rehoming from Racing NSW – why is this problematic?

This is problematic because it keeps the public (including the betting public) unaware of the extent of welfare problems faced by horses in the industry, such as ‘wastage’, overbreeding and risk of cruelty or neglect following racing, which is akin to false advertising. More importantly, it does not allow scrutiny of the industry and leaves horses unprotected.

- (3) Horse traceability has been raised as a concern throughout this Inquiry. Do we have any sort of horse register or traceability in NSW at the moment or at a national level – and if not, why is this a problem?

We believe that Racing NSW may have their own internal register and traceability system, but again, as highlighted above, there is lack of transparency around this, making it impossible to achieve public confidence. Having an external traceability system would be more advantageous in transparency.

At a national level there is no traceability register for horses in Australia, which means we are unable to efficiently identify horses, their location or their current owner. This has serious implications for animal welfare, such as limiting the ability of enforcement agencies to hold people accountable. For the racing industry, it means horses can only be traced while in the industry (via microchip identification), but this ends once they leave, accounting for the lack of data on what happens to ex racing horses in retirement.

- (4) To your knowledge, has Racing NSW been supportive of increasing horse traceability or creating a national horse register?

As above comment.

- (5) To your knowledge, has Racing NSW worked to block welfare reforms for horses on a state or national level (e.g. through Racing Australia)? If so, please provide details.

We do not have any knowledge of this. but it is very disappointing that Racing NSW has not responded to the report produced by the Thoroughbred Aftercare Welfare Working Group, which contains 46 recommendations with the potential to provide a robust framework to improve the welfare and aftercare of Thoroughbred horses in Australia. One of the recommendations in the report<sup>1</sup> is to improve horse traceability as follows:

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<sup>1</sup><https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e3788c2c2cd171e7c97ba5b/t/61a402a242660c71666b2b74/1638138541855/TWI+The+Most+Important+Participant+-+A+Framework+For+Thoroughbred+Welfare.pdf>

“14. A national horse register and traceability system should be established with utmost priority. The system must allow for all horses to be individually identified and traced to their current owner.

15. The thoroughbred industry should actively lobby state and federal governments on the urgent need for a national horse traceability register.

16. Federal, state and territory governments should commit to funding the establishment of a national horse register and traceability system.

17. Racing Australia should encourage the national traceability of thoroughbreds for life by developing the capacity to update ownership and other details at any stage of career and life and providing incentives for owners to do so.”

6) What other welfare issues do you think Racing NSW needs to address urgently?

**Banning the use of devices such as whips and tongue-ties during both racing and training.** These devices cause pain and injury to horses, and this signifies to the public an indifference to suffering. Their use is based on tradition, misguided beliefs and a pressure to meet the expectation of punters. Strongly held beliefs, that were expressed by a member of the committee during the hearing, are that whips improve the safety of jockeys by allowing them to steer the horse better, and that tongue ties are used to prevent ‘choking’, or the airway being obstructed by soft tissue at the back of the mouth during high intensity exercise. Both of these views have been refuted by scientific studies. A study based on steward reports found no difference in safety issues, no difference in steering and no difference in race times between horses raced with and without whips.<sup>2</sup> Another study showed there is no evidence that tongue ties keep the airways open during galloping – they do not increase the airway diameter and there was no evidence demonstrating improved upper airway function.<sup>3</sup> What we do know is that problems associated with tongue tie use include horses showing signs of pain, anxiety and distress, difficulty swallowing, cuts and lacerations to the tongue, bruising and swelling. The restriction of blood flow can cause the tongue to turn blue and can result in permanent tissue damage. Concerningly, the racing rules do not specify a requirement for veterinary assessment of tongue health after their use. If Racing NSW and the industry overall do not agree with the results of currently published studies, the onus is on them to provide refuting published evidence.

**Implementation of the recommendations of the Thoroughbred Aftercare Welfare Working Group (TAWWG)<sup>4</sup>**, with a focus on recommendation 2: “The thoroughbred industry should coordinate the development of Thoroughbred Welfare Australia (TWA), whose mission would be to focus on the whole-of-life welfare of thoroughbreds. The industry should convene key groups, including Racing Australia, PRAs, Thoroughbred Breeders Australia, RSPCA Australia and the

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<sup>2</sup> Thompson, K.; McManus, P.; Stansall, D.; Wilson, B.; McGreevy, P. Is whip use essential to Thoroughbred racing integrity? What stewards’ reports reveal about fairness to punters, jockeys and horses. *Animals* 2020, 10, 1985. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

<sup>3</sup> Barton AK, Troppenz A, Klaus D et al (2022) Tongue ties do not widen the upper airways in racehorses. *Equine Veterinary Journal*, 55:642-648.

<sup>4</sup> <https://thoroughbredwelfareinitiative.org.au/new-page-1>



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Australian Veterinary Association, to nominate a steering committee responsible for establishing TWA, developing its constitution and appointing an independent skills-based board.” and on recommendation 15: “The thoroughbred industry should actively lobby state and federal governments on the urgent need for a national horse traceability register.”

**Conducting in-situ independent welfare assessments of racehorses** during all life stages in the industry, based on the Five Domains model of animal welfare.

**Planning a shift away from horses being kept in individual stalls for up to 23 hours per day** to allow daily time on pasture, and also to adapt stalls so that horses may have tactile contact with conspecifics.

**Making CT imaging available to all horses** to identify sub-clinical conditions, which will reduce the risk of catastrophic injuries during racing and training.

17/9/2024

Contact: Dr Rosemary Elliott (President)