

Discussion Paper

NSW Racing Population Initiatives

November 2017

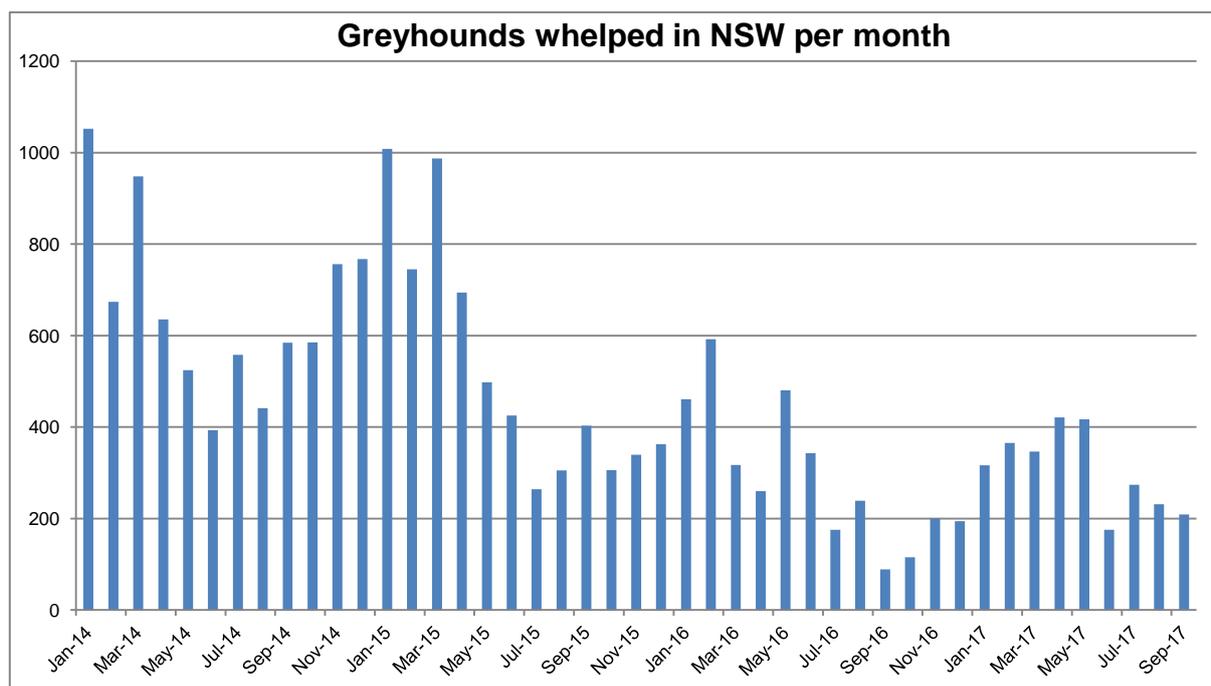
Introduction

Greyhound Racing NSW (**GRNSW**) is a body corporate constituted by the *Greyhound Racing Act 2017*.

A primary function of GRNSW is to initiate, develop and implement policies conducive to the promotion, strategic development and commercial viability of the greyhound racing industry in NSW, while also exhibiting a sense of social responsibility by having regard to the welfare of greyhounds.

It is this function that has instigated GRNSW to look at developing possible strategies and other racing-related solutions that can minimise the impact of the falling greyhound population which will quickly develop in NSW and Australia-wide over the next 12 to 24 months.

To illustrate the magnitude of the breeding drop off, the total number of pups whelped in NSW was 56% down in the 2016 calendar year compared to 2014, with the last six months of 2016 down 73% compared to the corresponding period of 2014.



The sharp fall in greyhound breeding levels experienced in recent years poses a serious threat to GRNSW being able to maintain current racing levels across the state, however, it also presents an opportunity to optimise the racing pool by improving welfare outcomes, increasing the proportion of greyhounds that make the track and extending the average career of racing greyhounds.

To determine how best to optimise the current racing pool in NSW, GRNSW undertook extensive consultation throughout September and October to gather industry views and opinion on what race programming initiatives, prizemoney structures, financial incentives

and other racing related solutions could be considered over the next 12 months and into the future.

This consultation included an online survey, which was completed by more than 550 participants, as well as 10 face-to-face meetings with stakeholders in all regions of NSW.

Based on the feedback, it was clear that GRNSW could maximise the racing population over the short-term through focusing on three areas of racing operations. These three areas are:

1. Programming
2. Incentives
3. Grading

This discussion paper aims to address each of these areas by making draft recommendations that aim to not only maximise the racing population, but also remove the hurdles for participants that prevent them from getting the most out of the industry for themselves and their greyhounds, while also prioritising animal welfare and responsible breeding practices.

The objectives of the draft recommendations are to address the immediate issues created by the falling greyhound population and maximise racing opportunities over the next two years.

The draft recommendations have been developed with consideration given to all feedback provided by stakeholders and aim to provide immediate solutions to the problems and frustrations regularly identified during the consultation period.

GRNSW would like to thank all the participants who contributed and provided their views during the consultation period. All the feedback was vitally important in forming the basis for the draft recommendations and will go a long way in ensuring the NSW greyhound racing industry can maximise the racing population to give the industry the best chance of being able to sustain current racing levels.

Stakeholders now have until **5pm, Thursday 23 November 2017** to provide their views on the draft recommendations contained in this discussion paper.

All industry stakeholders are encouraged to review this discussion paper and the proposed recommendations and provide final feedback.

Feedback on each recommendation can be made by visiting this link:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/C677MHL>

After all the feedback on the draft recommendations is collated and reviewed, the final recommendations will be developed and submitted to the GRNSW Board for approval.

Please note that the draft recommendations outlined in this discussion paper are still in draft stage and have not been approved or enacted by GRNSW at this stage.

List of Recommendations

Programming

1. Introduce Novice race programming at all NSW tracks, for greyhounds with 1-3 wins only.
2. Introduce the programming of races based on points (for example races for greyhounds with between 70 – 100 points).
3. Increase the frequency of programming Non-TAB heat series where the final is staged at a nearby TAB track (with no penalty). This is to apply to the New England and Mid-North Coast regions in particular due to the lack of TAB racing opportunities in the region.
4. Allow races to be drawn at a Non-TAB meeting with a minimum of five runners.
5. Introduce the programming of races for one win greyhounds at Wentworth Park Wednesday meetings.
6. GRNSW will engage all clubs and conduct a review of scheduled meetings for the second half of the 2017/18 season with a view to eliminate any unnecessary scheduling clashes between tracks in close proximity.
7. Program Masters racing at Non-TAB meetings.
8. Masters race events to be programmed at eligible TAB tracks once a fortnight.
9. Program Pathways racing at Non-TAB meetings.

Incentives

10. Increase the TAB racing travel subsidy to \$70 for a trainer's first starter at a meeting and \$20 for every other greyhound at that meeting. Non-TAB travel subsidy will remain at \$20 for each starter.
11. Increase prizemoney for maiden races to the same as an equivalent 5th grade race at that distance and class of meeting.
12. Introduce NSW bred-only races that will be part of a bi-annual race series at all TAB tracks.
13. When a Non-TAB meeting does not receive sufficient nominations to draw 10 races at a meeting, the remaining prizemoney for the meeting is allocated to the races drawn at that same meeting.
14. Reduce the fee for participants to submit a Naming Application to \$45 (currently \$80).
15. Remove the fee for Ownership Transfers (currently \$45).

Grading

16a. Remove the requirement for first starters to undertake a satisfactory performance trial before having a race start at a TAB track.

OR

16b. Introduce a \$20 travel subsidy for all greyhounds competing in a performance trial.

17. A maiden greyhound that does not get a start or a reserve spot after three or more successive nomination attempts will gain a preference at their next nomination attempt.

18. Remove the grading rule that requires greyhounds to win a graded race over 400m or more to be eligible to race in 280m events at Wentworth Park.

19. No penalty for greyhounds that win a final at an A, B or C class meeting in which they qualified at a different track and lower class of meeting.

20a. A greyhound of Masters age (currently three years and nine months or older) that has won an open grade event (5th grade or higher) in the past five starts will not be eligible for a Masters event.

OR

20b. Introduce a maximum point score to some or all Masters events (for example 200 point maximum).

21a. Introduce a rotating point restriction or minimum point score to Pathways racing (for example restrict Pathways racing for greyhounds with 60 points or more).

OR

21b. If a greyhound has not placed in three pathways races at TAB C level, they will only be eligible for Pathways races at Non-TAB meetings until they register a top three placing.

Programming

Much of the criticism of greyhound racing operations in NSW revolved around race programming. The vast majority of stakeholders who engaged in the consultation period listed programming as a major hurdle to maximising the racing career of their greyhounds, with many calling for improvements and better coordination around the state.

As a result, GRNSW management is proposing nine recommendations that aim to address deficiencies in the current race programming schedule.

Recommendations:

1. Introduce Novice race programming at all NSW tracks, for greyhounds with 1-3 wins only.
2. Introduce the programming of races based on points (for example races for greyhounds with between 70 – 100 points).

One of the most common pieces of feedback received throughout consultation was the lack of protection for 5th grade greyhounds with a small number of wins or those greyhounds in the early stage of their racing career.

There was substantial criticism that these greyhounds are often “out graded” and drawn in races with other greyhounds that have significantly more experience and career wins.

In addition, a lot of positive feedback was received on the expansion of win restricted races or the introduction of Novice racing, with many respondents believing the expansion of such racing would ensure these greyhounds are racing against other greyhounds of similar ability and experience.

Many respondents believed that programming of races based on points should be introduced to ensure greyhounds of similar ability and form can compete against one another.

Recommendation:

3. Increase the frequency of programming Non-TAB heat series where the final is staged at a nearby TAB track (with no penalty). This is to apply to the New England and Mid-North Coast regions in particular due to the lack of TAB racing opportunities in the region.

Respondents believed more needed to be done to give people in areas with poor access to TAB racing the opportunity to race for higher prizemoney.

As a result, it is recommended that more races are programmed where heats take place at a Non-TAB track and a final then takes place at a TAB track.

This will allow participants who predominantly race at Non-TAB meetings, the chance to continue to compete at these tracks with their greyhounds and then have the opportunity to race at a TAB track for higher prizemoney.

Recommendation:

4. Allow races to be drawn at a Non-TAB meeting with a minimum of five runners.

There was consistent feedback that the minimum starter numbers should be relaxed to allow for more top grade and distance greyhounds to be drawn and therefore gain starts more regularly.

Currently, these types of events are often not drawn due to insufficient nominations, especially in the Non-TAB sector.

As smaller field sizes have a substantial impact on wagering, it is appropriate that this lowering of the minimum starters requirement be introduced at Non-TAB racing only.

Recommendation:

5. Introduce the programming of races for one win greyhounds at Wentworth Park Wednesday meetings.

Despite having the highest prizemoney levels in NSW, Wentworth Park consistently receives very low nominations for each race meeting.

While many respondents believed the biggest detraction from competing at Wentworth Park was its location, some suggested improvements could be made to the programming, including making race events accessible to more greyhounds.

If recommendation 5 is adopted, GRNSW's racing function would investigate the feasibility of making these races penalty free to ensure greyhounds do not become unfairly graded if they win one of these events.

Recommendation:

6. GRNSW will engage all clubs and conduct a review of scheduled meetings for the second half of the 2017/18 season with a view to eliminate any unnecessary scheduling clashes between tracks in close proximity.

There was a high level of criticism across the state of schedule clashes with race meetings, particularly in the Non-TAB sector. Examples were provided by respondents which showed instances in which meetings in close proximity to one another were being held within 24 hours of one another or even on the same day.

As a result, GRNSW management will conduct a thorough review with all clubs of scheduled meetings between January 2018 and June 2018, and where a clash is identified, amendments to the racing schedule will be made.

In addition, participants will be encouraged to provide their views where they believe a schedule clash is due to occur.

Recommendations:

7. Program Masters racing at Non-TAB meetings.

8. Masters race events to be programmed at eligible TAB tracks once a fortnight.

Feedback on Masters racing was overwhelmingly positive. Stakeholders located in primarily Non-TAB areas were keen to see Masters introduced in this sector to provide greater opportunities for older greyhounds to continue their racing careers.

Throughout the consultation period, stakeholders voiced their desire for more regular Masters racing at their local track. As a result, GRNSW management is proposing to increase the frequency of Masters race events to approximately once a fortnight at each TAB track (excluding Wentworth Park).

Recommendation:

9. Program Pathways racing at Non-TAB meetings.

More than three-quarters of survey respondents support Pathways racing (see appendix, question 11), with many believing it is an effective way to ensure greyhounds of all abilities can get regular racing opportunities.

When asked what changes stakeholders would like to see to the Pathways concept, a large number of respondents believed there should be more Pathways events, particularly at Non-TAB level where the concept is not currently running.

Incentives

Despite an 11% increase in prizemoney and travel subsidies at the start of 2016/17, many respondents during the consultation still maintained that more should be done to incentivise participants to race their greyhounds and not transfer them to interstate jurisdictions.

While GRNSW management acknowledges incentives play a vital role in maximising the racing population available, any new incentives proposed have to be done responsibly, feasibly and ensuring that they do not have a negative impact on animal welfare outcomes.

Recommendation:

10. Increase the TAB racing travel subsidy to \$70 for a trainer's first starter at a meeting and \$20 for every other greyhound at that meeting. Non-TAB travel subsidy will remain at \$20 for each starter.

There was strong support for the introduction of higher travel subsidy payments in NSW, with such a shift seen as a way to incentivise trainers to keep greyhounds that are not regularly winning prizemoney racing for longer in a responsible fashion. More than 55% of survey respondents indicated that they would like to see GRNSW increase the travel subsidy to help manage the decline in racing population (see appendix, question 12).

Recommendation:

11. Increase prizemoney for maiden races to the same as an equivalent 5th grade race at that distance and class of meeting.

Prizemoney levels were a frequent point of contention during the consultation period, however, it was clearly conveyed that current Maiden prizemoney levels are deemed to be particularly inadequate. There was a belief that prizemoney levels should be raised for maidens to appropriately incentivise and encourage perseverance with less competitive and inexperienced greyhounds that are struggling to break their maiden.

Recommendation:

12. Introduce NSW bred-only races that will be part of a bi-annual race series at all TAB tracks.

Creating a race series where only NSW dogs are eligible was seen as a good way to encourage locally bred greyhounds to stay in NSW and therefore maximise the racing population. These special events would be advertised regularly and would also carry some additional prizemoney to be funded by GRNSW. Payment of prizemoney would be split as per the existing owner / trainer split for the greyhound.

Recommendation:

13. When a Non-TAB meeting does not receive sufficient nominations to draw 10 races at a meeting, the remaining prizemoney for the meeting is allocated to the races drawn at that same meeting.

For all Non-TAB racing, GRNSW budgets that each club will stage 10 races per meeting. When 10 races are not scheduled the remaining money is currently not distributed to participants.

By allocating the full amount of prizemoney that was allocated to a meeting, all prizemoney budgeted is actually being delivered to participants.

The amount of prizemoney on offer at Non-TAB meetings was a constant criticism during the consultation period and this recommendation will provide participants competing at Non-TAB meetings the chance to compete for higher prizemoney.

Recommendations:

14. Reduce the fee for participants to submit a Naming Application to \$45 (currently \$80).
15. Remove the fee for Ownership Transfers (currently \$45).

The costs associated with participation in the NSW greyhound industry were criticised during consultation. As such GRNSW has proposed to reduce fees for certain transactions that will assist participants while also maintaining a focus on responsible breeding decisions and animal welfare. It is proposed that the Naming Application fee is significantly reduced while the fee for Ownership Transfers are abolished as a way to encourage owners to seek and maximise racing opportunities that reflect their greyhounds ability in a more timely and cost effective manner.

Grading

An overwhelming number of participants believed the NSW Grading Policy need to be overhauled to ensure it meets its objective of promoting a high standard of racing that maximises racing careers in NSW.

Many of the grading changes suggested by responses are due to be introduced as part of the review of the NSW Grading Policy which took place in 2016 and 2017. For more on these changes, [visit this link](#).

The changes are currently being implemented to GRNSW's OzChase grading system and are due to be introduced in early 2018.

Despite this, GRNSW management believed a number of changes could be made to grading that will not require significant system changes. These are outlined in the six following draft recommendations.

Recommendation:

16a. Remove the requirement for first starters to undertake a satisfactory performance trial before having a race start at a TAB track.

OR

16b. Introduce a \$20 travel subsidy for all greyhounds competing in a performance trial.

Performance trials were heavily criticised by participants, with many believing they do not achieve their purpose of assisting wagering by providing the public with an accurate guide about a greyhound's ability prior to them racing. Many respondents pointed to the fact that no other states currently undertake performance trials.

As such it is recommended that performance trials are removed altogether. If this recommendation is not supported it is recommended that participants are paid a travel subsidy for any greyhound in their care that competes in a performance trial to ensure participants are not worse off for undertaking the requirement.

Recommendation:

17. A maiden greyhound that does not get a start or a reserve spot after three or more successive nomination attempts will gain a preference at their next nomination attempt.

Participants often described a scenario whereby a maiden greyhound with limited points is unable to gain a start and has no Pathways racing option available to gain confidence and more points. As such, this recommendation seeks to provide maiden greyhounds that are consistently unable to gain a start or reserve spot with a preference to increase the likelihood of gaining a start and kick-start the greyhound's career.

Recommendation:

18. Remove the grading rule that requires greyhounds to win a graded race over 400m or more to be eligible to race in 280m events at Wentworth Park.

Although there was a preference for 280m racing at Wentworth Park to be scheduled and utilised in extreme circumstances only, it was made clear that the current grading requirement to win a graded race over 400m or more to be eligible to race at Wentworth Park is not appropriate to enforce for 280m nominations.

Recommendation:

19. No penalty for greyhounds that win a final at an A, B or C class meeting in which they qualified at a different track and lower class of meeting.

Participants were supportive of race events whereby the heats and finals were run at different tracks, with the final at a higher class of meeting with additional prizemoney. These events were seen as a good way to earn additional prizemoney, however the grade penalty that winning the final attracted was often seen as too big a disincentive to participate in these type of events. As such, the proposed recommendation is aimed at encouraging owners and trainers to participate in this type of race series and provide more opportunities for more greyhounds to win a greater share of prizemoney.

Recommendation:

20a. A greyhound of Masters age (currently three years and nine months or older) that has won an open grade event (5th grade or higher) in the past five starts will not be eligible for a Masters event.

OR

20b. Introduce a maximum point score to some for all Masters events (for example 200 point maximum).

The majority of participants were supportive of the Masters racing concept, however, almost half of survey respondents indicated that they would like improvements to the way Masters races are drawn. The one consistent criticism was that too many top grade greyhounds that remain successful in ordinary racing are able to enter Masters, leading to lopsided fields being drawn and run.

There was strong support for a restriction or tighter eligibility clause to be introduced to ensure that greyhounds that are still highly competitive in ordinary graded races are excluded to promote more equal Masters racing.

Recommendation:

21a. Introduce a rotating point restriction or minimum point score to Pathways racing (for example restrict Pathways racing for greyhounds with 60 points or more).

OR

21b. If a greyhound has not placed in three pathways races at TAB C level, they will only be eligible for Pathways races at Non-TAB meetings until they register a top three placing.

While a large majority of participants support Pathways racing, many believe that changes are required to the current system.

There was substantial criticism about Pathways disadvantaging greyhounds ranking in the 'mid tier' – greyhounds with too many points for Pathways racing but not enough for a normal 5th grade event. A common suggestion was to introduce multiple pathways events at meetings with high nomination levels.

In addition, many participants believed some restrictions should be introduced to ensure as many greyhounds as possible can take part in Pathways events. A minimum point score or points restriction (e.g. 50 – 80 points) was a common suggestion to ensure that a rotating pool of greyhounds were able to take part in Pathways, especially at tracks that receive a lot of nominations.

Scheduling

During the consultation period, many participants identified ways in which the weekly NSW TAB racing schedule could be amended to improve nomination flows.

Examples include:

- Moving Lismore Tuesday night to Wednesday twilight or night
- An additional meeting for Richmond, particularly in a Sunday timeslot
- Bulli moving to Monday night and Nowra switching to Saturday night

GRNSW management cannot currently amend the weekly NSW TAB racing schedule due to race dates having to be submitted to Tabcorp prior to the start of each financial year.

However, GRNSW management will conduct an analysis of all feedback regarding the TAB racing schedule and factor this in when drafting TAB race dates for the 2018/19 racing season.

Long Term Changes

GRNSW management acknowledges that considerable feedback was provided on areas of the industry that dealt with more long term implications. This includes participant education around training methods and responsible breeding, track preparation, the re-homing capabilities of Greyhounds As Pets and the ability of the industry to attract new participants.

While GRNSW management understands the vital importance of these issues, it was deemed that more consideration was needed to be given to each one to determine the best ways in which GRNSW can address them.

All feedback has been provided to the relevant business units within GRNSW and each unit will give the feedback appropriate consideration as work to reform the NSW greyhound racing industry continues.

Next Steps

All industry stakeholders are encouraged to review this discussion paper and the proposed recommendations and provide final feedback.

Feedback on each recommendation can be made by visiting this link:

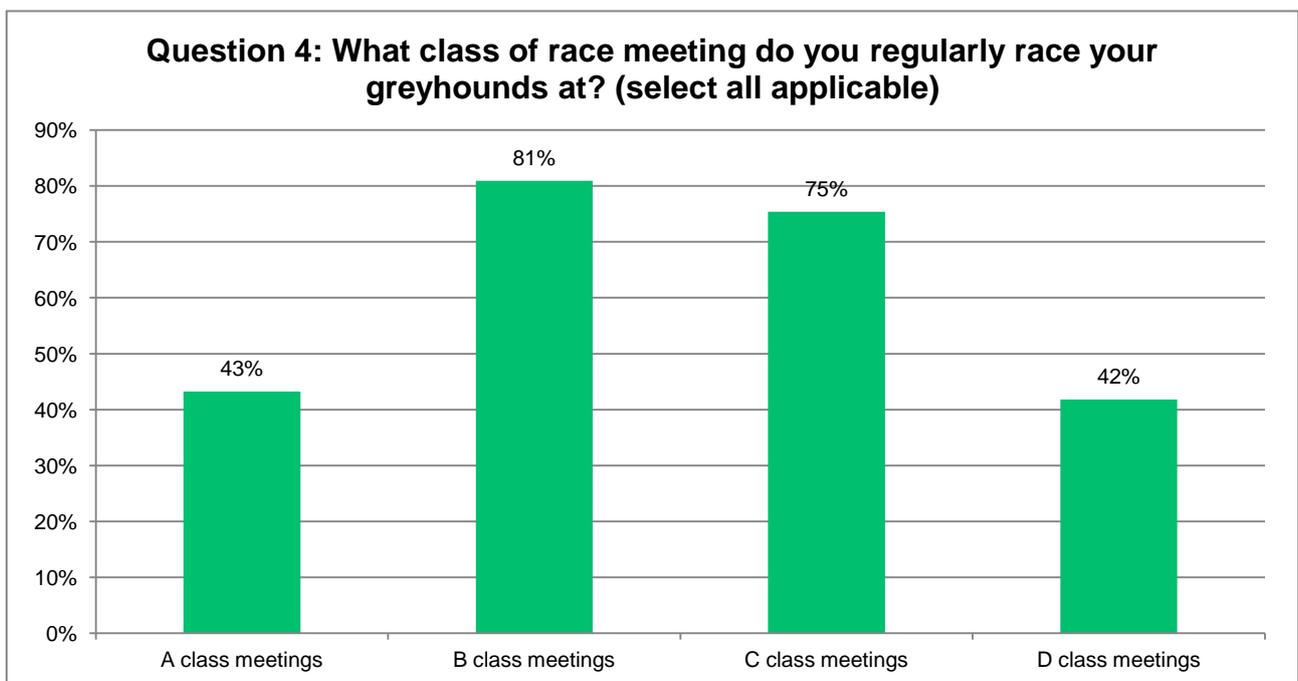
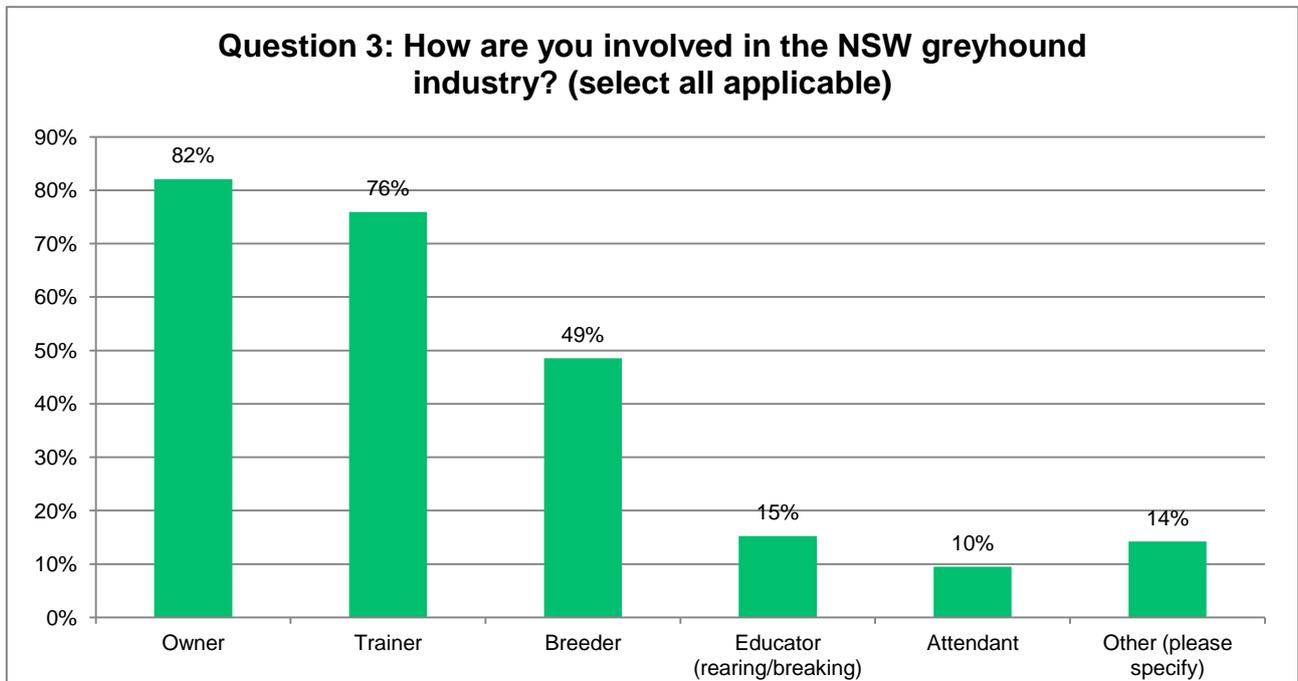
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Feedback needs to be submitted by no later than **5pm, Thursday 23 November.**

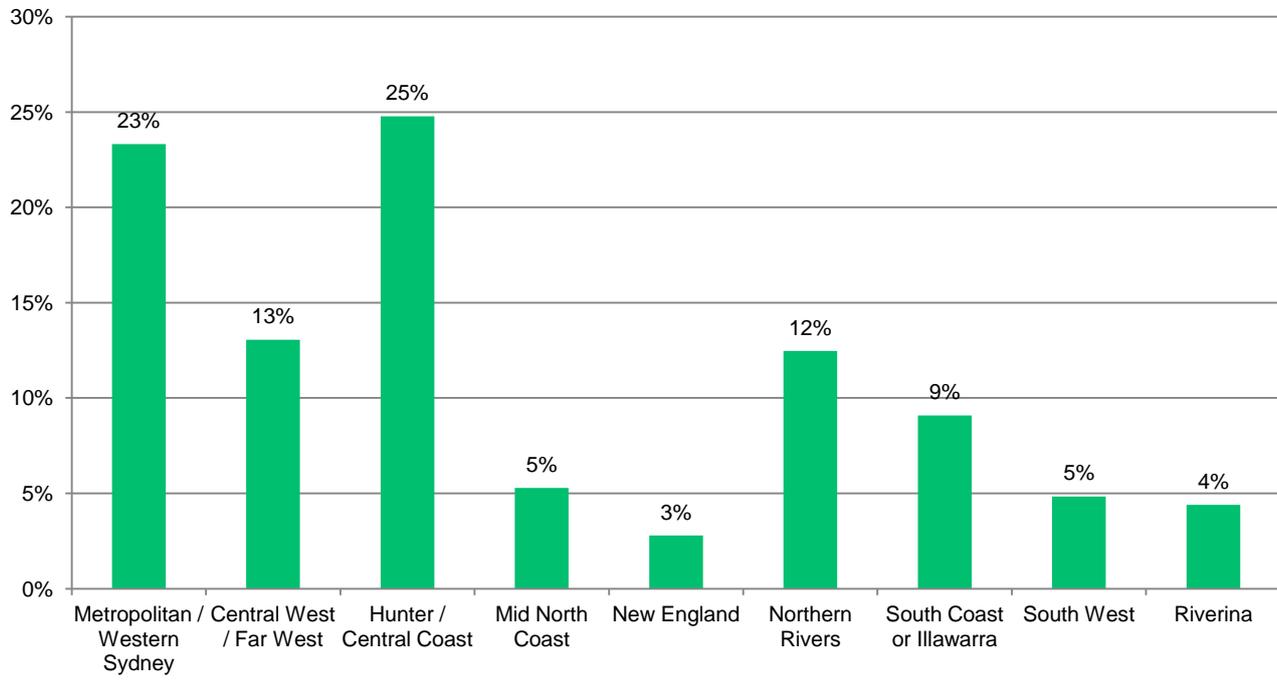
After all the feedback on the draft recommendations is collated and reviewed, the final recommendations will be developed and submitted to the GRNSW Board for approval.

Appendix

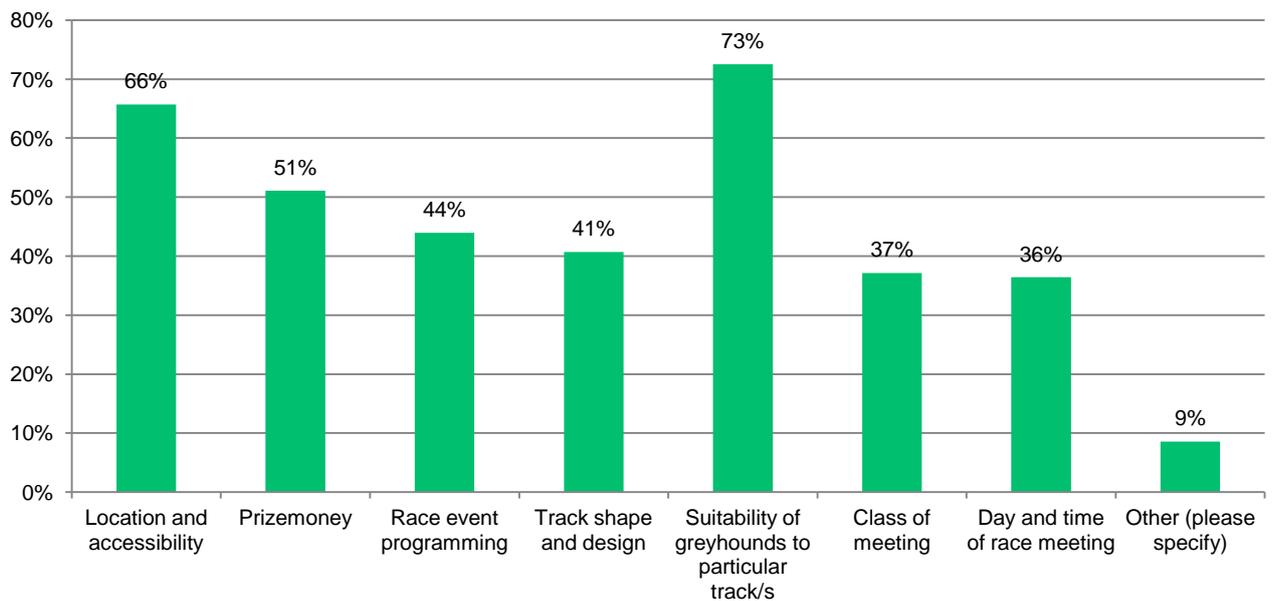
Responses for survey questions that required tick-box responses.



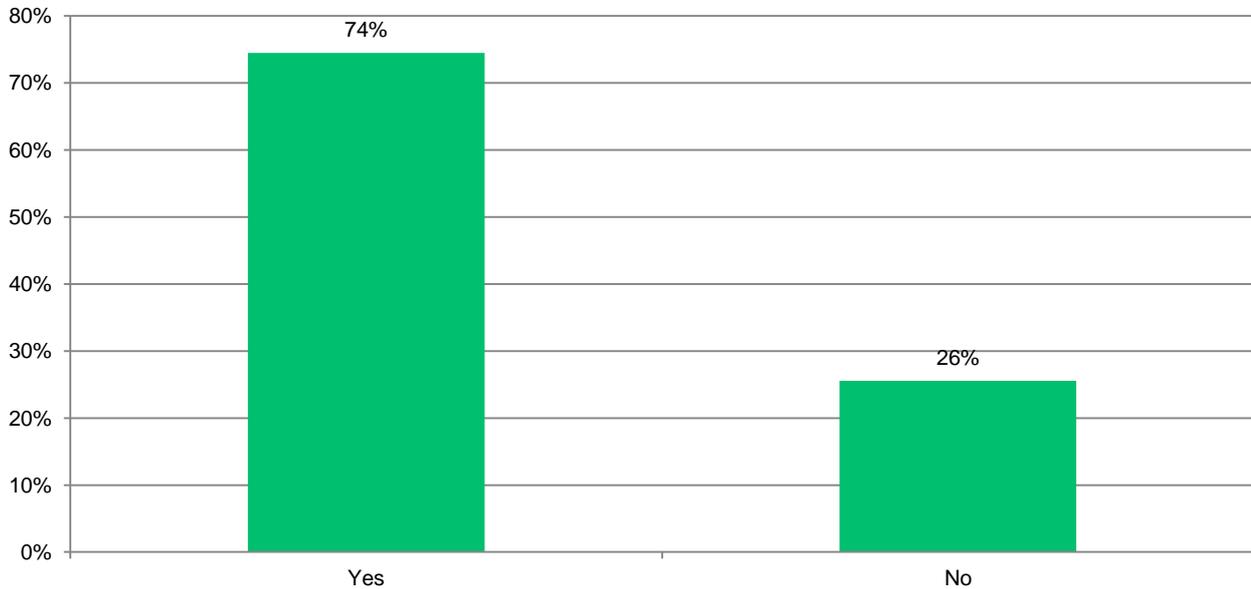
Question 5: In which region of NSW do you reside?



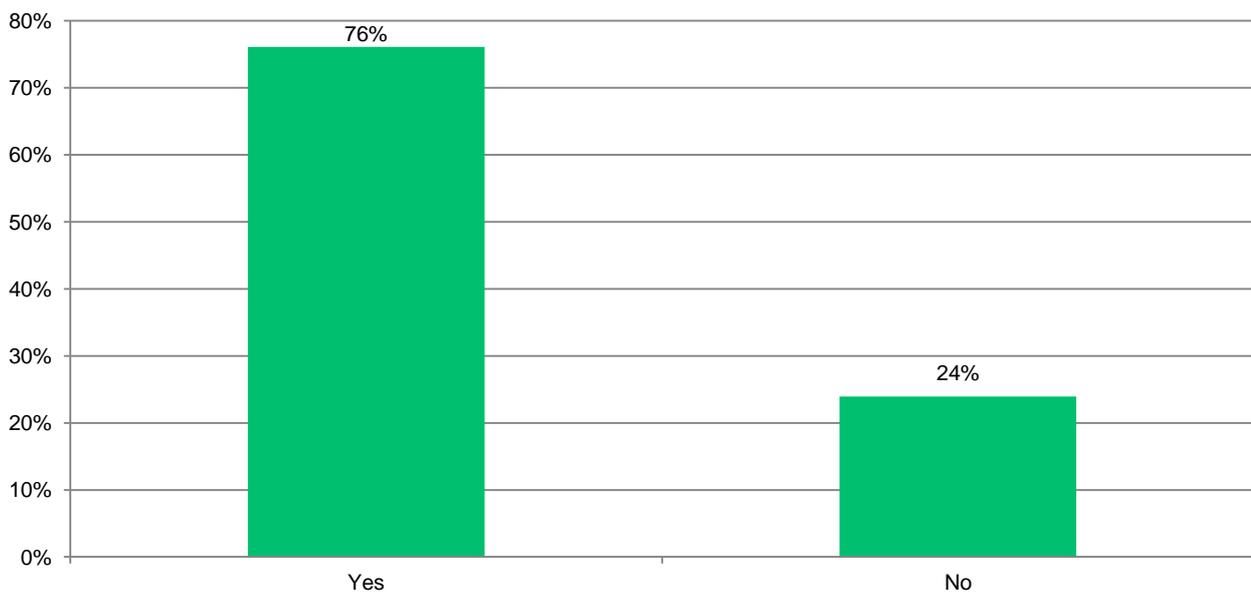
Question 6: What is the biggest influence on what tracks you choose to race your greyhounds at? (select all applicable)



Question 7: In regards to programming and the advertisement of race events, do you feel any particular type or grade of greyhound is being neglected?



Question 11: Do you support the concept of bottom up grading or programming (i.e. Pathways racing) to provide more racing opportunities for less competitive greyhounds?



Question 12: With the racing greyhound population in NSW set to decline over the next few years, how would you like to see GRNSW best manage this potential issue in a responsible manner? (select all applicable)

