Submission in response to the Racing Reforms in Queensland Discussion Paper

Introduction
1. The Animal Law Institute (ALI) welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the Queensland Government in response to the Racing Reforms in Queensland Discussion Paper (Paper).
2. By way of background, ALI is a registered charity and a not for profit community legal centre that is dedicated to protecting animals and advocating for their interests through the Australian legal system. ALI is a member of peak bodies, the Victorian Federation of Community Legal Centres and the National Association of Community Legal Centres.

Long term sustainability of the industry
3. ALI notes from the outset that it is broadly opposed to the use of animals for the purposes of sport and entertainment. However, ALI acknowledges that the Queensland Government is determined to further support the racing industry. In this context, ALI considers it sensible for the Queensland Government to pursue the stated objectives of the Paper – to seek input to “improve public confidence and integrity in the racing industry with regard to the welfare of racing animals and the transparency of commercial operations of the racing industry with a view to creating one that is sustainable in the long term.”
4. ALI commends the Queensland Government for accepting, in-principle, the recommendations made by Commission of Inquiry into the Regulation of the Queensland Greyhound Racing Industry (Commission). The Commission’s report, dated 1 June 2015, identifies that in order to restore public confidence in the greyhound racing industry, a number of significant changes are required to the way in which the industry operates, particularly in relation to how the industry is

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structured, monitored and regulated. As the Queensland Government would be aware of the Commission’s findings, these will not be re-iterated in this submission. In light of these findings, ALI encourages the Queensland Government to take into account, where appropriate, the Commission’s findings on the topics that the Paper focuses on (for example, the viability of maintaining incentive schemes).

5. Although the purpose of the Paper is framed to be that of improving public confidence and integrity in the racing industry "with regard to the welfare of racing animals” ALI notes that the paper invites limited input with respect to animal welfare; a submission which is supported by the fact that only one question out of a total of 34 questions that the Paper invites submissions on, relate directly to animal welfare (with the other two questions under the "Animal Welfare" heading focusing on issues of integrity of the sport).

**Question 29 (Page 21): Hot weather policy**

6. Racing Queensland’s Greyhound Racing Hot Weather Protocol\(^2\) (Protocol) permits trainers to scratch greyhounds without penalty if the trainer has a journey exceeding one hour to get to the race track, or does not have air-conditioned transport for the greyhounds.\(^3\)

7. The Paper seeks input on whether Racing Queensland should reduce the temperatures at which trainers can scratch their dogs from racing without penalty to (at least) 35 degrees, in light of the fact that Queensland has a number of days over 32 degrees and increased humidity in comparison to other Australian states and territories.\(^4\)

8. ALI understands that each Australian state and territory has adopted a slightly different hot weather policy and is unaware on what evidence each state and territory has relied in order to formulate their respective policies. Therefore, it is difficult to recommend which state’s policy is the most appropriate. By way of comparison however, ALI refers to Tasmania’s policy, which adopts much lower temperature thresholds than Queensland despite being a state with a much milder climate. Tasracing Pty Ltd has adopted a policy whereby voluntary scratching is permitted when the temperature reaches 30 degrees. Also, stewards can abandon a meeting if the temperature at the venue reaches 33 degrees.\(^5\)

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\(^3\) Ibid, 10.

\(^4\) Paper, 21.

9. ALI submits that there is credible scientific evidence which supports the view that it is appropriate for the hot weather policy to adopt a lower temperature than 38 degrees at which trainers can scratch their dogs without penalty.

10. ALI refers to the findings of Michael S Davis in his study of the effects of heat stress on working dogs. Mr Davis explains that hyperthermia is normal in strenuously exercising dogs and a conditioned dog can tolerate substantial exercise-induced increases in body temperature for short periods. Mr Davis notes that heat related disease can lead to serious systemic complications (often resulting in organ failure and death if left untreated) and that life threatening complications such as multi organ failure can occur even after an apparent recovery. ALI suggests that Mr Davis’ findings can be applied when considering at what temperature it is appropriate to permit voluntary scratching so as not to compromise the wellbeing of the greyhound.

11. ALI also refers to the study of PhD candidate at the University of Adelaide, Dr Jane McNicholl. Dr McNicholl studied temperature environments in transport trailers and examined individual greyhound temperature at racing tracks in South Australia and concluded that “transporting dogs in standard trailers in ambient temperatures >33°C may challenge dogs’ homeothermy and transporting dogs at such temperatures, before or after strenuous exercise may pose a significant risk of initiating heat illness.” Similarly, Dr McNicholl notes that a study conducted by Bjotvedt et al (1984) suggested that greyhounds performing strenuous exercise in high ambient temperatures were at risk of heat stroke.

12. ALI submits that if the Queensland Government is serious about ensuring that greyhounds are not required to race in extreme heat, it should use its findings from this consultation to identify the temperature at which greyhounds are susceptible to short and long term health issues if required to race, and implement a mandatory policy to cancel races when the weather is predicted to reach that temperature.

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7 Ibid, 256.
8 Ibid, 257.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid, 1.
Should the Queensland Government have any questions regarding this submission, please do not hesitate to contact The Animal Law Institute via email at policy@ali.org.au.

Yours sincerely

The Animal Law Institute Inc.