



RACING AND WAGERING WESTERN AUSTRALIA

**Submission to the Government of Western Australia  
Review of the *Dog Amendment Act 2013***

**To:** Cat and Dog statutory review  
Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries  
PO Box 8349  
Perth Business Centre WA 6849



## Terms of reference of the submission

The *Dog Amendment Act 2013* commenced five years ago. The Act is now being reviewed to see how effective the changes have been in the control and management of dogs in Western Australia.

The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries has released a consultation paper to gather feedback from the community, local governments and stakeholders about how the 2013 changes are working, whether they have been effective, and to identify any areas that could be improved.

RWWA's submission relates to the breed specific restrictions for companion greyhounds as per the *Dog Act 1976- Part VI- Control of Dogs- Division 1- Dogs Generally Section 33- Special Provision for Greyhounds-* (1) that states; "a greyhound must be muzzled in such a manner as will prevent it from biting a person or animal unless a) it is in or at premises occupied by its owner; or b) it has successfully completed a prescribed training programme".

## About Racing and Wagering Western Australia

Racing and Wagering Western Australia (RWWA) is the governing body of thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing within Western Australia.

RWWA was established on 1 August 2003. RWWA's Charter under the *RWWA Act 2003* is to foster development, promote the welfare and ensure the integrity of metropolitan and country thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing, in the interest of the long-term viability of the racing industry in Western Australia.

RWWA has responsibility for the off-course wagering functions trading as the TAB.

Greyhounds as Pets WA (GAP) is a program of RWWA. GAP's mission is to promote, encourage and facilitate greyhound pet ownership to the wider community through the provision of safe, healthy greyhounds to homes throughout Western Australia.

## Background

It is understood that greyhound associations and some members of the community have advocated for pet greyhounds not to have to be muzzled when in public places, whether the dog has been provided with a 'Green Collar' status or not.

Under *R109 Control of greyhound in public place*, the *RWWA Rules of Greyhound Racing 2008* require that greyhounds which are registered (for racing) are required to be securely muzzled and under the effective control of a competent person by means of a secure leash and collar when in public.

The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries' *Dog Act 1976* and *Dog Amendment Bill 2013* currently also requires retired greyhounds to be muzzled at all times when in public except where they have successfully completed a prescribed training program. Exempt greyhounds are issued with a 'Green Collar' status after passing the National Temperament Testing Assessment.

The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries' through the *Dog Regulations 2013*, prescribes GAP as a training organisation for the purposes of exempting a greyhound from wearing a muzzle in public. GAP is currently the only Western Australian greyhound rehoming group that have able to do so.



The National Temperament Testing Assessment is a behavioural program developed jointly by all official GAP programs around Australia. It was written by a qualified Animal Behaviourist, in conjunction with each State's GAP program.

Historically breed-specific legislation has been used in a number of countries as a means of controlling and reducing dog attacks on humans, other companion animals, livestock and wildlife. Its origins can be dated back to the 1800's when coursing with sighthounds was a common pastime and control measures were required to reduce the risk of attacks on livestock by coursing dogs. Coursing for live prey has since become illegal and although the Western Australian dog control legislation has undergone numerous changes and updated to reflect the changing landscape of companion dog ownership and the responsibilities around control of dogs in public, it still includes breed-specific stipulations relating to pet greyhounds.

The general consensus from a variety of professional bodies in developed countries with high levels of pet ownership such as the Australian Veterinary Association, British Veterinary Association, RSPCA, RSPCA UK and ASPCA is that a breed-specific approach is not effective in tackling and reducing incidences of dog aggression.

### Recommendation

RWWA supports the amending of the *Dog Act 1976* to remove the requirement for the compulsory muzzling of greyhounds who have retired from racing.

However, the current standards of responsible rehoming should still be implemented to mitigate the risks posed by greyhound's not wearing a muzzle, including:

- All greyhounds to remain on a lead in public, including in dog exercise areas
- The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries provides educational support to greyhound owners to improve the monitoring and interpretation of the dogs behaviour
- GAP to continue to responsibly rehome greyhounds and have appropriate behaviour management policies and practices in place to ensure its commitments to the community are met
- Where appropriate, muzzles should still be used as a safety precaution where a greyhound's behaviour may be unpredictable or unknown

Ongoing work is required to refine the above standards to improve risk mitigation. RWWA will continue to do so, including:

- Monitoring the data collected by GAP in other states since the legislation has been changed that has allowed greyhounds to go muzzle free
- Educating GAP adoptees on the responsibility regarding dog control in public
- Providing educational resources for GAP greyhound owners and foster carers

RWWA continues to look for ways to improve the welfare of our greyhounds and we are committed to ensuring the best outcomes for the rehoming of retired greyhounds and upholding the reputation of the breed.

