



**Cassy O'Connor MLC**

Member for Hobart

Tasmanian Greens spokesperson for Animal Justice

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Mr Sean Carroll  
Racing Integrity Commissioner  
[enquiries@racingintegrity.tas.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@racingintegrity.tas.gov.au)

Dear Mr Carroll,

Thank you for providing the opportunity to make a submission to your assessment of the Code of Practice for Racehorse Welfare as it relates to animal accommodation and protection from weather extremes.

I make this submission on behalf of the Tasmanian Greens.

While we welcome this assessment, we regard the reference provided to you by the Minister as too narrow in scope. The Code of Practice was, disappointingly in our view, prepared in haste by TasRacing late last year, prior to your appointment as Commissioner. It needs rewriting, not patchwork repair.

A new mandatory Tasmanian Code of Practice for Racehorse Welfare is required to reflect developments in animal behavioural science and law, and to bring the Tasmanian industry into line with, and preferably surpassing, other comparable jurisdictions, such as the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

## **ACT**

<https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/View/di/2024-11/current/html/2024-11.html>

The **Animal Welfare (Welfare of Horses in the ACT) Mandatory Code of Practice 2024** acknowledges horses are sentient beings 'able to subjectively feel and perceive the world.'

Unlike the current Tasmanian Code, the ACT Code applies more animal welfare focussed mandatory standards, such as allowing horses to display natural behaviours. The Tasmanian Code states the racehorse must be able to, 'express *appropriate* behaviour'.

For housing, shelter structures and yards, the ACT mandatory standards are:

*S6.1 Premises must be designed and maintained to minimise the risk of injury to horses.*

*S6.2 Horses in confinement must have freedom of movement to stand, stretch, turn around, walk forward, lie down and roll.*

*S6.3 Yards and loose boxes must have sufficient room to allow the horse to display natural behaviours, stand freely in the normal position with the head fully raised, walk forward and turn, lie down, roll, stretch and groom themselves without restrictions.*

*S6.4 Appropriate clean bedding must be provided in stables and loose boxes for warmth, insulation and protection from abrasion.*

*S6.5 Horses must have access to appropriate and sufficient shade and shelter at all times.*

*S6.6 Horses must not be kept in stalls, stables or other small, confined spaces on a permanent basis, see S6.1 and G6.4.*

*S6.7 Adequate firefighting equipment should be available and easy to access. Persons in charge of stabled horses should be trained and practised in use of firefighting equipment. There should be ready access to horses to enable them to be released or relocated quickly in case of fire.*

The guidelines in the ACT Code are significantly more robust than those in Tasmania's.

While there are some similarities, the Tasmania Code does not include, for example, horses having access to a number of paddocks to allow social grouping. This again reinforces the industry focus of the current Code.

### **ACT Guidelines**

*G6.1 Housing horses in stables is not likely to meet the full spectrum of horses' behavioural and social needs. If stabling is used, provision of exercise, time out at pasture, a high fibre diet, social interaction (such as allowing these horses to see other horses), and stimulation through environmental enrichment may reduce stress, boredom and the risk of stereotypic behaviour, and should be provided.*

*G6.2 Stable design should allow a horse to achieve visual contact with other horses, humans and activities in the stable surroundings.*

*G6.3 Buildings where horses are housed should be constructed and maintained so as to provide adequate security and minimise risk of injury and disease.*

*G6.4 Stables, stalls, loose boxes and other structures where horses are housed should have sufficient lighting to permit inspection of a horse.*

*G6.5 The floors of yards and structures where horses are housed should have surfaces that permit adequate drainage and provide firm and even footing for horses.*

*G6.6 All housing should give adequate natural ventilation. Air vents on opposite sides of the structure are preferred. Dust levels in stables and stalls should be kept to a minimum to reduce the risk of respiratory disease.*

*G6.7 Horses should be accommodated singly if in loose boxes and tied if in stalls. During weaning it is acceptable to have two weanlings together in a loose box.*

*G6.8 Dirty bedding and stale or contaminated feed and water should be removed each day. Disposal of washings, urine and manure should be made in compliance with the requirements of statutory authorities.*

*G6.9 Paddocks and yards should be kept free of potentially harmful plants, rubbish and debris that may injure horses.*

*G6.10 Healthy horses can tolerate a wide variation of heat and cold if they are acclimatised and have adequate feed and water. However, steps should be taken to minimise the effects of climatic extremes and other factors producing either cold or heat stress. Young foals, very old, or sick horses are most susceptible.*

*G6.11 Landscape features, such as rows of trees, hedges, and gullies, can provide some shelter for horses.*

*G6.12 The risk of injury increases where horses are overcrowded and competition for food, water and space leads to aggressive behaviour.*

*G6.13 Shelter should provide protection from hot, cold, windy and wet conditions.*

*G6.14 Horses should have access to an adequate number of paddocks or yards to permit animals of similar age, sex, size or compatible temperament to be grouped, see S1.2*

*G6.15 Loose-boxes for horses should provide a floor area of at least 12 square metres (9 square metres for ponies) and be at least 2.4 metres high for horses and ponies.*

The Greens urge you to consider these guidelines against those in the current Tasmanian Code.

## The International Federation of Horseracing Authorities (IFHA)

[https://ifhaonline.org/resources/IFHA\\_Minimum\\_Welfare\\_Guidelines.PDF](https://ifhaonline.org/resources/IFHA_Minimum_Welfare_Guidelines.PDF)

The definition of horse welfare in the IFHA Minimum Horse Welfare Guidelines of June 2023 is:

‘.. the physical and mental state of a horse in relation to the conditions in which it lives and dies. A horse experiences good welfare if it is health, comfortable, well-nourished, safe, is not suffering from unpleasant states such as pain, fear and distress, and is able to express behaviours that are important for its physical and mental wellbeing, that is, it experiences “**a life worth living**”.

The guidelines cite the “Five Domains Model” of animal welfare, with the aim to “reduce avoidable negative experiences and ensure horses enjoy a “life worth living” at all stages of life”.

The Five Domains are:

1. Nutrition – enough water and food, balanced and varied diet
2. Environment – comfortable and safe environment
3. Health – wellbeing and fitness, injuries and ailments appropriately treated
4. Behaviour – able to express natural and rewarding behaviours
5. Mental or affective state – comfortable in environment, sociable contact and bonding with other animals, close bond between horse and human.

The mandatory Tasmanian Code of Practice for Racehorse Welfare needs to similarly reflect these principles to ensure – while there is an industry in Lutruwita/Tasmania – all racehorses here have a life worth living.

### Best practice standards

As you know, under the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024*, it is the role of the independent Racing Integrity Commissioner to:

*S.9 (1) (k) to make best practice Standards that provide for any matter relating or incidental to the conduct of racing (including but not limited to integrity in the racing industry and animal welfare) and to monitor, review, and give advice and make recommendations in relation to the implementation of, and compliance with, those Standards*

The Greens were pleased to have the support of Parliament in amending the Act’s original provision to ensure any standards developed are best practice.

While there are varying definitions of 'best practice', in the Oxford Public International Law journal, the term 'best practices' refers to a [soft law](#) method of addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges by providing exemplary models for future action.

Applied to contemporary animal welfare law and regulation, mandatory best practice standards would not only work to prevent cruelty, mistreatment and neglect, they would also acknowledge animal sentience, as well as the intrinsic value and rights of animals.

Horses are sentient animals, with feelings and capable of feeling pain, pleasure, hunger, thirst, warmth, joy, comfort and excitement. For too long and to this day, the law has treated and mistreated these animals as things or possessions, to be owned, and – as it is with the modern racing industry – discarded once they cost more to feed and home than they make on the track.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-10-17/the-dark-side-of-the-horse-racing-industry/11614022>

### **The current Code of Practice**

The current Code of Practice for the welfare of racehorses is not best practice nor in line with community expectations that are heightened after years of scandal and cruelty in the industry.

It sets out the very bare minimum of standards, with the focus more on industry convenience and needs than on the genuine welfare of horses.

We encourage you to reset its balance in recognition of the intrinsic value and rights of racehorses. While we understand you are not examining the full scope of the current Code at this stage, we trust you will, in time.

Tasmania's harness and thoroughbred racing industry must be regulated by a genuine best practice Code of Practice, with robust, mandatory animal welfare standards, for as long the industry lasts in the face of its declining support and loss of social license.

Thank you for the work you have done to date to restore a measure of integrity and higher animal welfare standards to the industry.

Yours sincerely,



**Cassy O'Connor MLC**

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Spokesperson for Animal Justice