

A NEW GENERATION OF FEMALE TRAINERS AND LEADERS IS EMERGING

Women making big strides in the sport

Michael Cowley

WOMEN around the world celebrated International Women's Day on Sunday, March 8, and according to Hayley Searl right now is an empowering time to be a woman involved in NSW greyhound racing.

The 21-year-old who recently was awarded the Young Achiever of the Year at the Greyhound Racing NSW Annual Awards, has been a part of the industry since her formative years.

She's on the industry's front line working with the Shoalhaven Club in Nowra and is a member of the Young Participant Panel who see the sport from a younger perspective and provide ideas and feedback for the future to the governing body.

"There's a real surge in women in the sport at the moment. It's like women are the face of greyhound racing in NSW at the minute," Hayley said.

"If you look back a couple years ago, you didn't see that, but it's so encouraging as a young woman in the sport, to see the path the sport has taken.

"We now have these female trainers winning massive races too, and to see that is a real confidence boost for all young women in the sport and those wanting to get involved.

"Growing up there were heaps of kids around me, my age, who were interested in dogs, and only the boys that I grew up with stuck with it.

"But now to see so many young females coming in, it's crazy.

"When I first started working at the tracks, I was the only young person around and to now see so many young people and so many females working at tracks,

and training and handling dogs it is truly empowering."

Family brought Hayley into the sport. Many years ago, her mother Donnaleah Carter received a call from her brother Shane needing help.

Shane owned a greyhound which was ready to whelp a litter, and he was overseas with the peace-keeping forces.

From that litter, Donnaleah fell in love, and, as Hayley puts it, "our empire was started".

Having spent many Monday nights as a child at the Nowra track, a teenage Hayley approached Club Manager Glenn Midson asking for work.

The following week she started.

She has progressed to now be kennel supervisor at the club, taking the place of her mentor Lorraine Curry who "taught me everything," Hayley said. Lorraine left the role last year.

Hayley also worked as a starter and swabber at Dapto before its closure in 2025.

While she is unable to hold a trainer's licence as she swabs greyhounds at Nowra meetings, Hayley spends a lot of her time preparing dogs raced by her mother and one in particular, Ameena's Meraki, holds a special place in her life.

"Meraki means putting your soul, love and passion into your work," she said.

"I was 15 when I picked the name and it was important because this was

going to be the first dog I could actually put real time into. It was very fitting for me and her.

"We went through a lot together and I've decided I will hang up my swabbing licence to be able to pursue having a litter with her.

"We've had four or five generations of the same bloodline, and I want to get out there and have my name next to the dog.

"I went and bought myself a Shimmer Shine straw and now I'm waiting for my girl to come on season. This will be my first venture on my own into the big racing world."

When her name was called as the winner of the Young Achiever Award, Hayley was in disbelief.

"Totally shocked," she said.

"Honestly it means the world to me. It just really proves all the sleepless nights and hours that I've put into Nowra as a track and put into spending time with the youth panel, it actually makes it all worthwhile.

"We've got a small kennel, we breed our own dogs.

"I'm not winning any big races or anything, and still to get recognised for the work that I do and what I do for greyhound racing in general, it's so special.

"I guess it also shows that there are places in the industry and in the sport for young people and young women.

"I work with a bunch of fantastic women at Nowra

and I also did at Dapto and I've met some powerhouse women in the sport.

"Women are truly doing amazing things in greyhound racing right now and I'm proud to be a part of that.

"And also, to be a part of the Young Participants Panel; it's an amazing group with so many people from so many different walks of life as well, all with many different point of views on the industry.

"Some of the ideas and some of the passion behind the projects that we've got going on, if we can get some of our ideas and projects over the line, it could be nearly revolutionary.

"It could really step up the game."



A jubilant Hayley Searl collecting the Young Achiever of the Year award at the GRNSW Annual Awards. Picture Ross Schultz

Iconic new sponsor for the prestigious Golden Easter Egg

NEWS FROM AROUND THE NSW REGIONS

THE name Wheeler can be found in three places in the illustrious honour roll of the Golden Easter Egg, one of NSW greyhound racing's greatest races.

Regardless of who wins the race in 2026, the name Wheeler will remain synonymous with the Easter Egg, with the announcement that the Wheeler Kennels will sponsor the Group One event next month.

The late Paul Wheeler and his wife Jan won the Egg with

Radley Bale in 2011, Grigorieva Bale in 2013, and the legendary Fernando Bale in 2015, and the NSW Greyhound Breeders, Owners and Trainers Association have announced this year's event will be known as the Wheeler Kennels Golden Easter Egg.

"I discussed it with [my son] Brendan, and while we don't sell a product, and there is no benefit to us in any way, it's not about that, it's about giving back to the industry for what they've given us," Jan said.

"We both agreed it was what we wanted to do."

Heats of the Wheeler Kennels Golden Easter Egg will be held on March 28, with four semi-finals the following week on April 4. The \$300,000 to the winner final will be run at Wentworth Park on Saturday, April 11.

New WP record

It was a record which stood for more than a decade, but yet again last week the Wentworth Park track record was lowered.

Back in April 2014 Shakey Jakey - having his first race

start - set the track record at 29.07 seconds. It stood until October 2024 when another young dog called Dalwhinnie would run 29.04 seconds.

In September 2025, Cumbrina Jack equalled Dalwhinnie's mark, then on March 5, 2026, Mark Gatt's Jungle Johnny came out running and stopped the clock at 29.00 seconds.

GRNSW auction

Greyhound Racing NSW (GRNSW) has finalised a date for its 2026 Puppy Auction, with the Richmond Race Club to again host the

event on June 28, 2026.

Full details can be found at thedogs.com.au/the-dogs/puppy-auction/nomination.

Once again there will be a race series attached to this year's auction, the 2027 GRNSW Puppy Classic Race Series, with all pups sold through the 2026 GRNSW Puppy Auction eligible for the series. It will consist of three regional heats and finals varying in distances from 300 to 500 metres. These finals will be worth \$10,000 to the winner and an addition will be that each se-

ries will carry a \$500 Breeder's Bonus for all greyhounds nominated (limited to one payment per greyhound) in the series.

A Major Final at more than 500 metres will then be held with \$150,000 in total prize pool made up of \$100,000, \$25,000 for second, \$12,500 for third, \$4,000 for fourth and \$100 for fifth to eighth. Each of the finalists will also earn their breeder a \$1000 bonus.

Another addition in 2027 will be the GRNSW Puppy Classic Race Series Bonus.