

# Restricted Breed Inquiry



## - Greyhounds -

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# Background

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- In Victoria, Greyhounds are subject to **breed-specific legislation**
- Section 27 (s27) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 (DAA):
  - Greyhounds in Victoria must be **leashed** in all public places and **muzzled** in public unless an exemption has been obtained
- In 1999, **muzzle exemption** given to GAP/GRV pet greyhounds identified by green collar (Victorian Government Gazette)
  - Since then, more adoption groups have formed to deal with the demand – which is still increasing

# Reasons for change

- **Adverse consequences** for pet greyhounds and their owners, and for the **welfare** of greyhounds transitioning from the racing industry
- **Inconsistency** with other jurisdictions with greyhound racing, most of which do not require muzzling in public
- Government and the racing industry are looking for ways to **reduce the killing** of unprofitable greyhounds
- Changing this law is a **simple** policy change that can be implemented now to help address the problem

➤ **We recommend the removal of s27 from the DAA**

# Who we are

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- A group of concerned pet greyhound enthusiasts from across Australia
- We feel it is time to address the **inequities** imposed on greyhounds through **out-dated legislation** here in Australia and, in particular, here in Victoria
- We provide **evidence-based** information on current laws and issues regarding greyhounds in Australia and worldwide
- **Wide public following** (over 3400 followers on Facebook)

# Letters of support by ...

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- **Greyhound Rescue Victoria**
- **Amazing Greys**
- **Emeritus Professor Jock McLean**  
*BVSc, PhD, HDA(Hons), ComplEAust*
- **His Honour Gordon Lewis A.M.** was a main contributor to our submission

# Other endorsements

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- In total approx. **50% of 583** submissions received from individuals (incl. proforma signatures) and animal welfare organizations related to greyhounds
  - All submissions (except 1) call for **the removal of the muzzle** requirement for greyhounds
  - **104** submissions (incl. proforma) **explicitly endorsed** the GES submission AND
  - **184** submissions endorsed our submission **in substance**
  - **4** vets, **1** vet nurse, **1** vet assistant, **1** dog trainer among submissions
- Among the submissions are **RSPCA Victoria, Animals Australia, Animal Liberation Queensland, The Veterinary Institute for Animal Ethics, Greyhound Safety Net, Friends of the Hound, Dr Des Fegan, Dr Amy Marder (VMD CAAB)**

# Failure to address community safety



1. **Outdated law from 1884** was **never** intended for pet greyhounds, as they essentially **did not exist** at the time

**1884 Dog Bill (first referred to in Hansard, 17 July, 1884, p. 594):**

*'No person shall exercise or train any greyhound within the limits of any city town or borough save in the grounds belonging to such person or in respect of which he has obtained a right or permission for such person unless every greyhound is first properly muzzled and kept muzzled during the time he is so exercised or trained and every person who acts in contravention of this section shall be liable to a penalty...'*

# Failure to address community safety



## 2. **Historical** documents show that the **original intention** of the 1999 muzzle exemption awarded to GAP was to **remove the muzzle law for all pet greyhounds**

- Media release of the **Racing Minister** in 1999:  
*“It will improve the public attitude towards this fun family dog ”*
- Today, GAP is nationally catering to arguably **less than 10%** (Herald Sun, 2015) of the dogs whelped each year and a **large percentage** is now adopted through **other rescue organizations** (and therefore legally required to wear a muzzle)

# Failure to address community safety



## 3. Non-aggressive breed

- Worldwide reputation as a great family pet: “one of the most easygoing dogs”, “very lazy, docile”, “boast a placid nature”, “cooperative, adaptable”, “affectionate” (GAP, 2015)
- Australia, and particularly Victoria, has one of the most stringent regulations with respect to pet greyhounds **–worldwide–**
- There is **–no– evidence** (nationally and internationally) that greyhounds are involved in more dog attacks than other dog breeds
- RSPCA Australia information paper: “*The RSPCA supports the complete removal of compulsory muzzling requirements for pet greyhounds while in a public place*”

“RSPCA Australia has **not identified any evidence** of increased safety risks or incidents/issues arising from the absence of compulsory muzzling of pet greyhounds in public places in other countries”

# Failure to address community safety



## 4. Problematic green collar

- Green collar creates a **false sense of security** and undermines owner responsibility
- The American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior (AVSAB) on BSL (2014):

*“[S]uch legislation – is ineffective, and can lead to a false sense of community safety as well as welfare concerns for dogs identified (often incorrectly) as belonging to specific breeds...”*

- A one-off test of whether a greyhound is “safe” or “unsafe” is **no substitute** for the **owner’s** ongoing monitoring and training, which responsible dog ownership involves

# Failure to address community safety



## 5. Dog Rehabilitation

- Muzzles deny dogs the ability to learn appropriate dog-to-dog socialization
- Not all greyhounds have been adequately habituated and desensitized to wearing a muzzle

## 6. Other laws

- Current Victorian law requires that all pet dogs must be either on-leash or, if there is an off-leash area, local council laws clearly state that dogs are required to be **under the effective control of their owners**
- R109 of GAR adequately outlines the control of a greyhound, registered with GRV for the purpose of racing, in a public place - **further regulations are superfluous**

# Animal welfare concerns



- The current muzzle law leads to **unnecessary barriers in greyhound adoption rates**, and thereby increased euthanasia rates for healthy dogs that have finished their racing careers
- The muzzling requirement is a **clear disincentive for the public to adopt** retired racing greyhounds
- While **greyhounds adopted through GAP** have been granted an exemption to the muzzling law, this constitutes only a **small proportion of the total greyhounds** in need of re-homing in Victoria, estimated at **approximately 10%** of greyhounds whelped each year (Herald Sun, 2015)

# Conclusion

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- Removal of the muzzle requirements for pet greyhounds would greatly **improve** “retired” or unwanted **greyhounds’ chances of finding homes** as family pets
- As a **policy matter**, government and industry are looking for ways to **reduce the killing** of unprofitable greyhounds
- **No** community protection concerns
  - *Pet greyhounds* would continue to be governed by the **laws that govern all *pet dogs*** and support community safety
  - *Racing greyhounds* would still be required to wear a muzzle in public under R109 of GAR
  - **Other jurisdictions** provide clear evidence that muzzles can be removed **–safely–**

# Conclusion



➤ **Changing this law offers multiple benefits with minimal risk**

➤ **Education, not legislation**

**Resources spent on breed-specific legislation and exemptions could be more effectively spent on owner education for greyhound adopters**