

**Submission
No 124**

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP ROSEHILL RACECOURSE

Name: Mr Daniel Johnson

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Submission to the Inquiry into the Proposal to Develop Rosehill Racecourse

Dear Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to submit my concerns regarding the proposed development of Rosehill Racecourse in NSW. I am deeply troubled by the potential impact on the welfare of Thoroughbreds, which is covered under Terms of Reference (g) focusing on animal welfare impacts and integrity concerns related to the proposal, as well as (h) any other related issues.

It has come to my attention that the Australian Turf Club (ATC) stands to gain as much as \$10 billion from the sale of Rosehill. Irrespective of the nature of the development planned for Rosehill, I am worried that such a substantial sum of money could lead to the racing industry expanding and intensifying its activities in ways that could harm Thoroughbreds' lives. Instead, I hope the ATC will see this sale as an opportunity to enhance the welfare of racehorses in NSW, which could also help improve its somewhat tainted reputation. However, historically, the racing industry has shown little genuine concern for its racehorses and is known for its lack of transparency regarding what happens to horses after they leave racing.

I support the proposal for Rosehill Racecourse to be sold and repurposed for uses other than racing. My endorsement hinges on how the proceeds from the sale are utilized, particularly in ways that do not further harm Thoroughbreds.

I urge the NSW Government to intervene and impose conditions on how the ATC can use the potential \$10 billion from the sale of Rosehill. This sale presents a significant opportunity for the NSW racing industry to genuinely contribute to improving racehorse welfare. There should no longer be any excuses for lack of funding.

I believe the sale proceeds should be allocated to benefit Thoroughbred racehorses as outlined below:

1. Establishing a lifelong traceability system for every horse in the NSW racing industry.
2. Funding a secure and lifelong retirement plan for all horses involved in NSW racing.
3. Implementing immediate measures to enhance racehorse welfare both on and off the track, adopting standards based on the 2020 Five Domains Model for animal welfare assessment, and ensuring education of industry members accordingly.
4. Creating a fund to support the transition of racing industry members into professions outside of racing.

Given NSW's significant role in the Australian Thoroughbred racing sector, including a substantial share of races and breeding activities, the sale of Rosehill Racecourse could have profound implications for the industry and its surrounding areas. It is crucial that this financial windfall is used to address longstanding welfare concerns within the industry.

Thank you for considering my recommendations. I hope the Committee prioritizes the welfare of Thoroughbred racehorses in any decisions concerning the future of Rosehill Racecourse.

Yours faithfully,

Daniel Johnson

Introduction

NSW plays a significant role in the Australian Thoroughbred racing scene, hosting nearly 30% of all tracks, race meetings, races, and race starts. In 2023, NSW also accounted for 29% of individual racing Thoroughbreds (10,534 animals) and 38% of Broodmares (7,123 mares), which produced 5,778 foals, amounting to 45% of all Australian foals. The potential sale of Rosehill Racecourse will profoundly impact racing in NSW and the surrounding region. This substantial financial gain presents a crucial opportunity for the racing industry to address the numerous animal welfare issues that persist within the sector.

1. Horse Traceability Register

The anticipated \$10 billion revenue from the sale of Rosehill Racecourse could empower Racing NSW to establish its own traceability register. This initiative would ensure transparency and traceability for every Thoroughbred horse born into the NSW racing industry. By implementing such a register, all unregistered foals, breeding horses, and retired racehorses would be documented, enabling accountability for their welfare that can be traced back to their respective owners at any given moment.

2. Rehabilitation and retirement plan for racehorses

The racing industry has a moral obligation to look after all the racehorses it breeds. To date, the racing industry's promises to rehabilitate and rehome their retired animals have proven inadequate and insufficient. An estimated 3,500 Thoroughbred horses exit racing in NSW each year, that simply cannot be accommodated by pony clubs, private buyers, and other rehoming programs. The racing industry does not know, and refuses to disclose any information about the whereabouts of these horses.

I urge the NSW Government to ensure that a properly funded rehabilitation and rehoming program is implemented to ensure the lifelong retirement of all current and future Thoroughbred horses involved in the NSW racing industry.

3. Breeding

Horses are bred solely to meet industry demands without consideration for their welfare post-racing. Around one third of all horses bred for racing never even make it to the racetrack. Mares are typically bred annually until they reach about 10 years old, often with

little chance of being re-homed afterward. There is currently no public record kept of mares leaving the breeding cycle.

I strongly urge the NSW Government to impose a limit on breeding numbers and hold the racing industry accountable for the welfare of all horses they breed and profit from. Funding for these initiatives could be sourced from the proceeds of the Rosehill Racecourse sale.

4. Animal Welfare in Racing

There is considerable evidence suggesting that the racing industry may prioritize profit over the welfare of animals. This concern is reflected in various aspects, including the breeding practices, daily care routines, treatment on the racetrack, and the troubling instances of early deaths among Thoroughbreds, both during races and at slaughterhouses.

Cruelty on race day

The impact of cruelty on the racetrack is visible on television during every race day, with instances of horses breaking down, showing signs of distress or injury, and their deaths often concealed from the public. Common practices that raise concerns include whipping, the use of tongue ties, sharp mouthpieces, earplugs that impair hearing, and blinkers or blindfolds that obstruct vision. These methods can cause significant physical and psychological harm, as well as pain and distress to the horses.

The use of negative reinforcement—such as inflicting pain or inducing fear of pain to compel a horse to enter the barrier and race—contrasts with allowing horses the freedom to make their own choices. Additionally, the forceful handling and use of restrictive or painful equipment are prevalent and normalized in the NSW racing industry. However, these practices do not align with the principles of good welfare as outlined by the 2020 Five Domains Model for animal welfare assessment.

Day to day cruelty

Racehorses often experience harm due to management practices that are not well-informed or adequate, affecting them daily throughout their racing lives. These practices encompass housing, diet, training, racing, and breeding regimes that do not align with their biological needs. Frequent minor issues can lead to lifelong suffering, poor welfare outcomes, and premature death.

The conditions in which racehorses are housed are notably inappropriate. They are confined to stalls for up to 23 hours a day, which restricts their ability to graze and contributes to painful stomach ulcers due to their feeding regimen. Additionally, the lack of social interaction and freedom of movement often leads to stereotypical behaviours such as wood chewing, box walking, windsucking, and weaving as the horses attempt to cope with the stress.

The conventional feeding and housing practices within the NSW racing industry do not meet the basic, natural needs of horses as outlined in the 2020 Five Domains Model. This often results in horses exhibiting behaviours that differ significantly from

their natural tendencies, such as learned helplessness or difficulties in handling and riding. These behaviors become normalized within the industry and can create further challenges when horses are retired and need rehoming.

I respectfully urge the NSW Government to enhance Thoroughbred welfare by adopting the Five Domains Welfare Model for all racehorses in the NSW Racing industry.

5. Racing related deaths and injuries

According to the Deathwatch report by CPR (2023), it has been noted that in 2023, there were 168 Thoroughbred deaths across Australia, either on the track or shortly thereafter, directly attributable to racing, with catastrophic front limb injuries being the most common cause. Approximately 30% of these fatalities occurred on New South Wales racetracks.

The general public increasingly opposes the use of animals for gambling and entertainment purposes. It is noteworthy that no other sport worldwide would permit such frequent fatalities among its athletes as is seen with Thoroughbred racehorses in Australia.

6. Social impact of the Racing Industry

Research indicates that individuals who exhibit cruelty towards animals are more likely to display violent behavior towards other humans. The public display of cruelty towards Thoroughbreds during each race day contributes to the normalization of animal cruelty and may increase the risk of violence towards people.

Furthermore, the horse racing industry is closely linked with the gambling industry. Studies reveal that 41% of individuals who regularly gamble on horse and dog racing encounter various gambling-related issues, including relationship problems, financial pressures, and health concerns. Additionally, research shows that incidents of police-recorded assaults and family issues tend to rise on major horse racing event days. The NSW Government has a responsibility to address these social challenges by supporting problem gambling assistance programs.

I respectfully urge the NSW Government to impose conditions to ensure that any funds from the potential sale of Rosehill Racecourse are not used to expand the NSW racing industry, as this could potentially worsen these social impacts.

Conclusion and Recommendations

History has demonstrated that profit-driven industries often prioritize financial gains over animal welfare, and the NSW horseracing industry appears to follow this trend. Should the proceeds from the potential sale of Rosehill Racecourse be used to expand the NSW racing

industry, I am deeply concerned that this could exacerbate the issues outlined in this submission, leading to severe negative impacts on Thoroughbred welfare within the industry.

Therefore, if the proposal to develop Rosehill Racecourse proceeds, I respectfully request that the NSW Government impose specific conditions on the ATC regarding the use of the sale proceeds. These conditions should ensure that the funds are not utilized to sustain or expand existing practices within the horseracing industry but are instead directed towards enhancing the welfare of horses in the NSW racing sector.

I would like to propose that the proceeds from the sale be used to benefit Thoroughbred racehorses in the following ways:

1. **Ensure Lifelong Traceability:** Implement measures to guarantee that every horse in the NSW racing industry has lifelong traceability.
2. **Fund Safe Retirement:** Establish funding to provide a secure and comfortable retirement for every horse in the NSW racing industry.
3. **Enhance Welfare Standards:** Take immediate steps to improve racehorse welfare both on and off the track by adopting standards based on the 2020 Five Domains Model for animal welfare assessment. Additionally, ensure that all members of the racing industry receive education on these new welfare standards.
4. **Support Transition:** Create a fund to assist members of the racing industry in transitioning to careers outside of racing.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Yours faithfully,

Daniel Johnson