

**Submission
No 71**

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP ROSEHILL RACECOURSE

Organisation: Sustainable Action for Racing

Date Received: 18 July 2024

Sustainable Action for Racing Submission to Rosehill Racecourse Inquiry

I write on behalf of Sustainable Action for Racing, an organisation committed to the longevity and integrity of horse racing through our brand 'Kick Up'. Our sole purpose is to ensure that the industry not only survives but thrives, with the welfare of horses and the interests of the community at the forefront of our efforts to improve the public acceptance of horse racing.

The proposal to sell Rosehill Racecourse raises significant concerns, not only about the sustainability of high-quality racing we have come to expect but also regarding the maintenance of safe and suitable environments critical for both equine and human participants. This is compounded by the ongoing and systemic lack of transparency exhibited by Racing NSW (RNSW).

Without clear communication, stakeholders are left uncertain about the strategic direction of RNSW and any horse welfare implications. Analysis of RNSW's annual reports reveals that while there are generic statements about commitments to horse welfare, there is a distinct absence of clear, quantifiable data on the allocation and impact of the fund. Our repeated requests for information on aftercare programs and integrity measures have consistently been ignored. This lack of disclosure does not align with practices in other states, where detailed accounts of welfare fund expenditures and metrics are readily available.

Unfortunately, history has shown that without changes to the NSW Thoroughbred Racing Act, RNSW is unlikely to provide the necessary clarity and openness that stakeholders need to ensure accountability and trust.

Key points of concern include:

1. **Non-disclosure of Funding Allocation and Metrics:** Repeated failures to provide stakeholders with important data on the rehoming and welfare of horses, despite direct requests for this information. We do not know how many horses are rehomed by RNSW from their system. If one looks at social media - Team Thoroughbred NSW posts to socials when a horse is rehomed - it would appear that only 25 horses were rehomed between July 2023 and 2024. Other states provide detailed welfare reports and have welfare committees involving participants.
2. **No Clear Plans:** The potential sale of Rosehill raises substantial concerns about the future welfare environment for horses, with stakeholders left without clear information on future plans or commitments from RNSW or the Australian Turf Club regarding future training locations or replacement racetrack.
3. **Historical Lack of Response:** There is a documented history of not receiving responses from Racing NSW when queried about their strategies and outcomes, which undermines trust and hampers collaborative efforts to improve the industry.
4. **Lack of Property Details:** RNSW provides no details on the properties they have for welfare. We do not know how many horses are on these RNSW properties, nor the conditions of horses on these farms.

5. **Disregard for Stakeholders and Statutes:** This lack of transparency is compounded by RNSW's disregard for the statutes under which they are established: the NSW Thoroughbred Racing Act requires either the RNSW CEO or Chair to attend every Racing Industry Consultative Group meeting to discuss issues with participant groups. Our understanding is this does not happen.
6. **Public Expectation of Transparency:** There is a pressing need for the industry to be transparent on welfare as a step in ensuring the public's confidence: we note that, notwithstanding their recent challenges and accusations of data manipulation, Greyhound Racing NSW is required to regularly publish injury data and mortality rates.
7. **Importance of Safe Training Facilities:** Rosehill is the best training facility in NSW, and premium training tracks are essential to ensuring horses do not get injured. It would be detrimental to sell such a facility when other training tracks are not up to standard. While RNSW has more money (over \$360 million when unused provisions are included), Victoria has done a better job at upgrading training facilities and infrastructure. In the past 10 years, they have developed Pakenham as a new track and training centre, Cranbourne as a state-of-the-art training centre, Ballarat has had significant upgrades, and they have also developed a new track at Caulfield.

As this Inquiry into the proposal to develop Rosehill Racecourse progresses, it is imperative that we address the existing transparency issues within RNSW. Ensuring a high standard of transparency will not only facilitate better informed decision-making regarding this development but endeavour to restore public trust that will safeguard the future of horse racing. To address these key points of concern, it is crucial to implement the following desired outcomes that focus on accountability and governance within RNSW:

- **Review of Powers and Responsibilities:** A review of the powers and responsibilities of RNSW, potentially through an inquiry or review of the NSW Thoroughbred Racing Act, focusing on financial transparency and welfare.
- **Mandatory Reporting:** Consideration for mandatory reporting from RNSW on areas of welfare.
- **Parliamentary Oversight:** Consideration for a requirement that RNSW management appear before the NSW parliament once a year to answer questions from parliamentarians.

We urge the Inquiry to consider these factors and recommend legislative changes that align our state with the best accountability and governance practices nationwide.

Regards,
Vicky Leonard
Chair, Sustainable Action for Racing