

Audit of Greyhound Racing New South Wales (GRNSW) 'Aussie Mates In The States' USA Rehoming Program

Report Summary

In 2023, Greyhound Racing NSW (GRNSW) commenced a program to rehome retired racing greyhounds to the United States and Canada. GRNSW contracts with Australian company Hanrob International Pet Logistics to transport greyhounds to the US, and with a number of US-based transport companies and rehoming organisations to rehome greyhounds.

In October 2023, the Commission conducted an audit of GRNSW's USA Rehoming Program. At the time of the audit, approximately 450 greyhounds had been exported. The purpose of the audit was to measure the program's compliance with the NSW Greyhound Industry Animal Welfare Committee's Best Practice Guidelines for Greyhound Rehoming Organisations.

Audit Criteria

The Audit team assessed the program against relevant provisions of the Best Practice Guidelines. These Guidelines comprise 72 individual requirements relating to:

- Accepting surrender and confirming ownership of greyhounds
- Greyhounds not to be accepted
- Health
- Greyhounds with existing health conditions
- Desexing
- Behaviour
- Husbandry
- Death or euthanasia
- Pre-rehoming communications
- Greyhounds not to be rehomed
- Transportation
- Preventing and responding to rehoming failure
- Record-keeping
- Registration

In particular, the audit assessed transport of greyhounds in accordance with the *Animal Welfare Code of Practice No 1 - Companion Animal Transport Agencies - New South Wales* which are contained within the Best Practice Guidelines.

It should be noted that not all of the standards were relevant to the program; for example, all greyhounds are desexed prior to entering the program. Similarly, legal requirements relating to the transport, keeping and registration of companion animals vary across states in the US and Canada. The Audit team did not seek to measure compliance with all applicable instruments, instead measuring compliance with relevant Australian standards.

Audit Design

The Audit team comprised two senior Commission staff. The Audit team inspected key sites and conducted interviews in both Australia and across several locations in the United States, focusing on a sample consignment of New South Wales greyhounds bound for the US. The Audit team inspected and assessed holding and transport facilities in both Australia and the US, and all relevant agreements, records and record keeping processes. The Audit team was also able to inspect a small number of “ultimate homes” in the US.

However, due to the number of program partners, the Audit team was unable to conduct a full audit of the performance of US and Canadian partners.

Audit Findings

The program operates in five phases:

1. Pre-assessment and Homing Assistance Scheme (GRNSW)

Potential greyhounds for the USA program are assessed for suitability by Greyhounds As Pets assessors at locations around NSW. In order to be accepted into the program, greyhounds must be under eight years old and successfully complete a temperament/behavioural assessment; behavioural assessment is consistent with the Guidelines.

Greyhounds that successfully complete this assessment are considered “pet ready”. HAS funding is provided to relinquishing owners to assist with any veterinary expenses (such as desexing) required in preparation for rehoming. All greyhounds must be fully vaccinated (including rabies vaccination) to meet US requirements.

2. Hanrob (Hanrob Logistics)

Greyhounds to be exported are kept at the Hanrob facility for an average of three weeks. While at the facility, greyhounds assessed by veterinarians and provided with crate-training; Hanrob constructs transport crates to suit individual greyhounds.

Hanrob is also responsible for preparation of documentation required for export including:

- details of the greyhound;
- veterinary declaration that the greyhound is fit to travel;
- rabies vaccination certificate;
- certificate of C7 vaccination;
- certificate of desexing;
- negative heartworm status certificate; and
- export health certificate.

3. **Transit Phase** (Hanrob International Pet Logistics, Qantas Freight, US-based animal transport providers)

Greyhounds designated for export are transported directly to Hanrob's Mascot facility, where they are removed from containers and provided an opportunity to toilet. Greyhounds remain in a designated area before being taken to the international airport four hours prior to departure.

For flight, greyhounds are loaded into the cabin and transported in temperature-controlled compartments. On arrival, they are transported to freight facilities within 60 minutes of landing, where they are assessed by Qantas staff. The greyhounds are then collected by commercial pet transport providers and transported to facilities run by US adoption partners (e.g.).

4. **Adoption facility/Foster care**

The Audit team inspected two adoption facilities in Texas that receive greyhounds exported by GRNSW. These facilities were operated by Greyhounds Unlimited and the Greyhound Adoption League, respectively.

The Audit team assessed these facilities in relation to the NSW Greyhound Welfare Code of Practice, which specifies detailed standards for the housing of greyhounds whereas the Best Practice Guidelines for Greyhound Rehoming Organisations do not. The facilities inspected were compliant with the Code.

5. **Ultimate home**

The Audit team was impressed with the assessment and adoption processes used by the Greyhounds Unlimited, the Greyhound Adoption League and the Southern Arizona Greyhound Adoption, which assess prospective homes for suitability and conduct post-adoption check-ins. The Greyhound Adoption League will only place greyhounds with owners who have previously had greyhounds.

The Audit found that the organisations assessed were fully compliant with the Guidelines in respect of preventing and responding to rehoming failure and record-keeping. The Audit team was also able to assess a small sample of NSW greyhounds in their ultimate rehoming location and was satisfied that the greyhounds were well care for in a suitable environment.

Conclusions

While noting that the Audit design did not cover the entire program, the Audit team was satisfied that GRNSW is compliant with the Best Practice Guidelines in its management of the 'Aussie Mates in the States' Rehoming Program.

Importantly, the Audit team was satisfied that transport of animals complied with the Guidelines, which refer to the *Animal Welfare Code of Practice No 1 - Companion Animal Transport Agencies - New South Wales* in relation to the transport of animals.

Findings and Recommendations

In addition to the key findings in relation to compliance, the Audit team made a number of findings and recommendations. These were:

1. A centralised governance structure would improve oversight of the program. However, there are some obstacles to this as US partner agencies are autonomous and there exists a current diversity of providers; and
2. A centralised database would increase visibility over the program. Major US partners already have systems in place that could be readily adapted for this purpose; and
3. GRNSW should be required to report on the death of any greyhound in the program. While the number of greyhound deaths in the program has been very low ($n=2$), such reporting is important to provide assurance in relation to greyhound welfare; and
4. GRNSW should support professionalisation of partner agencies which, though very effective, are largely volunteer based. Among other benefits, a centralised governance structure could assist in enhancing capacity among partner agencies; and
5. There is a large market for Australian greyhounds in the USA. “Aussie Greys” are viewed as desirable pets and opportunities to rehome greyhounds in the US, both through general and targeted programs, are likely to grow; and
6. As the US-based program partners have ongoing contact with adopters, GRNSW should be required to provide annual updates of a representative sample of greyhounds. This would not only verify program outcomes but also provide a valuable source of data in relation to long term trends in greyhound adoption.
7. The program should be reviewed annually, for the first three years, to ensure its ongoing appropriateness. This review should be conducted by the Commission, or another agency independent of GRNSW.