

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Wednesday, 6 February 2019

### **GRV Media Release – Gippsland Carnival to reach a thrilling finale at Cranbourne Cup**

Australia's biggest country greyhound series comes to an exciting conclusion Saturday (February 9) with the running of the Spolly's Syndications Group 2 Cranbourne Cup.

The third annual Gippsland Carnival has succeeded in drawing huge crowds to the Gippsland region and has quickly become a highlight of the Victorian Greyhound Racing calendar.

This year's series consisted of three country cups beginning with the Sale Cup on Boxing Day, before moving to the Warragul Cup on 12 January. As well as a host of other events including the inaugural Warragul Calcutta on heats night, a family fun day, food truck festival at Sale and the Australia day at Sale event.

The 45th Cranbourne Cup will be the final highlight of the series with the first and second placegetters from last weekend's heats producing a spectacular field to compete for the \$47,000 top prize.

The qualifiers include three Cranbourne-trained greyhounds, including Pearcedale trainer Seona Thompson's two greyhounds Azkaban and Poke the Bear; Thompson is the only trainer with multiple greyhounds in the final.

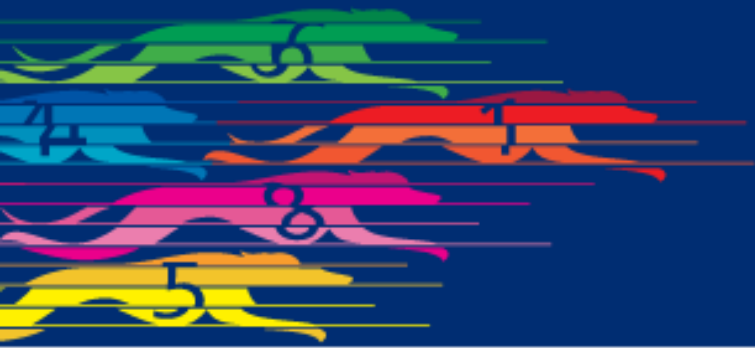
Poke the Bear is looking for redemption from Box 2 after finishing third in the 2018 Cranbourne Cup; he is currently Australia's premier sprinter and if he wins will surpass \$500,000 in prizemoney.

Thompson's other sprinter, Azkaban, is also on a winning streak having won his last three races. This is his first country cup final, but he is no stranger to victory having won last year's Victorian Cup on Cranbourne Cup night.

The fastest heat time was set by Orson Allen, who clocked in just .01sec from the track record set by Pop the Cork in 2016; this exceptional greyhound, trained by 25-year-old Correy Grenfell, is one of Australia's most decorated sprinters and is a country cup regular.

In contrast, winning the Cranbourne Cup would be a career highlight for trainers Ian Brown, Michelle Nolan, Paul Abela and Graham James.

Ian Brown's greyhound, Wears Woodleigh, may be the least experienced in the field with just 19 starts, but he showed a huge display of power in his heats when he jumped last out of the boxes and used the outside track to storm into second one length behind powerful contender, Poke the Bear.



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Michelle Nolan is a nurse by trade and Hightan is her first greyhound to make it to a country cup final; Hightan, the other Cranbourne trained greyhound and only female in the race, is on a career high after five consecutive victories leading to the Cup.

Paul Abela is also hoping to find a country cup victory after his greyhound, Huxley, maintained an early lead in his heat despite being chased by star duo Blue Striker and Hasten Slowly. Peter Akathiotis' Blue Striker was second in the heat; this consistent racer has placed 19 from 20 starts.

Finally, Gippsland trainer, Graham James, is keen for a group win after his greyhound Sure to Excite placed fourth at the Carnival's Warragul Cup last month.

In addition to the exciting 520m Cranbourne Cup final, the night will also feature the \$10,000 Rams Security Victoria Cup (699m) and the \$5000 TAB Van Echteld (311m).

Across the 2018/2019 Gippsland Carnival series there has been a series of bonus prizes for trainers. On the night, five lucky trainers across the entire race field for each of the cup evenings will each walk away with \$1000 worth of Coles Myers gift cards.

As with the rest of the Gippsland Carnival, the Cranbourne Cup will be a great night of entertainment for the whole family with spectacular racing, live-music from Bosley, free kids' activities, dining and bar options including the Trackside Party Paddock, where you can meet Dane Swan, former Collingwood AFL player.

Entry is free from 5pm.

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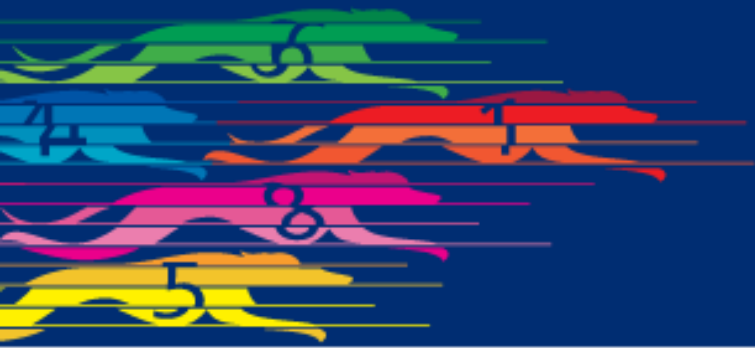
### **\$47,000 Cranbourne Cup**

Saturday, 9 February; 520 metres

1. Wears Woodleigh, Ian Brown (Loch)
2. Poke the Bear, Seona Thompson(Pearcedale)
3. Orson Allen, Correy Grenfell (Avalon)
4. Hightan, Michelle Nolan (Devon Meadows)
5. Huxley, Paul Abela (Parwan)
6. Blue Striker, Peter Akathiotis (Reservoir)
7. Azkaban, Seona Thompson (Pearcedale)
8. Sure To Excite, Graham James (Woodleigh)

### **Reserves**

9. Hasten Slowly, Angela Langton (Anakie)
10. Dyna Chancer, Correy Grenfell (Avalon)



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**For media inquiries please contact:**

Luke Holmesby | Public Affairs Manager, Strategic Communication | 0478 473 570 |

[lhomesby@grv.org.au](mailto:lhomesby@grv.org.au)