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THE PARLIAMENTARY JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART ON FRIDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2025.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON GREYHOUND RACING TRANSITION

The Committee met at 9 a.m.

CHAIR (Ms Johnston) - Welcome to today's hearing of the Joint Standing Committee on Greyhound Racing Transition and thank you very much for your attendance. I'd just like to introduce the members of our committee today who we have here. We have the member for Nelson, Meg Webb; the member for Hobart, Cassy O'Connor; myself, Kristie Johnston, the Independent member for Clark; the member for McIntyre, Tania Rattray; the member for Franklin, Dean Winter; and the other member for Clark, Marcus Vermey.

We might go along the table, if we can start with you, Mr Gatehouse, if you wouldn't mind please stating your name and the capacity in which you are appearing before the committee?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yes, my name is Luke Gatehouse. I am the executive officer to the three clubs here in Tasmania.

Mr NEWSON - I am John Newson, I am the Chairman of the Launceston Greyhound Racing Club.

Mr CLARK - Ben Clark from Greyhounds Tasmania.

Ms ROBINS - I am Claire Robins; I am the Vice Chair of the Hobart Greyhound Racing Club.

Mr ENGLUND - Ben Englund and I am the Chair of the North West Greyhound Racing Club.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, everyone. Can I please confirm that you have received and read the guide sent to you by the committee secretary?

WITNESSES - Yes.

CHAIR - This hearing is covered by parliamentary privilege, allowing individuals to speak with freedom without fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place out of parliament. This protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside the parliamentary proceedings.

This is a public hearing and the public and media may be present. Should you wish aspects of your evidence to be heard in private, you must make this request to the committee at the time.

Mr BENJAMIN JOHN ENGLUND, CHAIR, NORTH WEST GREYHOUND RACING CLUB, **Ms CLAIRE LOUISE ROBINS**, VICE CHAIRMAN, HOBART GREYHOUND RACING CLUB, **Mr LUKE GATEHOUSE**, EXECUTIVE OFFICER, GREYHOUNDS TASMANIA, **Mr JOHN SYDNEY NEWSON**, CHAIR, LAUNCESTON RACING CLUB,

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Mr BEN CHARLES CLARK, GREYHOUNDS TASMANIA WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION, AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. I would like to invite you to make an opening statement. I'm not sure if one or all of you would like to make a statement, but please feel free.

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yes, we'd like a few of us to make some statements and I will hand over to Ben.

Mr CLARK - Thank you very much. It would be dishonest for me to say that we welcome the opportunity to appear before this committee, given the terms of reference are designed to dismantle our industry that many have dedicated our lives to. Many Tasmanians have a long association with greyhounds and are distressed by this decision. Although I know some members of the committee believe your role is merely to implement this decision, I would hope that you provide us with some leeway to outline our concerns regarding the decision itself, particularly given that there was no public debate on this matter prior to the Premier's announcement.

Although some would argue that there's been ongoing debate about the issues facing greyhound racing, there's no discussion or consultation by the government about the merits of the decision prior to it being taken. On the contrary, the Premier gave written guarantees to the future of all three racing codes just days before the recent election. This has meant this has been our first opportunity in a formal setting for greyhound representatives to address the situation that we now face.

It has been said that we have been unwilling to engage and respond to requests for involvement of the consideration of this issue: I would like to clarify our position to avoid any ongoing issues.

Firstly, having not been consulted at all about the Premier's backflip on greyhound racing, it is not at all surprising the initial reaction of shock, anger and frustration. The greyhound racing community sees this decision as betrayal - pure and simple.

Secondly, to then not to be asked to be part of the consultative structure about the implementation of the decision that has not yet been legislated by the parliament was seen as pre-emptive of the diplomatic process. Given the ban is proposed to take effect in mid-2029, almost four years away, it was reasonable to expect that some consultation would occur prior to the legislation being introduced. In fact, given the timelines for implementation, we expect there would be an exposure draft circulated, consultation scheduled, expert evidence gathered and economic and other impact statements completed prior to this legislation being debated.

Not only has this not occurred, but the draft bill has been intended for implementation on 1 January 2026. This makes it clear that the government's intention for the bill to be fully debated and considered in the next two weeks. We put to the community members that greyhound racing has been an important part of the Tasmanian society for almost a century. To legislate its demise on such a timeframe is just unreasonable, particularly when the Premier's announcement was without any public debate or consideration.

Mr GATEHOUSE - Thank you. I will hand over to Ms Robins.

Ms ROBINS - We all share the concerns that have been raised regarding the importance of animal welfare, but we want to assure you that the overwhelming majority of Tasmanians involved with greyhounds love the animals that they work with and care for. For many of us, greyhound racing is not just a job, it's a way of life.

That's why we supported the government's reform program that resulted in the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024*. We endorsed the minister's comments at the time, that the reform process is central to restoring faith across all three codes. We welcomed the commitment to developing and improving animal welfare.

The new Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner took office on 1 February and began the implementation process. This included the establishment of an Integrity and Animal Welfare Advisory Committee to advise the commissioner on animal welfare, biosecurity and integrity matters. The Premier's announcement to ban greyhound racing was just six months later. Surely, more time was needed to assess the impacts of these reforms.

Greyhound racing has the most comprehensive veterinary and injury reporting of any animal-based industry. Every scratch, bruise and abrasion occurring on race day is recorded by regulatory veterinarians. We have seen some awful injuries that have taken place when greyhounds race, and all of our hearts go out to the animals affected and their owners. However, we also need to remember that such incidences, while tragic, are very rare. Minor injuries that may rule a dog out from racing for a week or two were about 80 per cent of the injuries occurring during 2024-25. Injury rates have been trending down in Tasmania over the last few years, clear evidence that we have been getting our house in order. Yes, rates will jump around - nothing is linear - that's also because we're talking about quite small numbers. Data also shows that Tasmania had the second lowest injury rate amongst all Australian states in 2024-25, at 2.34 per cent, with only Western Australia lower. Our on-track euthanasia rate per 1000 starters was the third lowest in the nation, at 0.17, less than two unfortunate fatalities from almost 12,000 starters. But we can do better, and we are committed to doing so.

This is all evidence of Tasmanian greyhound racing embracing the government's commitment to animal welfare and working to improve those outcomes.

Mr GATEHOUSE - I'd like to go next and talk about funding to the committee. Prior to the state government selling it off, all three racing codes were substantially funded by TOTE Tasmania. The state government created Tasracing and put it in charge of racing administration and made TOTE Tasmania a strictly wagering operation. This was the basis for the establishment of the funding model via the deed. They then moved to sell the TOTE. At that time, the racing industry opposed the sale of TOTE, and a review of *Hansard* highlights that many who opposed the sale were concerned that it would create tensions about the ongoing funding for racing. Unfortunately, that is exactly what has happened.

The deed has ensured all three racing codes have been able to operate with financial certainty and stability. It has allowed them to plan ahead, maintain tracks, offer competitive prize money and invest in future development. All three codes rely on the funding deed to maintain their viability. In fact, greyhound racing receives the smallest component of public funding of the three racing codes. We received less than 20 per cent of the public funding, yet we are responsible for 39 per cent of the commercial wagering on Tasmanian product, which in 2024-25 was in excess of \$280 million.

It's been said that greyhound racing benefits by around \$7.5 million in public funding: money that could be used to fund hospitals, schools or other vital services. This is inaccurate and it's quite simplistic. We don't know what the impact will be if greyhound racing is banned, and that's what our concern is. For example, Tasracing has confirmed that \$8.1 million was collected in race field revenue fees for greyhound racing in the last financial year. This revenue source will disappear if greyhound racing is banned. Sponsorship and broadcasting agreements will also potentially lose a significant part of their value. Those who think there will be an economic windfall for the state as a result of this proposed ban do not understand the complex, interwoven finances at work in Tasmanian racing. It's a small, three-code operation and it's basically a three-legged stool. Take one leg away and we don't know what the impact will be on the other two, which may fall into the narrative of those who oppose racing.

In addition, direct and indirect taxation generated through greyhound racing will be severely impacted as a result of this ban. A study undertaken on behalf of Greyhounds Australasia pointed to a total tax take of almost \$16 million and a \$10 million net benefit to the state of Tasmania in taxation alone. While we concede that some of this will still be collected, there is no doubt that there will be an impact, and it will be worth millions.

All of this points to the urgent need to conduct a thorough review of the economic impact of this ban, before the decision is made, not after the decision is made. Frankly, we would have expected it to be done prior to, and we're quite shocked that Tasmanian racing has said that they will do that next year after the horse has bolted, so to say. I'll hand over to Mr Englund.

Mr ENGLUND - I'd like to speak about the rushing of the bill. Both minister Howlett and the Racing Integrity Commissioner were asked why the bill should be passed this year and the reasons given were: the transition plan cannot be developed without legislation; the rules of racing that currently govern and protect many aspects of behaviour diminish in value over time as you implement a phase out; preparing a budget bid for 2026-27 will require legislative certainty to properly assess what monies are required; and industry participants need certainty in order to plan for the end of greyhound racing.

It's clear that the transition plan will evolve over time. The commissioner made that point: commencing the development of a transition plan that will itself continue to be reviewed, adjusted and updated is not effectively constrained while the legislation is properly debated and considered. In fact, key issues may well be exposed and highlighted through the parliamentary process. The diminishing of the effectiveness of the rules of racing may well be an issue in the longer-term, but not in the first few months whilst the greyhound racing industry is fully functional. The whole point of a staged introduction of such a change is to allow time for matters to adjust and avoid massive disruption.

The newly implemented *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act*, which captures the rules of racing, will still have an authority and it will be up to the commissioner to ensure the rules are applied. That is his job.

Preparing a budget bid will not be restrained by allowing proper parliamentary scrutiny and debate. With all due respect, the commissioner has had a range of issues that he still needs information about. At worst, it may be required, then adjusted or late bid is necessary. Governments continually have to deal with expenditure measures outside of the normal process when required.

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The concern for the greyhound industry participants, we believe, is genuine. However, we want to assure the committee that the people who we represent and have been dealing with in the aftermath of the Premier's announcement do not want this legislation rushed through parliament. They are angry and frustrated. They want the concerns of the industry debated and for there to be proper and thorough canvassing of the issues.

To be frank, most of our people are offended at the suggestion that this legislation should be pushed through in a couple of weeks for their own good. They would rather the merits of this issue be debated and that their representatives reconsider this decision. A few more weeks or months of uncertainty is a small price to pay.

CHAIR - Thank you very much for providing your opening statements. I want to, at the outset, acknowledge this is the first opportunity you've had to come and present formally. I know you've obviously made public comments, but this is the first opportunity you've had had to present to members of parliament, in particular. I acknowledge that and thank you for your time today.

If perhaps I can go to you first, Ben, around your opening comments and talking about that first opportunity and the lack of consultation. You talked about the inability to participate in the consultative panel. Can I ask a bit more about that? I understand that the Racing Integrity Commissioner put a public advertisement out asking for members of the advisory group. Did he write to members, to the clubs individually, or perhaps to members, inviting them to participate in the advisory group that he advertised publicly in, I think, all three regional papers?

Mr CLARK - Basically, any consultation that he sort of wanted, we felt that we would put the white flag up if we went straight there. We were exposed to the draft bill the morning of it being stated by the Premier and the minister in parliament. There was basically no consultation whatsoever. We asked for certain things to get a feel for it and represent our participants the best we could, but the decision was already made. We weren't going to be part of something that was going to be the demise of us until we got appropriate information, which we're still waiting for.

Mr GATEHOUSE - If I can add to that, we responded to commissioner Carroll and we did not accept, and we put this in writing and we are happy to table that should you wish to. We don't accept the premise of a transition and the formation of the transition working party prior to there being any legislation to discuss. The words of 'we refuse consultation' have been used and that is not correct. We have said as soon as there is a bill to be consulted on, we are happy to consult on that. We don't think getting the bill two hours before it was tabled in an information briefing was consultation. That was a briefing.

The commissioner's working party had no input into the bill either. They first saw the bill on 29 October, which was the week before the bill was tabled. They were not consulted on the bill either. The bill was written by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment with, I believe, some input from the commissioner. That is it.

CHAIR - Thank you. And certainly it might be useful to have that letter tabled, if that's okay with you, just for the record, so that we can be really clear about the language that's used. Because obviously, that's really important when we're talking about this. I might open it up for questions.

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Mr WINTER - I will start by saying thank you and echo what the Chair said, which is the first opportunity you've had publicly to outline as part of this so-called process, which is more of a sham, really, unfortunately for you. I've asked this several times over the last couple of weeks of the Minister why the government is shutting down greyhound racing. She's been unable to tell me.

I will start with you, Mr Gatehouse, but happy for anyone to answer the question. At any point has anyone from the government, Tasracing, or the commissioner told you why the government is shutting down greyhound racing? Has there been a rationale provided to you?

Mr GATEHOUSE - No.

Mr WINTER - Have you asked the question?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Many times.

Mr WINTER - What sort of engagement has there been with the government from participants around this question? Has anyone been given any information?

Mr ENGLUND - We're yet to hear from the government on any matters surrounding this legislation.

Mr WINTER - So, we have an industry that's been going on for almost 100 years. Mr Englund, you received a letter on 17 July telling you that the government was committed to support the longevity and sustainability of the racing industry, which generates \$208 million. They provide you that on 17 July and, from that point in time, you have never been told a rational reason as to why the government has changed its position 180 degrees?

Mr ENGLUND - No, we have not.

Mr WINTER - Have you asked anyone?

Mr ENGLUND - We really haven't been given the opportunity yet, because there's been no consultation about this issue whatsoever. It's been hard to ask the question when we can't raise them.

Mr WINTER - Can I ask a broad, personal question? How's this made you feel personally, and the community you represent, and the clubs that you represent? Maybe starting with you, Mr Englund? How's this made you feel?

Mr ENGLUND - We're absolutely devastated and completely shocked and feel betrayed because, as you said, the letter that I received on behalf of all Liberal candidates, we thought we were pretty confident once we received that letter. So, we're just absolutely devastated.

Mr WINTER - Unfortunately, you represent a club that's been let down a few times with the North West tracks that you were promised, you were ripped out of an operating racetrack at Devonport. You know, you were operating fine as a pretty successful club, ripped out and promised a new track, so it's been a few years now of uncertainty. You're representing a club

that, unfortunately, doesn't really have a home at the moment. Can you take the committee through the impact that's had on participants and the club over the last few years?

Mr ENGLUND - Well, the real impact on participants is just the time impact on their lives. They're expected to travel all over the state now to do what we could do in Devonport. We were promised many times that we would get a new racing facility on the North West Coast. The Minister actually attended our kennels and said that we would definitely get one, but after three tries it never happened. We just feel really let down. This is just another let down from the Liberal government, unfortunately.

Mr WINTER - Yes. Ms Robins, I probably know you the best of anyone here, being from the Hobart Club, and you were very welcoming to me when I became Shadow Racing Minister the first time, invited me to a few Hobart 1000's. You're someone who's been flying the flag for greyhound racing in the South for a long time and have a lot of people supporting you being here today. Can you take me through the impact this has had on the club and on yourself over the course of the last few months, and the uncertainty that's been driven by the decision?

Ms ROBINS - We're absolutely devastated. We acknowledge the fact that the last sitting day of parliament falls on the day of the Hobart 1000, which is Australia's oldest continually-run feature race in the country, and that last sitting day is quite possibly when the other House will vote on our future. The dates do kind of coincide from what we are reading and what we are receiving. Morale is at an all-time low down here and we just feel very betrayed because we had a very good relationship with the minister and she has been a wonderful supporter of the club and then all of a sudden we get this backflip. A lot of us did vote Liberal for the reasons of being given that letter.

Mr WINTER - So, you received the letter and that was circulated and you felt comfortable and safe?

Ms ROBINS - Yes.

Mr WINTER - You and I have talked about your love of greyhounds a lot. Do you want to talk to us about the impact of greyhound ownership on yourself? Some of your dogs you talked to me about, I think, Alice and Aggro, can you talk about the relationship with the animals themselves from you, as a greyhound participant, and perhaps others?

Ms ROBINS - Ruby Bailey changed my life. I escaped a domestic violence situation and Alice was right there by my side. She survived parvo sepsis, had to have an emergency hysterectomy, survived an attack from another dog, and I lost her in October last year. She was having grand mal seizures that were lasting in excess of 20 minutes at a time and I had to make that decision to put her to sleep. Alice was the dog that started it all. She was my whole world. I am pushing 40 - as my mother keeps reminding me - and that the closest thing -

Ms RATTRAY - Mothers do that.

Ms ROBINS - I know. She told me that last night when I was complaining about my pants size, and I am probably not going to have biological children of my own, and they are the closest thing I have to kids. Alice was in my life since she was three days old and it just opened up so many doors. I was terrified of public speaking, I was terrified of dogs, and along

came Alice and the rest is history. The racing industry has had a profound impact on my life and knowing that, come 1 January, we might not be able to have breeding dogs and be breeding dogs, knowing that I won't get to have anything close to that connection that I had with Alice ever again is devastating.

Mr WINTER - Thank you so much for sharing a really personal story. I guess the next question is: you've just told that personal story about you and it's really important that those stories are told. But, from the club's perspective, you're not the only one, are you? I mean, I talk to people there who love their dogs and it's such a big part of their social life as well. Can you talk about the culture within the club and how greyhound racing has brought people together?

Ms ROBINS - We're like a family, you know, a really big, dysfunctional family. At the end of the day, if anyone needed help, any one of us would put our hand up, irrespective of our personal differences. We're all there for each other. It's a safe space and we welcome anyone with open arms. It wouldn't matter, even yourself, Cassy, as a Greens member, if you walked in off the street we would happily have you, even sit down and have tea with you.

Ms O'CONNOR - I will bring Frankie my dog along.

Mr WINTER - Mr Gatehouse, I think you can probably answer this question for me - Ms Robins just talked about a dog that she loved and unfortunately had to put down, as so many pet owners have had to do - myself, I've had to put animals down. Does the dog that Ms Robins talked about get counted in the numbers of euthanised greyhounds that come through the stats that we see?

Mr GATEHOUSE - I'm not sure, given when she was born, as to whether she would be counted in those stats at the age she was at. I'm not that au fait with the Tasracing tracking system down here, and where you're up to with the speed of that. But if it was Queensland, it would be, because we would have to report it.

Mr WINTER - Sure. I've probably had a fair go, but I will come back to that.

CHAIR - That's alright, it's important to get these questions, Mr Winter, on the record.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Claire. If only everyone in the Tasmanian greyhound racing industry loved their dogs as much as you clearly do; but there's some evidence that that's sadly not the case, which is part of the reason we're here.

My question is about the legislation itself. A policy decision has been made by the government; there's legislation now for parliament to consider. It's arguable that between now and when the debate happens, but also through this process, there is an opportunity to feed into the bill, to make improvements to it, potentially. I wonder what - and I don't know who wants to answer this question - industry representatives think there is to achieve through delaying legislation, when ultimately your objective is to reverse the policy decision?

Mr GATEHOUSE - I'm happy to take that one. Thank you, Cassy. We haven't had any opportunity to feed into the bill. The Department of Natural Resources is putting out information sheets that actually carry incorrect information. As late as last Friday, I was trying to contact the department to get that information corrected, because there was confusion amongst people who were getting their female greyhounds bred at this point in time leading up

to Christmas, as to whether the pups would be registered, because the information on page 1 of the sheet is now up to its third version.

The only way I was able to get that corrected was to go through the commissioner, who has been very easy to deal with, and also Mr Jenkins from Tasracing, who has been very easy to deal with through this process. That was the only way we could get that corrected. I spoke to them on the Friday, and it took until the Tuesday for that error - which is not knowing what the difference between whelping and birth and service, which is pretty important in this piece of legislation, that's the confusion at the department.

There's been, other than the briefing, we had one hour before the legislation was tabled on the 7th, which was Oaks Day, so most of the world was concentrating on the Melbourne Cup carnival and not us. We haven't had any official reach out from the department for feedback on the bill.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Mr Gatehouse. So, your issue is with material that's been provided by the department that is sort of background material to the bill? But, if we go to the bill itself, what is it within the bill that the industry would seek to change through an extended consultation process?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Given that we only have 45 minutes remaining, Ms O'Connor - Cassy -

Ms O'CONNOR - You can call me whatever you like, as long as it's polite.

Mr GATEHOUSE - Sometimes I get back to my formal stuff, and sometimes I get relaxed. Anyway, we don't have enough time to go through the feedback that we would like to formally provide on this bill. The important thing we need to understand is that we haven't had the opportunity to provide that feedback at all through the department. We've been invited to speak to the commissioner and the working party who sit over here and still have no legislative basis other than the policy decision. We are talking about the process that's been followed. We are talking about the role of government and proper due diligence in governance and the fact that this is having wide-ranging impacts. The bill, as it stands, if we were to go through a first-round consultation on this, it would be a very long process to provide feedback to this thought bubble.

Ms O'CONNOR - Can I just close off by saying, on the bill, it's arguable that this committee is doing due diligence and it is providing that opportunity to industry participants to feed into the bill, given that we understand the industry doesn't support the policy position. I ask again, what is to benefit the industry in prolonging a process of transition, which is a government policy decision that's been made?

Mr GATEHOUSE - A government policy decision that was made post an election. It's not a policy decision that the government took to the election to seek a mandate to implement that policy. Let's make that very, very clear. This was a policy decision made, as admitted by just about everyone who turned up to Estimates, made by the Premier. It was a captain's call made by the Premier. He informed the minister. Then the commissioner was informed. The CEO of Tasracing. A journalist somehow got to it on the 9th on Twitter, leaked it out on Twitter, and then the announcement was made on the 10th. Then it has been a cavalcade of

running this ship towards the iceberg since - and I've got a whole timeline here that just shows that it has been a rush.

The key thing here is this is all being rushed through and we're being asked why do we want to hold it up? We want to hold it up so that there can be some proper consideration of what is a massive change to these good peoples' lives. That's why we want some delay. We would rather it be delayed for six months, 12 months. It may still come that the parliament makes the decision, but we want the parliament to make a sound decision based on evidence.

Ms O'CONNOR - Plenty of evidence about the industry was presented to a joint parliamentary inquiry that was established by this parliament in 2015. It detailed all those issues with the industry that have led to the erosion of its social licence. This issue has been examined by the parliament. It's been debated at length by parliament. The industry in Tasmania really has been on notice for 10 years. I understand that it's a shock, but we were dealing with the Premier in a minority parliament. It is not true to say parliament hasn't examined the issues surrounding this industry, is it?

Mr GATEHOUSE - No, it's not. Parliament has and yes, I do recall the parliamentary report from 2016, thank you for raising that, where that was endorsed by all members of the parliamentary committee, bar one, I believe.

Ms O'CONNOR - That was me.

Mr GATEHOUSE - Correct, and the findings of that committee recommended a number of reforms. If we go through the record, there have been a number of those reforms undertaken by the Greyhound Racing Committee. This industry is the most heavily regulated animal industry in Australia, across racing, across all other animal endeavours.

If you look at the improvements made by Tasmanian greyhound racing - and it stands out in the annual reports, as your colleague and leader pointed out the other day in the business review, that there's statistics kept on injuries, statistics kept on euthanasia. Last year, the second lowest injury rate in Australia. I wasn't fully aware until I delved into Tasmanian greyhound racing, that you are, as an industry, leaders at 2.34 per cent - yourself and Western Australia, who are 2.29 per cent. Most other states are in 3 per cent. As Claire said, the majority of those injuries are minor injuries because there is a vet in attendance at every race meeting. There's pretty much vets at trials now as well. To say that we haven't done anything in those 10 years is erroneous.

Ms O'CONNOR - No one's saying that.

Mr GATEHOUSE - We've jumped every hoop, and we've improved, improved, improved to the point where last year there were two euthanasia's on track, and we feel for the dogs, if Claire hasn't made that pretty apparent to everyone how much people care. We can make the comments that not every person in the greyhound industry does.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, I will give you one -

Mr GATEHOUSE - No, no, no.

Ms O'CONNOR - Anthony Bullock.

Mr GATEHOUSE - We won't go into personal issues. I mean, you can go there. I'm not going to go there. That's fine.

We have standards under the Rules of Racing and that is up to the regulator, Tasracing, and now the Independent Racing Integrity Commissioner, to take on those who do the wrong thing in our industry. Now, society is full of people who do the wrong thing. You have people getting extradited back here a lot at the moment. I was on a plane with someone in handcuffs the other day. Society has bad eggs.

In greyhound racing and in racing itself, we have regulations to rub those people out and we would stand side by side with anyone - if they are doing the wrong thing, we do not want them in our industry either because we care about those dogs. People may say we don't, but we do.

Ms RATTRAY - Thanks very much. I sincerely thank you all for coming today. I did nearly need the tissues, Claire, it was just that they are a long way away. Thank you for sharing.

A couple of things. John, you and I have known each other for a very long time and I'm happy to put that on the record here. Do you want to give the committee some insight into what your family puts into the community through your involvement with the greyhound racing industry, but also - and please, I don't need to know your financial input wholly and solely - but just a bit of an indication of what you do in the community because you have, and race and love greyhounds.

Mr NEWSON - Actually, I have been involved with greyhound racing since 1972. I think I trained my first winner in 1973, so it's been a long, long time. I have been on the board of the Greyhound Club for 25 years, Chairman for 15 years, Vice Chairman for five years. I have spent quite a bit of time involved with the administration of the Launceston club and during that time I have raced and trained. I only have a very small kennel because I run my own business and I do not really have the time to put the right amount of time I need to do if I had a large number of dogs, but I can handle two to three dogs.

When my father was alive, he trained greyhounds back in the 1940s. When greyhound racing first started, he was a greyhound trainer -

Ms RATTRAY - What, at White City?

Mr NEWSON - White City, yes. When they first started I can remember him saying that they used to walk their dogs to the track - we lived about three miles away from the track and they would walk the dogs to the track, race them and walk them home. You know, it was just dedication of that and I've just sort of picked up on racing.

I've always liked dogs and I like greyhounds. They are a beautiful dog and so, I just started training since, I suppose, when I had my first pups. My daughter, she was about two years old, she would always come with me to the trials. She would always come to the races. She helped me with my dogs until she moved interstate a few years ago and there's really been a family affair.

My wife, Leanne, my now Chairman of the club, does a lot of bookwork and stuff for me as our club is basically run by volunteers because we're not in the position to make a lot of money. We want to keep our costs low and offer benefits to our members. So, most of our stuff is done by volunteers and she helps out a lot with stuff that I need to do. It's like the rest of our committee: we're all volunteers. They do more than what is really expected by most places. We don't even have a paid CEO, and in doing it and saving money, our club, we've been able to provide benefits to the community.

We have run community days for the elderly. We have people from local nursing homes come - actually, last Tuesday we had 90 people come from local nursing homes around Launceston, fully funded by the club. The day cost us probably \$8000, which has come out of our own money, from money that we have derived from our prudent investment by our club. It's not money that really has come from the government or Tasracing. It's money that's by prudent investment and hard work by our committee, that we've been able to make these days available. We've had the last four or - I think the last three years - we've had two of those per year. We had a sportsman's night here about a month ago and we had 140 people there from local sports clubs, and I think we gave out about \$8000, again to them for incentives for them to come and we ran competitions on the night. It's money that we've put back into the community.

Our club is a life member of the St Giles. Over the years, from back in the early 1940's, the Launceston Greyhound Racing Club has made considerable contributions in donations to St Giles - it'd probably would be thousands of dollars. We've benefited also local - there was the one that they have during the winter -

Ms RATTRAY - The winter appeal. *The Examiner* Winter Appeal.

Mr NEWSON - Yes. We've made substantial donations to that. Obviously, our club, we put a lot of money and effort into the local community. This social licence - this is the thing that's got me beat - how do you get a social licence? I've got a driver's licence, I've got a greyhound trainer's licence, I've got a gun licence - I apply for those, but where do I apply for a social licence?

Ms RATTRAY - John, I'm interested in the difference between a minor injury, as a trainer, how do you - in the stats, I think it says 'injuries', but how do you work out what's a minor injury and what's a more significant injury?

Mr NEWSON - A minor injury is more like if a dog during a race has been galloped on, or he's got a bit of a scratch on his leg, he might have maybe torn a toenail.

Ms RATTRAY - That's all included in the injury list?

Mr NEWSON - It's like football. You go to the outpatients on a Saturday night or Sunday or Monday -

Ms RATTRAY - I try not to, but -

Mr NEWSON - if you go to there, you see how many footballers are there getting patched up from injuries sustained through playing the game. These are minor injuries, just racetrack injuries, which are just caused by dogs bumping one another, or -

Ms RATTRAY - But they're all included in the list?

Mr NEWSON - It's all included in the list.

Mr GATEHOUSE - What happens is after the race, the stewards will direct any number of dogs to the vet. They will then get washed down, might get put away in the kennels for a little while, or go straight to the vet. The vet will then assess them and, based on their professional assessment they will, if they believe the dog needs a standdown period, based on what is now a nationwide standard of - I think it's A B C D and E and F, but one of those includes two categories, that's how they get categorised. Nought to 10 days, anything up to 22 days these days is considered a fairly minor injury; anything over 22 days is considered a more significant injury.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you, appreciate that.

Mr VERMEY - I do believe there was an opportunity to speak to the minister early on, but it was declined. What was the reason for declining? Did you have another attempt at trying to arrange a meeting?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yes, Influenza A was the diagnosis. I had a meeting booked with the minister in mid-September. I'd come via Melbourne, through Launceston and then had a choice of going to the hospital or getting on a plane; so, I took the plane option and got back to Brisbane and was in bed for three weeks until pretty much early October. I haven't travelled since until this trip.

Mr VERMEY - You didn't try to get a Teams meeting or any of those other ways to have a meeting with the minister?

Mr GATEHOUSE - The way things were going in the parliament, there wasn't much opportunity because there was parliament sitting periods, I'm sorry. Yes, I -

Mr VERMEY - But you didn't make contact with someone within?

Mr GATEHOUSE -I've had contact with the minister's adviser, Mr Gaetani, but we hadn't organised a follow-up meeting. Not that the minister had much knowledge of the bill anyway when she was talking about it, I think the department has had a pretty good run on that.

Mr VERMEY - Yes, but there were attempts and it just hasn't flowed, by sounds of things.

Mr GATEHOUSE - It's been very quick and very rushed, Mr Vermeay, and we haven't had a lot of time to line things up.

Mr VERMEY - Yes. On those injuries, if the owner, whoever sees those sort of injuries, who deems that those injuries need to see the vet or can they just say, 'Oh, I think that's okay.' Is there a chart or something to reference it against to what level it needs to be checked?

Ms ROBINS - The stewards make the decision, if an animal has been checked or bumped or falls during a race, to send that dog to the vet. It's then up to the regulatory vet on the night

to make that decision. If it's something minor like a sore muscle or a scrape or a bruise, it's normally in one of the A, B or C categories and then, if it's something more severe like an obvious muscle tear or sometimes even breaks, if it's a toe, fall into some of the higher categories, so that's up to the regulatory vet and then it's recommended that, depending on the injury, the dog goes to a follow up at its local vet or its regular vet.

Mr VERMEY - And they keep good records of all that?

Ms ROBINS - Yes, we have to. As trainers, we have to fill out a daily treatment log. If one of my dogs was on a multivitamin or something that's not naturally occurring in a food byproduct like calcium, I had a dog on calcium, I would have to write that in every day and say I've signed for it. Now it's the same if I have to ultrasound a dog: it's recorded in the treatment log for a day and the stewards can call us to request that at any time.

Ms RATTRAY - Is that in those air-conditioned kennels you have?

Ms ROBINS - [inaudible].

Ms WEBB - I have some sympathy about process matters here. I'm very firmly on the record of wanting to see the industry close. That's my position. But, I feel it's very unfortunate that the process is impacting people and their livelihoods. This is not a minor reform about the industry. It's a major, in fact, categorical reform about the industry and it's come about in a way that I think was abrupt and personally, for people involved, probably incredibly difficult and we've heard that from you today, so I acknowledge that.

This bill has come about very quickly and through a process that wouldn't normally be followed for a bill of such consequence, in that we would have normally, under good bill development processes, have seen an exposure draft go out for comment before it came to parliament. I am being very clear about the concerns I have about that too.

Having said that, this is what has happened. The bill was tabled on 6 November; we are three weeks down the track from it. Have you got something to provide to us in writing or that the outlines your input on the bill or your thoughts on the bill in detail? Has the industry put together and documented a response to the bill?

Mr ENGLUND - Not as yet, no; purely and simply because we haven't had the time to do it. We're in damage control mode at the moment. Our focus has been on trying to get our head around why this has been rushed through in the first place. No, apologies, we haven't got a document for you, but we can definitely look at that.

Ms WEBB - I can appreciate the fact that you have felt behind the eight ball the whole way since the announcement after the election and scrambling. I understand your position is you would like to see the policy decision reversed. Having said that, the process that we're in is charging ahead and so you, as key stakeholders in this space, need to enter into it as it's occurring.

If we're about to debate this bill in the parliament, in the lower House first and then if it passes there, it will come to the upper House, we need to see something from you to consider in relation to this bill for us to be able to do our job well and to understand the industry's position on the bill. Do you anticipate that you will have something to provide to us?

PUBLIC

Appreciating the time factor and that that's a difficult thing to do because you still want to see the policy decision reversed, is it the intention of the industry stakeholders to put together something to bring to us about the bill?

Mr CLARK - I would think, us lot on this side, we've not only been dealing with the participants, there's businesses, regional communities. I mean, our phones, I operate two businesses, also involved in greyhounds, me and my best mate. Our phones just went ballistic and a lot of other key people within the industry when it happened. But it wasn't just the participants. It was businesses, we have people spread from Copping to Smithton to Zeehan, we're all over the state and people rely on it. People like John, that's what age demographic, right down to Claire. We're gathering as much intel as we can from all of them different angles that we represent.

That's why we have Luke, who's experienced, to gather it, assemble the band, and basically that's why we're here today to ask for a bit of time so we can gather all that information and give a fair go for the people that we represent. That's not just the participants, it's the trainers, it's everyone else involved, local servos, the paper people, and there's people out there hurting, people who are absolutely hurting.

Ms RATTRAY - And in here, too.

Mr GATEHOUSE - We could come up with something, but we have so many unanswered questions that if we're putting something together for you to consider in relation to this bill, there's this whole side out here that we don't even know the answers to because there's too many different moving parts. Just the simple thing about a greyhound being whelped prior or after January 2026, the draft of the legislation in the department has taken three goes to almost get those definitions right.

We can go through line by line on the bill, but it doesn't cover off all the other questions that we have in terms of not only process, but the impacts. We'd love to be able to come up with a 'this is the impact on everything that's going to happen', but in this amount of time?

Ms WEBB – I know it's incredibly difficult.

Mr CLARK - We've had two Q&As with Andrew Jenkins, CEO of Tasracing, who's been brilliant. At the time of the announcement he was up there, and he spoke to me and Ben. Obviously, it was a bit of a shock. We've had two Q&As this week and he's the CEO of Tasracing that oversees us and, obviously, the commissioner has his heavy hand on it too.

Ms RATTRAY - Could he answer your questions?

Mr CLARK - He can't answer questions. Whether we had 30 or 40 people in Launceston on Monday night and there was probably about the same there last night, you have to feel for Andrew, whether he's not letting it all go, but you can generally see in his face, he didn't know what was going on and he's meant to be governing us. That's the process. We're trying to gather our stuff for everyone. He can't even deliver to us.

Ms WEBB -That's an incredibly frustrating position to be in.

PUBLIC

Mr CLARK - You can see the step-by-step process, and we're trying to build and represent everyone else.

Ms WEBB - I might make one more comment to you about it, which is potentially an invitation as well. I have a lot of sympathy for you. From my background, I've been involved in a lot of campaigning, trying to get outcomes and change policy, and often you have no time and you're told about things at the last minute and it's really difficult. But unless you get something to us in the parliament on this bill, we can't even be raising the questions that you have in this formal way. I'm just putting that to you.

Mr GATEHOUSE – We will endeavour to at least, obviously, it will be introduced to the lower House next week, but we'll endeavour to make sure that the Upper House where we probably will get a fairer hearing on process in terms of voting to make sure that you are fully aware and if we can get it to Lower House members by next week, we will.

CHAIR - We have about 20 minutes left. I know there is a number of other questions, and I will make sure you get an opportunity to answer them fully, so if we can just keep our questions quite short.

Mr WINTER - I wanted to continue with Mr Clark around Mr Jenkins and forums, and I agree Tasracing's been on the front foot trying to host forums. What are the sorts of questions you were asking, or members were asking, that Tasracing was unable to answer?

Mr CLARK - A lot of them were around what Luke was saying in what come out in the information packs. A lot of our participants, jump on, whelping, can we send our dogs interstate, out-of-state? Lot of trainers down here, a certain amount of percentage of dogs they train for other people all over Australia. We also have dogs that are in and out as well, everyone does. Those sorts of questions along with the media release come out yesterday. One of the questions I asked him was, his opening paragraph was all about the three codes and planning and doing everything - yes, you've got it there, Tania - towards 2050. I genuinely asked him, 'Are we part of your planning process now and moving forward?'

Mr WINTER - What was the answer?

Mr CLARK - A good politician answer. It was sort of, 'Yes you are, but in the current scheme of things, we're just moving forward in this direction.' Roundabout answers, but a lot of questions like that and a lot of trainers are confused on what they can or can't do depending on the decision of the Upper House.

Mr GATEHOUSE - Just to follow up, the question begs, if all parties who are trying to be in place to implement this or affected by this on 1 January next year, why is there a rush to have the bill debated prior to Christmas? Do you feel as though you are compelled to make a decision on this bill, or can you refer it on for further consultation, which to me is the only possible outcome that needs to come out of this process. Just as a person looking in, that's the way I view it, that we're trying to rush this through for a 1 January implementation that is just going to be a disaster. Do you really have to make a decision this year or can you, as we have asked, make due consideration of the whole impact of what's going to happen and how it may or may not look? You may still decide that, 'Yes, the industry will close at a certain point in time.' That is your prerogative as elected members, but make sure you do it properly.

PUBLIC

Ms RATTRAY - I have a comment around that and I'm pretty sure that the honourable member for Nelson will back me up. The Legislative Council will run their own course regardless of what the government decides. If the numbers in the House say that there is no debate on this particular piece of legislation until the new year and they get the numbers, then there won't be. That's just how that process works. I can't speak for the other place; that's a very different place.

Mr WINTER - Just to continue, if that's alright?

CHAIR - Just one last question, because I know there's a couple.

Mr WINTER - I wanted to ask about consultation. I heard Mr Verney, presumably on behalf of the government, sort of pretending as though it was the industry's fault they hadn't been consulted on this, which is farcical obviously. If the parliament makes the correct decision and decides to not deal with this in such a rush, is the industry that you represent, the clubs you represent, open to consultation around the bill and the issues over the course of what would be a more standard process of public consultation, exposure draft, are you committing to the committee and to the parliament that you are willing to engage?

Mr GATEHOUSE - We are just after a fair go. All we want is a fair go. We don't feel like we're getting a fair go at the moment.

Mr WINTER - In terms of the consultation you've been able to do with your membership, obviously you represent hundreds of active participants, but thousands of supporters. How much consultation have you been able to do with them given the short amount of time?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yes, as consultation is through our member clubs and their membership, I'd hand that over to each of the reps.

Mr CLARK - It's been significant. We've actually had growth as John could contest in Launceston itself, non-aligned race people due to the services and just the night they can come to with their kids and everything. Obviously, family friendly. We've got growth; sponsors come on board. Obviously, Ben's in a bit of a different situation down there, but they're heavily involved and they work in with Claire and Hobart as well. We're on a united front and I suppose once we try to tell our participants to - we get asked the question: where did this come from? Based on what?

Mr WINTER - You've talked about consultation. I was thinking about just greyhound clubs, but you're quite right to talk about harness and thoroughbreds as well because the entire racing ecosystem and economy. In terms of that consultation piece and the economics of this, what's your views around the likelihood or not for the rest for the other two codes to be able to stand up without greyhound racing as part of Tasracing's revenue mix and more broadly across the economy? What are the more broad impacts?

Ms RATTRAY - I think we heard about the three-legged stool.

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yes, it's the three-legged stool and, to paint the picture, I ran the Brisbane Greyhound Racing Club, as many of you know, for nearly 20 years. Our wagering turnover in my last couple of years was around about a billion dollars per year on Albion Park.

PUBLIC

The wagering turnover on Tasmanian racing is about \$750 million to \$800 million a year. So the Albion Park Greyhound Club was larger than the entire Tasmanian industry, where you have to run a whole regulatory arm, plus have an independent commissioner and all those as well as delivering the race meetings.

My role was to deliver race meetings on that sort of turnover. So, without having a full economic impact on what would happen to the other two codes, I would be very reticent to be making this decision hastily because the flow-on effect might be that it actually costs the government more money to keep those other two going.

CHAIR - If I can go back to the issue around the bill and amendments and the process of going through parliament. I am hearing really clearly that there's a lot of uncertainty within your participants and the not knowing what's happening next, or what's in or what's out or what's happening from 1 January or whelping - all those kind of things. It brings a lot of uncertainty and distress to the community. I suppose I'm after your thoughts on, if it was delayed, so if the bill did not pass through parliament before Christmas and was delayed until March, April, May, June, whatever it might be sitting next year, how does that uncertainty impact on your participants, given the fact that they don't know for then six months, maybe, potentially, of what's happening, in particular when it comes to breeding and those kind of issues? I understand that there's a need for certainty around that.

Can you explain a bit more about that? I mean, your position is, fundamentally, you don't want the bill to be passed at all, so it's a binary kind of yes or no fundamental issue for you. But I hear very loudly that the uncertainty of not knowing what's happening is perhaps potentially worse than knowing. Does that make sense? It was a long-winded question.

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yeah, no.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yeah, no is a very Queenslander response, I might say.

Mr GATEHOUSE - I will hand over to Ben.

CHAIR - So, yes. The uncertainty, and I fully appreciate and I agree with Meg's comments around being a very quick process and it's not a normal parliamentary process, but there is a lot of uncertainty and that's causing a lot of pain from what I'm hearing. Can you talk to me a bit more about that?

Mr ENGLUND - Yes I can, for sure. Thanks for that, and I'd go back to your comment about the breeding aspect of it. Breeding is a very complex issue. It's not a decision that you make overnight; you plan it well in advance. Now, I'm not sure whether there's been any data analysis done, but no one's sort of diving into the information around people that have got investments in breeding already. People on this table may have made investments in straws and stuff for their for their females. If this legislation is passed and breeding is stopped on 1 January, no one's done any modelling around how much investment people will just lose overnight. I think the really hard thing to grasp is, because no economic modelling has been done around any issue surrounding this ban in its entirety, we don't know. You know, there's been no economic modelling done; there's been no modelling done around compensation. There's been no risk controls put in place. Because it's been so rushed it's really hard to fathom how the members of parliament can actually make an informed decision on something that they haven't got all the information on.

The impact on the communities is another big thing that we are really worried about. Some people, that might be their only avenue to have a bit of enjoyment throughout their day. They might have a couple of dogs at home. What are those people going to be doing if this is taken away from them? That's the real concern that we have: the participants and their mental health around this industry just being taken away from them overnight. That's something we're really concerned about. A lot of members have come to all of us on this table and expressed that concern. They're really worried, so -

CHAIR - And I hear that worry really clearly. I suppose my question is - that worry of going for an extended period of time, the uncertainty, so if you're a breeder do you invest now or do you wait until January? Do you wait until March? The bill's not going to go away, but that's the reality. It's been tabled. It will happen at some stage: whether it happens before Christmas or happens sometime next year, it's not going to go away. That impact and the uncertainty in not knowing, whereas I would prefer, if it was me, to know yes or no sooner rather than later than have it hanging on.

Mr CLARK - I can understand and, further to bend to your question, give us time or give us some leeway. It's not about a snap decision. Give us some time to gather all our stuff, like Meg has indicated for us, and have a time to take a breath, get in front of the minister, the commissioner, to go through the legislation. Then we can go back to our participants and the broader communities and say, 'Right, we've done our due diligence on this. We are now going to meet them on such and such a date, and we'll deliver what we feel and debate it and look at the feasibility studies and the impact statements'. At the moment we're just trying to help out our side of things and deal with the unknowns on that side, like back with the Q&A with Tasracing.

Mr GATEHOUSE - If I can just add to that, we would be far happier with a well-considered decision, rather than a rushed decision based on political expediency.

Ms O'CONNOR - I wanted to go to Ben's statement that there hasn't been any economic modelling done on the impact of the decision. There's been economic modelling done, economic analysis by respected economist, for example, Saul Eslake, who says:

In greyhound racing, according to the industry's estimates, it requires an average of \$12,140 in 'code allocation funding' in 21-22, up from \$10,600 in 2018-19. More than \$6000 in 2011-12 - an increase in funding of 91 per cent over 10 years. The actual cost per job 'created' is almost certainly considerably more than this, given the strong likelihood the industry's estimates of the number of jobs 'created' by its activities are substantially exaggerated.

Then it goes on to detail the deed and how it's distributed.

I don't know if you've seen Saul Eslake's economic analysis? Are you aware of the detail in it? Do you have any response to his findings that the industry actually costs the taxpayers enormously and is sustained by public funding?

Mr GATEHOUSE - In all respects to Mr Eslake, I won't take him on in terms of his economic credentials.

Ms O'CONNOR - That's a good idea.

Mr GATEHOUSE - We, obviously, have our own economic impact study done, which I believe is also done by the Tasmanian government through Tasracing, and is on the Tasracing website. We've also, through Greyhounds Australasia, had similar economic modelling undertaken and that is a holistic approach to economic modelling, which has been criticised by Mr Eslake. As I've said in other forums, I'm not going to match economist views. However, where you start an analysis is generally where you can finish an analysis. If you start in a different place you can end in a different place.

The IER studies look through the whole range of revenue streams available to the racing industry, of which, new at the table, a point of consumption tax, race field fees, and, obviously, lucrative sponsorship and media rights deals. There is that component of government funding and I will remind the committee that the greyhound industry receives less than 20 per cent - I think it's about 19.7 per cent - of the government funding through the current deed and delivers 53 [39] per cent of the wagering activity on local racing in this state.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you for that. Just on the IER reports, as you know, and there are other reports you cited there, they're industry sponsored reports. The methodology has not just been criticised by Saul Eslake. It is considered unreliable and misleading because it uses unaudited data, bad economic methodology and inflated job numbers. The Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance and the Productivity Commission have also questioned IER's methodology. I will just say that and say, in terms of a transition for the industry and going to before to what Ben said about needing time, the legislation provides for a four-year transition period. What does the industry need, in terms of extra time, given that the policy decision has been made - four years is provided for, the bill is really clear about -

Mr WINTER - Well, it hasn't been made.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, the bill is really clear about the steps through there. I might go to Claire's point - people will be able to breed greyhounds for pets. There's not going to be the end of that beautiful breed in Tasmania. In terms of time, what, in reality, does more time look like or achieve?

Mr GATEHOUSE - In reference to the sponsorship of IER's reports, I do need to put on the record that they provide governments all over Australia with economic benefit studies, plus organisations not only in the racing industry across the country, and as recently as the Melbourne Cup Carnival - they did the economic impact for the Melbourne Cup Carnival.

Ms O'CONNOR - So, they're the industry's consultant of choice?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Government, the racing industry, plus industries outside of government. I encourage members to go to the IER website to see the range of industries that they do consult for. May I respectfully point out that Mr Eslake's report on greyhound racing was funded by 12 bodies, and those 12 bodies -

Ms O'CONNOR - Plenty of individuals actually, as well.

Mr GATEHOUSE - And individuals who are against greyhound racing. So, yes, let's -

PUBLIC

Ms O'CONNOR - Let's not slur Mr Eslake, because he is a respected independent economist -

Mr GATEHOUSE - No, I have not slurred him. I'm just -

Ms O'CONNOR - Don't suggest that he's been bought.

Mr WINTER - Do you understand what a hypocrite you sound like?

Ms WEBB - To be fair, you pointed out who funded the industry funds - it's relevant to point out who funded -

CHAIR - We've got very limited time; we've only got another -

Ms O'CONNOR - Sure, but it's Saul Eslake.

Mr GATEHOUSE - I know, and as I opened, full respect to Mr Eslake. But you put on the record that the industry funded our report. I just wanted to put on the record who funded that report.

CHAIR - Thank you, Luke. We've got three more minutes. I will go to Tania, for probably the last question.

Ms RATTRAY - Ben, I'm really interested in your thoughts around the participants and the supporters of the industry and their mental health. It's evident to me that there will be significant mental health issues raised through that. Is that something that's been talked about with Tasracing? If they've got not a lot of answers about other things, have they got some answers and some thoughts and some avenues for your industry, for your code, to be able to use through this period of whatever it looks like? I have no idea what the period looks like, because those members upstairs will decide what that looks like.

Mr ENGLUND - I might just ask Claire to make comment around the support services that are available for the code, if she doesn't mind.

Ms ROBINS - Tasracing, and I believe they mentioned it when they were here the other day, the employee assistance program (EAP), they said at the time they believed it was going to be unlimited. The last time we looked into that as a code, when I appeared in the newspaper with you, Kristie, and Susan Gittis was in the media a lot. That was limited to two complimentary free sessions per racing participant, which anyone at this table knows that that's not adequate. We all share the concern. We've got a community that's older, and older males tend to believe that there's still a great stigma attached with poor mental health. So, it is something that really needs to be addressed rather quite quickly, especially if it is still limited to those two complementary free sessions per year.

CHAIR - That's something the committee can certainly take on board. If we do at any stage make recommendations, that's something we can certainly -

Ms RATTRAY - Is your message to the members of the parliament to give you time? Is that your absolute message?

PUBLIC

Mr ENGLUND - Absolutely.

Ms RATTRAY - Give you time to work through this.

Mr CLARK - Give us time and don't restrict trade in the meantime - and trade means breeding interstate, everything like that. If it's six months, let us do our due diligence and debate it.

Ms RATTRAY - It's interesting, isn't it? If you can send your dogs over to the mainland, where's the welfare issue there?

Mr CLARK - That's right.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, welfare is at the heart of this whole policy decision and this inquiry. Part of the reason the Racing Integrity Commissioner has asked that this bill not be delayed is for the welfare of the 1036 racing greyhounds now.

CHAIR - That concludes, we are at quarter past. That's gone very fast and I'm sure there's a lot more that we would like to ask you and, and I'm sure a lot more you would like to tell us as well. As I've said to others, there will be - I'm sure - a number - without speaking for the committee, we haven't made that decision yet - but I'm sure there will be a number of opportunities to speak over the coming years or the life of this committee anyway.

Thank you very much for your attendance today. Before we do conclude, I need to make a few final statements. What you have said to us here today is protected by parliamentary privilege, so once you leave the table, you need to be aware that that privilege does not attach to comments you may make to anyone, including the media, even if you are just repeating what you have said to us here today. Do you all understand that?

WITNESSES - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you very much for your time today. We really do appreciate it. Hopefully we weren't as scary as what you were anticipating and we will see you next time.

The committee suspended from 10.15 a.m. to 10.30 a.m.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Welcome to today's hearing of the Joint Standing Committee on Greyhound Racing Transition and thank you very much for your attendance. I will introduce you to the members of the committee today. We have Meg Webb, the member for Nelson; Cassy O'Connor, member for Hobart; myself, Independent member for Clark, Kristie Johnston; Tania Rattray, the member for McIntyre; Dean Winter, the member for Franklin; and Marcus Vermey, also the member for Clark.

If you would mind stating your name and the capacity in which you are appearing before the committee, please?

Ms DAWKINS - Andrea Elizabeth Dawkins. I am the CEO of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) Tasmania.

Mr WILD - I'm Mark Wild, the CEO at Dogs' Homes of Tasmania.

CHAIR - Fantastic, thank you. Can I please confirm that you've received and read the guide sent to you by the committee secretary?

Ms DAWKINS - Indeed.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. As you'd be aware, this hearing is covered by parliamentary privilege, allowing individuals to speak with freedom without fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place out of parliament. This protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside parliamentary proceedings. This hearing is public and the public and media may be present or watching online. Should you wish any aspects of your evidence to be heard in private, you must make this request to the committee at the time. Is that clear?

WITNESSES - Yes.

CHAIR - Excellent. You have a statutory declaration in front of you there. If you wouldn't mind making that for the record, please?

Ms ANDREA ELIZABETH DAWKINS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, RSPCA TASMANIA, and **Mr MARK FLETCHER WILD**, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, DOGS' HOME TASMANIA, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED

CHAIR - Lovely. I invite you both to make an opening statement to the committee, if you would like to.

Ms DAWKINS - Thank you. Briefly, I am here to represent the RSPCA today. I'm obviously on the transition working group, but that's not a subject that I will be discussing today at any length.

I'm here as an advocate of greyhounds - the animals, not the industry. We're here as advocates to ensure that there is a voice for the dogs at this table and, at any opportunity we get, to be able to stake the claim that these beautiful, gentle dogs need a transition out of being a gambling product and into being a family pet.

We both have experience with running greyhound adoption programs. It was something that I set up when I first came to the RSPCA. It's something that we do off the side of our desks because we have to. We're not funded for it. We, at the RSPCA, generally get the animals that nobody else can rehome. That's how we had the litter of nine semi-sighted dogs. They stay in our care for a really long time. Those dogs, it took a year to rehome some of them. We cover the funding, all the vet costs, everything that's required to get those animals into homes because that's our job.

We're here as that last resort for the industry, for the participants when there's nowhere else for them to rehome their animals. In that time, we've rehomed 53 dogs, which we are immensely proud of, and we keep in touch with those dogs as much as we can. If there are issues, they can come back to us, we can offer advice, but we make sure that our program is ethical and sustainable.

CHAIR - Thanks very much, Andrea. Mark, would you like to make an opening too?

Mr WILD - Thank you. I just want to thank the Chair and members of the committee for the opportunity to be a part of this process. The Dogs' Homes of Tasmania has a proud 75-year history in Tasmania and we're Tasmania's largest canine welfare organisation. We've stood beside Tasmanian greyhounds for many years. We see first-hand both the joy they bring as companion animals and the challenges that they face when they're treated primarily as racing animals.

We think this is an historic moment for their welfare and we welcome the chance to contribute constructively to the transition process. We believe the government's decision to end greyhound racing, from our perspective, is long overdue and it's a great step for animal welfare. At the Dogs' Homes of Tasmania, we never say no to any dog. Every dog that comes through our doors is given the chance of life beyond racing.

Rehoming greyhounds is deeply practical, hands-on work. It means sitting on kennel floors with nervous dogs, it means tending to old track injuries and managing chronic dental disease, helping them build confidence and matching them with foster families who will love and support them in the search for their forever home. It's slow, compassionate work delivered by people who care, not a corporate process, not a throughput metric.

To give you a sense of scale, last year the Dogs' Homes of Tasmania rehomed 44 greyhounds. A rough average cost, depending upon their length of stay, is around \$3500 to rehome a greyhound once you factor in vet care, dental work, medication, behaviour assessments, enrichment, feeding, transport and staff time, and the list goes on.

From our perspective, for this transition to truly succeed, we believe there are a few principles that we need to follow. One is that the rehoming system must be properly resourced, which we've mentioned. Second is that planning needs to be simple, humane and centred on the needs of the dogs. We were chatting before this and they need to be coordinated processes, I believe. Third, we need to honour the promise that every greyhound gets a fair chance at life. We believe if we keep these principles at the heart of the transition then Tasmania can become a national leader in humane greyhound rehoming.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - It's a wonderful way to conclude those opening statements on those three principles of humanity and recognising the humanity of the greyhounds as sentient beings. Thank you for your appearance here today.

I want to start by taking you to some of the comments that you made, Andrea, about the dogs themselves and recognising that both the RSPCA and the Dogs' Homes of Tasmania have a long history of supporting animals. I understand deeply Tasmanian sentiment and love for animals, in particular dogs and greyhounds for this instance, but the racing industry treats them as gambling commodities, so you see the output or the wastage from that particular industry, which does see them as a commodity.

Can you speak to the committee about some of the challenges that you see as carers for these animals, for an animal that's been treated as a commodity, to trying to transition them to a much-loved pet? You spoke about the medical issues and the size of dental things, but perhaps the behavioural things and the challenges that you have around that.

Ms DAWKINS - We both have lots of stories about greyhounds because, of course, all the greyhounds that come to us have never been in a home. They've never been in the backseat of car. You're having to teach them how to get in and out of a car. One dog we had took four weeks of every day trying to get them in the vehicle; get them back out again. They just simply didn't know how to manage it. Walking on floorboards; what furniture was. I think you can all understand when an animal comes from a pen into a home that everything is new.

They're very adaptable animals and in some ways that makes them adaptable for shelters, which is the opposite of all the other dogs that are in our care because every other dog just wants to get out. Whether a greyhound will come to us, be surrendered, go through that process, into their pen and they're like, well, this is home. In some ways that makes it easier to keep them for the length of period that we sometimes have to before they can get into foster homes.

They are taught everything, but really the biggest one for us has been their dental because they're fed a soft diet of raw food, almost all of them, their entire lives before they come to us. Because of the nature of their physiology, the way their mouths are formed, their diet, the fact that it's very hard for them to lick their teeth clean the way that other dogs can, we're often cleaning their teeth every day because a dental for a greyhound can be between \$1100 and \$2000. That's out of the reach of most people who have just adopted an animal, and we don't want them to have to stump up that money. We want them to come to us with all their veterinary work done so that we can start teaching them, socialising them how to be pets.

Ms RATTRAY - It's lovely to see you again, Andrea, in the parliament. Do you have any thoughts about the number of greyhounds, should the bill pass the parliament? At the moment, we have 1036 registered greyhounds racing in the state and so the transition will be quite a challenging one

You talked about the challenges of rehoming. My understanding is that people will still be able to breed greyhounds for pets. My understanding as well is that everyone loves a puppy, so people would choose a puppy over a two-year-old greyhound. How's that going to impact the work you do in being able to rehome some of these greyhounds that will potentially come to you?

Mr WILD - We face challenges rehoming dogs every day, so certainly bringing 1036 -

Ms RATTRAY - It might not be that many, but that's the figure.

Mr WILD - Certainly bringing those back into our sector, looking to rehome those is going to be an ongoing challenge. From our perspective, there needs to be a staged approach to this. Looking at a transition between now and the end of June 2029 so that we're not landed with a huge mass of dogs to try to rehome all at the same time.

Ms RATTRAY - What's the magic number that you've been thinking about that might be welcome to your dogs' home or the RSPCA at 30 June 2029?

Mr WILD - Our facility is limited in terms of the infrastructure, in terms of how many we can take on. So the model that we would use going forward in terms of trying to rehome these would be more of a foster care sort of model. I think there needs to be a coordinated approach because we're going to rely on community help and community support, which we do each and every day. We're going to need to rely on that community support to be able to transition these dogs into their forever homes, so getting them out of the shelter environment because our capacity is limited.

I know other shelters have limited capacity. We need to look at a model that gets them out into the community, helps with a lot of the issues that Andrea addressed about the socialisation side of things. Socialisation, outside the vet-related or health-related issues, is the biggest challenge for these dogs in terms of getting to what we would consider to be a normal life.

Ms RATTRAY - But there's still going to be, if the whole thing goes through as government has planned, a lot of dogs at the one time. Are you able to manage? Say you had 50 dogs?

Ms DAWKINS - We've had big discussions about this. There's a bit of a hierarchy that we've come up with which I think is sensible. We put GAP at the top of that hierarchy funded by the organisation for that very purpose. Then the Dogs' Home - 20 dogs at a time roughly able to take. We could take 10. We work with the North East Animal Sanctuary as well. They could take four. Then I'm in discussions with the CEO of the RSPCA in Victoria, which could also take 10 at a time. You start looking at those sorts of numbers. Say that was a couple-week period, and once we've built that kind of community engagement with the process, we can get them into foster home, start moving them through, then the cycle starts again.

Ms RATTRAY - But won't they have to go to your facilities prior to being put out to a foster home?

Ms DAWKINS - Not necessarily. It depends on how those animals are assessed. We do a whole lot of third-party assessments so that we can meet, say in a dog park, and go through some natural dog behaviours that are safe. We can have a look at a dog, look at their assessment and go, 'Okay, this animal looks like it would be perfectly comfortable to go straight into a home'. Others might not, but there are some creative ways that we can kind of broker that process.

PUBLIC

Ms RATTRAY - So if that number is multiplied to 550 or something, that still won't be an issue? You have enough capital or people on the ground who have put their hand up and said, 'Yes, I'm willing to take a dog'?

Ms DAWKINS - All we can say is that when the labradoodle farm was shut down, we had 1000 people subscribed to be foster carers in 24 hours.

Ms RATTRAY - I recall that.

Ms O'CONNOR - Amazing.

CHAIR - Tasmanians love their dogs.

Ms DAWKINS - We need to get to the start so we can go to the community and say, 'Okay, who wants to apply?' We have all the processes in place. Ours is a fully automated system that comes straight into our inbox. We can start assessing those applications on day one, but the legislation would need to pass parliament. We can't go out and do all that work if it is for no purpose.

Ms RATTRAY - What sort of timeframe are you thinking that you would need? We had a heartfelt request from the code previously saying we need more time to get our heads around this and what it looks like. Say, for example, that the legislation doesn't pass by the end of this year and it's into March or April of next year, is that still plenty of time given the 2029 July deadline? Is that enough time?

Mr WILD - I'd feel comfortable with that sort of timeline. Obviously, the sooner legislation passes and the transition commences, the better off we all are.

Ms RATTRAY - But you do understand that the code has been blindsided and is struggling with what's being presented to them?

Mr WILD - I totally understand that. We would be coming more from the animal welfare or from the dog side of things. We firmly believe that dogs in the industry are struggling and that they're suffering. So from our perspective, we're totally respectful. But this is a monumental change for the code and our focus remains on getting good outcomes for the dogs that are within the industry. What that timeframe looks like - as Andrea mentioned, she had 1000 subscribers in a matter of possibly overnight. We recently went out and someone did mention a minute ago everyone loves a puppy, and I get that everyone loves a puppy -

Ms RATTRAY - That was me.

Mr WILD - We did go out wanting foster carers for puppies because we're going through a bit of a puppy influx or crisis at the moment, and we had 200 people come overnight wanting to do that. I think there's an overwhelming feeling within the community, certainly within the areas of the community that I work in, that people want to help and people want to see good outcomes. How we mobilise that becomes the challenge. What we're saying initially is that this needs to be a really coordinated approach. Organisations like ourselves, GAP, RSPCA and North East Animal Sanctuary, whoever's involved in that process, really need a structured and coordinated approach to the rehoming - almost a dedicated resource to say how is this going to be managed and where are our resources within the community?

Ms RATTRAY - My final question is, have you put a number on what you will be seeking, whether it's from the community or from the government, around the cost of taking one of the dogs? You would have to have started to do a few back-of-the-envelope numbers?

Mr WILD - Yes, we know what it costs us to rehome a dog. Our average costs across our organisation are around \$70 per dog per day. Greyhounds tend to spend a little bit longer in our shelters just through some of the reasons that we have spoken about, but average stays are looking around 50 days over the last four or five years, so that gets us to a cost of around \$3500, if my maths is correct, per dog to rehome.

Ms RATTRAY - And your organisations will be looking for that resourcing from someone other than what you already do in the community?

Mr WILD - Yes, and I guess from our point of view, I won't speak for the RSPCA, but we rely really heavily on community support and we get fantastic community support each and every year to be able to keep ourselves operating, so -

Ms RATTRAY - But not enough to cover what's expected?

Mr WILD - We don't see this as necessarily different to that, but we don't think it's solely the community's responsibility to look at this industry transition. There's an industry that's been profiting from this for a long time - this is our view, sorry. We think it's fair and reasonable that they get a significant amount of skin in that game.

Ms RATTRAY - And so you will be expecting that whoever has been the owner of those dogs to be paying to put them into the foster arrangement or homes?

Mr WILD - Not necessarily.

Ms RATTRAY - Well, you just said they've got the skin in the game?

Mr WILD - Yes, in terms of the industry, I was referring to.

Ms RATTRAY - So, the racing industry, not necessarily the greyhound owner?

Mr WILD - Yes, not necessarily each greyhound owner, yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - Sean Carroll, the Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner, presented to us at our last hearing and he subsequently came to the Estimates table. Both times he was asked about the legislation that is now to be debated by the parliament. He was asked about how important it is that it passes this year, and he said it is essential and, to paraphrase him, the reason he said it's essential is because there's so much work to do - going to the issues that you raise about a coordinated approach to rehoming dogs, making sure that their welfare is prioritised as well as ensuring the industry has certainty and the opportunity for a just transition.

Going back to your previous answer, Mark, I wonder if the legislation is delayed, can you see there's a risk that that will mean there are more dogs bred that have to be rehomed, potentially more dogs imported to race here in that time, which ultimately would just be

delaying a policy decision and potentially it prolongs the suffering, not just of people but of the dogs in the industry?

Ms DAWKINS - Yes, I agree absolutely. We need to get started. There are so many questions that are being asked about how that transition for the dogs might look. We cannot even get to the beginning of that until that legislation has passed. The whole conversation in the past has been about the industry, essentially. Yes, we have been talking about dogs and, yes, we have been rehoming them but we need, as animal welfare advocates, to get to the beginning so we can start planning and doing the detailed, clever work that we need to do to make sure every single dog has a chance.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you for that. I know, in your introduction, you said you wouldn't be detailing too much the operations of the working group that the Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner has established, but are you confident that the process which has been put in train, in part, which is waiting for the legislation to pass, will be able to manage that rehoming task as well as make sure the industry participants are respectfully looked after?

Ms DAWKINS - Yes, I do. Look, we've met several times and there's been a pretty clear split down the middle of time spent on the industry and the participants, and ensuring that their voice is heard, even though it's not at the table yet.

The other half has been around animal welfare and the changes to legislation, the *Dog Control Act* and the dog regs changes that are occurring at the moment, and all the work that we need to make sure that by the end of this process we no longer have this breed-specific legislation - but that the greyhounds are treated like every other animal in the community.

Ms O'CONNOR - Just like dogs.

Ms DAWKINS - Just like dogs.

Ms O'CONNOR - We were told this morning by Mr Gatehouse, for the industry, and in fact a number of participants reinforce the point, that they're a highly regulated industry, that animal welfare standards have substantially improved over the last 10 years. They put this as, I guess, an argument for their ongoing social licence. As heads of rehoming organisations, what's your reflection on the regulatory framework around greyhounds, and whether animal welfare standards within the industry are anywhere near sufficient?

Ms DAWKINS - Look, I have an image that's burnt into my mind of a site visit. I'm trying to help some really lovely people rehome their greyhounds. I will never forget what I saw that day and I don't know if I feel comfortable sharing it with you, but it's some of the worst images I've ever seen in my life. The very strange part about it was that the industry participants were so proud of their site, but the animals were kept in squalor, the food they were being fed was covered in flies. I don't think this is an unusual circumstance - it's not appropriate, it's a very marginal pastime. There are not a lot of industry professionals in Tasmania in this field and it's entirely appropriate that Tasmania would be the first state to phase out greyhound racing, from my experience.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. As you were speaking, I was thinking about the report that was put out by Animal Liberation Tasmania called 'A Few Bad Apples'. It profiles and explores through drone footage dozens of industry operations. The pictures tell the story of the

way greyhounds are kept in confined spaces, poorly ventilated, freezing cold, water buckets with slime in them. Do you think - we know that there are plenty of people who work in the industry who do care for their dogs well, but it's not the exception is it, that dogs in the industry are kept in very substandard conditions that we wouldn't accept for our own dogs?

Ms DAWKINS - Absolutely, and having greyhounds exempt from the dog regs over the entire time that I've been in this job has been nothing short of appalling. Having that change will mean that our animal welfare inspectors will be able to, under the dog regs, inspect all the facilities and measure them the same way every other dog facility needs to be measured against those regulations. That's a really good start.

Ms O'CONNOR - Is it routine to see dogs come into either the RSPCA or the Dogs' Home that have multiple veterinary issues, as well as socialisation challenges? If you could detail a bit more what you're seeing - which you did in answer to the Chair's question in part before. What are you seeing?

Mr WILD - All the greyhounds that come to us have socialisation issues through lack of exposure to normal socialisation, be that with people or other dogs. That's certainly something that we would see.

To your earlier point around the industry and their animal welfare standards, I can't necessarily comment too much about that, but it's certainly not what we see. We see dogs coming to us that don't come from an environment where we consider animal welfare to be a high priority; so multiple health issues, but the socialisation issues are fairly significant as well, which is where a lot of the time and effort is spent.

Ms O'CONNOR - Can I ask on the socialisation - is it often fear? Fear of people or fear of men - I've noticed fear of men amongst ex-racing greyhounds, and I don't mean to make it a gendered issue. It's just an observation.

Mr WILD - Yes, it can be. But certainly, just the general - you know, other dogs, other people, noises, sounds and those sorts of things can really - any greyhound owner would attest to the fact that they can be really freaked out by not much.

Mr VERMEY - I'd just like to say fear of men; when I was doorknocking, I actually did really well. I think that's because I'm -

Ms O'CONNOR - With greyhounds?

Mr VERMEY - No, with all the dogs I think, and that's mainly being the butcher -

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, but you're a lovely bloke. Dogs are good judges of character.

Ms RATTRAY - I've been bitten.

Mr VERMEY - Have you? That's no good, but with the labradoodles and what we saw there and that was unprecedented, it was a call to arms to quickly alleviate the problem. With greyhounds coming through, what have you learned out of that? And this is a longer lead-up potentially to it, how do you put that out to the public that this potentially will be happening? What they need to look for?

I know a good friend of ours, they've got one who is I think eight years old, Gracie. If they have the garden hose in the back going around the garden, the dog shies away. I think that was from where it was potentially in a crate and hosed, et cetera. They've had that dog since I think it was two, so eight years and it still has an aversion to a hose in the garden.

With potential clients taking on the dogs, how do you brief them on all that? Are there plans?

Ms DAWKINS - Absolutely. We accept all foster care applications and then we start by having a phone call. We talk to them about their experience with animals. We have a look at their sites and make sure it's safe. But foster carers, like foster carers across any organisation, are the absolute salt of the earth. They are the sort of people who just get stuck in and rise to every challenge. We offer quite a supported program. We will have food delivered, we will broker the veterinary appointments and that kind of thing but, often, foster carers, once they sort of get into the rhythm of it, will take that on themselves. Obviously, the invoices come to us, but they will go, 'Okay, I can manage this animal's health'. Then we hope in every situation that we have more foster carers coming through because that animal stays for that person. That's what happened with the labradoodles -

CHAIR - Foster fails.

Ms DAWKINS - Foster fails - most of those animals were actually adopted by their foster carers because it was a pitiful situation, right?

Mr VERMEY - And I tried to get one but we couldn't get in fast enough.

Ms DAWKINS - I'm so sorry about that, it was bad. Our website crashed, I am sure you've heard, but I think it will be a much more stepped process with greyhounds. I do not think it will be quite the level of excitement, but I do think that we have this incredible capacity to be able to bring life to greyhounds after racing. So many people have only ever seen them on TV, racing round and around a track. This gives people an opportunity to see them as dogs.

Mr VERMEY - With the labradoodles, some people may have taken them and then found that it was a bit hard to deal, did you have them come back or?

Ms DAWKINS - Yes, two out of all those dogs.

Mr VERMEY - That's not bad.

Ms DAWKINS - Yes, and they were rehomed immediately.

Mr WILD - Part of the reason for putting greyhounds in the foster care, or dogs in the foster care, is so we can learn more about them, their behaviours and what they like and what they do not like. From our point of view, we spend a lot of time trying to match the dog to the home so that we're making sure that that dog and its needs are being looked after in that new home and the new home is capable of meeting those needs as well.

There's an extensive process in terms of trying to get that match right to start with. Then, in a lot of cases, it's about the ongoing support - having behaviour trainers who are able to

provide help, support and guidance if things do get tough, or even just as someone to check in to normalise behaviours.

Mr VERMEY - Obviously, we hope that the dogs, during the phase-out, will be taken up by people before having to go to your resources - that is the best way to go.

Ms DAWKINS - Well, that's right. All these dogs will have to be rehomed through one of our organisations or GAP anyway. That's definitely going to happen. It's just a matter of when and how it's managed and what that future looks like - whether this goes on for another 10 years or whether we manage it within this period.

Mr WINTER - Firstly, there have been a few occasions this morning when Ms O'Connor has said that policy decisions have been made; the government and the Greens might have, but I think it's being presumptive to say that this will pass parliament and this will work -

Ms O'CONNOR - I didn't say it will pass parliament. I said a policy decision's been made.

Mr WINTER - Yes, a decision's been made as though it's final, but I think there's a lot to do here.

I just wanted to start by tending to the evidence you've given, Ms Dawkins, around the conditions you've found greyhounds in, do you accept that given the nature of what you do, you're being called out to greyhound trainers because there's an issue that's been raised and, potentially, you're not being called out to people in the industry who are doing the right thing and there's no allegations against them.

Ms DAWKINS - That wasn't one of these situations. I never go out with authorised officers when an animal cruelty complaint's been made and then they start in that investigation process. This was actually a part of my work getting ready for a greyhound adoption program at the RSPCA. I reached out to some stakeholders: 'Can I come and have a look?' And, as I said, these people were delightful. They were so kind, they were so welcoming, and they were so proud of their facility, but it wasn't anything that anyone should be proud of.

Mr WINTER - You spoke a little about the general dog legislation. As someone who's interacted with this a bit around greyhound off-lead areas and in local government, and the frustrations that we've had with perfectly sociable greyhounds that are ridiculously often times kept away from other dogs, I agree with you in that sense. But do you also agree that given the regulations, the fact that we have new racing regulations in place, we have a commissioner of racing, that greyhounds are actually more highly regulated than any other breed at the moment? They're subject to steward checks, they're subject to lifetime monitoring, they're subject to tracking, I should say, statistics every year that are scrutinised by this parliament. Do you accept that they are in fact more highly regulated than any other breed at this point in time?

Ms DAWKINS - As they should be for the high-risk activity that they're involved in. Of course they have to be regulated. You've seen the number of injuries and animals that are dying in kennels that really no-one understands why. Yes, data is collected, and, yes, they are regulated but of course they should be - they're being used as a gambling product.

PUBLIC

Mr WINTER - They are very heavily regulated at this time. In terms of your earlier comments about what's been said by others to be the urgency of this legislation, if the evidence is agreed to by parliament from our earlier witnesses around not wanting to rush this through and the legislation doesn't go through this year, how many dogs would you expect reasonably to be bred or brought into the state in the first few months of next year -

Ms DAWKINS - That's a question for the industry and not for an animal welfare advocate.

Mr WINTER - I am just struggling to see how there's any circumstance in which there are huge numbers of additional dogs coming into Tasmania during a relatively short period of time. Are you aware of any evidence that would support the idea that during this period of time there would be a large number of dogs bred or brought into the state during such a period?

Ms DAWKINS - I suppose the question you're asking is, if I need to answer a question about the urgency for the legislation to allow not to pass this year, as the commissioner has indicated would be the ideal outcome, but for it to be prolonged for a period of time, which I don't really understand how that would positively impact anybody.

We've not had the chance to get stuck in and make a plan for the welfare of these animals for the long-term to come out of the industry, whereas the industry's had decades and decades to continue to do what it's doing and using dogs as a racing product. I think it's our turn. The community has stated quite clearly through petitions and through their voice that it's time to get those dogs out of the racing industry and into homes. That's a fair call and it would be very responsible for this parliament to ensure that happens.

Mr WINTER - To answer your question, the industry says that they've been unfairly treated. There's been no natural justice for them, and they haven't had input into the bill. From the point of view of the RSPCA and the Dogs' Homes, if you've got anything additional to add as well, were you consulted about the development of the bill before it was tabled in the House of Assembly?

Ms DAWKINS - I was a part of the transition working group. Yes, we had a briefing, but certainly not consulted. I didn't have any input. I just heard.

Mr WINTER - Is that the same answer for Dogs' Homes?

Mr WILD - We weren't consulted, no. We're also not part of that working group.

Mr WINTER - Perhaps for you, Mark, then it might be the best question. Have you had the opportunity to provide any feedback on the bill as it currently exists?

Mr WILD - No, we haven't been given that opportunity.

Mr WINTER - Have you had any feedback in terms of improvements or otherwise?

Mr WILD - To your earlier point around the urgency, we've been fighting for this for a long period of time. We think every day that goes by there are dogs at risk of serious injury and/or death, so from an animal-welfare perspective, that's where our urgency comes in. We totally appreciate that there's another side to all this and we don't want to discount the industry

or the code and their participants. But certainly, from an animal-welfare perspective, we think that there's an urgency to get this bill happening and getting it through parliament so that we can start to get to work.

Mr WINTER - Ms Dawkins, your impact report talks about more than one point, more than 1900 cruelty reports received through the cruelty hotline. Of that, how many of those related to dogs? I assume that's animals more broadly. Of those, how many were specifically in relation to the greyhound breed?

Ms DAWKINS - I can't keep that kind of data in my mind. Can I take that on notice and get back to the committee?

Mr WINTER - Really appreciate that.

CHAIR - Can I go back to the issue around the urgency for the bill. When the announcement was made, there was concern in the industry. Uncertainty was instantly created. I think that's fair to say for the industry and a lot of public interest because, as you say, Andrea, the community has been campaigning for this for a very long time, so a lot of excitement with the industry. That caused some dogs to exit the industry in unusual ways or ways that aren't approved in terms of we saw dogs appearing on Gumtree, comments made, I know, that I think Mark at the Dogs' Homes of Tasmania stepped in to assist those dogs to make sure they were homed properly.

What's the risk if this legislation doesn't pass by the end of December that we see continued dogs exiting the industry in non-approved ways, at highly risky ways, who are dumped, potentially euthanised - and that's been the experience from other jurisdictions - and how important is it to you to be able to have - when you're [inaudible] into that process - trying to rescue these dogs is costly without the support of proper transition process.

I suppose I'm saying, if the legislation passes, you're able to put that plan in place, the funding arrangements, all those kinds of things, that coordinated approach. If it doesn't pass and it's delayed, then what's the risk to both your organisations in trying to ad hoc pick up the pieces of an industry that has a lot of uncertainty and dogs that are at high risk?

Ms DAWKINS - If I could briefly go first then. Around the Gumtree dogs, that's so complicated to try to nail down somebody who's advertising a greyhound on Gumtree. They don't want to surrender them to us. We're enforcers. I understand that and they don't want to travel necessarily to the Dogs' Homes either, but Mark, I'm sure, will speak more about that. There are community groups, as I'm sure you're aware, that are set up to try to broker that, to try to extract that animal from that home. It's the strangest and most complicated process that we go through in order to rescue an animal, but we do it and, for us, it's not a good use of our time. We'd much rather have a simple, clear transition, a structured process so that our time can be spent looking after animals, not on the road trying to extract those animals.

Mr WILD - Yes, we'd certainly agree with that in terms of the sooner there's a structure around the transition and what that looks like from our point of view, the better off we are. We've been rehoming greyhounds for a long time, and we've been doing it with no funding. We're an organisation that's super committed to greyhounds and to the welfare of those greyhounds and finding them their forever home. From our point of view, the sooner we get on with the job the better.

CHAIR - Can I also go to the issue and the transition? The bill itself has the phasing out of, or the ending of, greyhound racing in June 2029, but then a transition process starting from, if it's passed, from 1 January next year. How important is it to have that transition process to ensure that you don't end up, and Mr Carroll has given evidence, we don't want to get to 30 June 2029 and have 1036 dogs to rehome. How important is it to have that transition process put in place? Could you also talk about the issue of greyhounds not being treated as dogs in our regulations and how important it is to ensure that greyhounds are treated as dogs in regulations moving through that transition phase so that we can rehome them and typically enjoy them just as people enjoy their labradors or their labradoodles or whatever it might be?

Ms DAWKINS - Over the last 12 months, because our funding increased to ensure that we have enough inspectors to do the facilities inspection - so, 31 dog facilities had been inspected against the dog regulations. Now, none of those facilities house greyhounds. They were all just general breeding facilities. But it's given our inspectors a really good insight into the Tasmanian landscape, as far as ethical, legal breeding is concerned. Most people are doing brilliantly. Where they fall short, and I think you will all understand this, is the paperwork. So, it's the evacuation plans and the overall health plans for the site - the individual dogs themselves are doing very, very well.

We really need to get the change in that regulation through, so our inspectors can measure greyhound breeding and training programs against what we know are really good people working in the dog breeding industry. Because we've got no oversight of that right now, we have to wait until perhaps a Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commission (TasRIC) official will call us in on a joint investigation, which we're always happy to do. Then we can see it firsthand. But we're not the first port of call right now for an animal cruelty allegation for a dog in the greyhound industry, because that, of course, would go to the racing industry, which is then regulating themselves.

CHAIR - So, it's a crisis response, rather than an educative kind of on-the-ground supportive response?

Ms DAWKINS - Exactly. The RSPCA for many years - that's been a really main part of our role. In fact, we've been challenged on it - that we're trying to educate and help people to do better with their animals, rather than using that enforcement capacity. For my time, I think it's important that we do both: it's really important that we educate people when we need to, but then when somebody really has got to that point where we've tried, we've instructed and they've not followed instructions, we have to enforce.

Ms O'CONNOR - If we could just go back to the bill that's before the parliament. It amends a number of acts: the *Animal Welfare Act*, the *Dog Control Act*, and the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act*; and in the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act*, there are further amendments in part 5. Going back to, in a way, Mr Winter's question about consultation, and I know this has landed quite suddenly - but just in terms of the stepping out that's in the bill, which the Chair referred to earlier, you have a transition that starts on 1 January. Have you had a chance to have a look at the legislation to assess whether you believe it allows for that coordinated transition; that the dogs will be looked after and that it does - I mean, not that your concern is for the industry itself, but we all care about people - that it provides that framework and certainty to the industry?

Ms DAWKINS - Well, I think it does. I think it's been incredibly generous. From my perspective, greyhound racing could continue until that last date from this legislation. I mean, obviously we'd hope that it would be a stepped approach through there so that all the animals don't exit on the same day, but I think from the industry perspective they should be. I mean, I know they're not going to be pleased, of course they're not - it's a change, a big change to their lifestyle. But it does give a very long lead-in time until they have to stop racing greyhounds.

Ms O'CONNOR - The restrictions on breeding that would come into effect from 1 January 2026, have you got any reflections on how important that is to a transition that prioritises animal welfare?

Mr WILD - From our point of view, we think it's an absolute priority in terms of stopping the breeding.

Ms O'CONNOR - The breeding for racing?

Mr WILD - Yes, breeding for racing, sorry. For us to rehome 1036 dogs over four years is going to be an extremely challenging job. So, the sooner we stop the supply coming into the system, I think the better off we are. It's going to be a big job over four years to rehome that many greyhounds.

Ms RATTRAY - But didn't you just say earlier that that was fine? That you would be able to manage?

Mr WILD - We feel as though we are comfortable to be able to do that, but it's going to be a challenge.

CHAIR - That would add to that challenge.

Mr WILD - We have other dogs that come to us as well, not just greyhounds.

Ms RATTRAY - I'm just checking I didn't mishear, that's all.

Mr WILD - All I'm saying is, it's not going to be an easy job and it's going to rely on a lot of animal welfare organisations and the community to make it happen in that timeframe.

Ms O'CONNOR - What would you say to anyone who has never had a greyhound in the family before and is looking to introduce a new family member, and is considering perhaps one of the 1036 greyhounds that are in the industry at the moment, as that family member?

Mr WILD - I guess my personal point of view, I would say come and visit the Dogs' Homes. But outside of that, I think any amount of time anyone spends with a greyhound realises how placid they are and how loving they are in terms of they're very much leaners, as those who know greyhounds would know, and they're very affectionate dogs. People think they are going to be highly strung and highly energetic. They do have their highly strung, highly energetic moments that might last for several minutes and then the rest of the time they are quite happy to be with people and on the couch.

Ms O'CONNOR - And they are quite goofy dogs too, aren't they?

Mr WILD - They are a bit goofy, yes.

Ms DAWKINS - For our greyhound, and I've always had RSPCA rescue dogs, we've got a kelpie cross and a little thick-headed staffy cross at the moment. Then we inserted a two-year-old Goldie greyhound in between those two dogs and she just loves them. From the moment she walked into our house, it's like she's always been there. She's got them under control. They adore her. They completely adore her. I've never known an animal like it. I do not know why, but I have always thought that animals like this- big personalities that need lots of attention and lots of care and concern- Goldie just is. She just exists in our home and she is the most loving, sweet animal I have ever met.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you.

CHAIR - I can vouch for that absolutely, as a greyhound owner myself.

Andrea, can I go to some of the practicalities around greyhound ownership during a transition period and then after the end of greyhound racing? As Dean alluded to, at the moment greyhounds can only be run off-lead in a very limited number of places in Tasmania. I think we're up to three parks now in Tasmania, one being opened recently in West Tamar, I think it was, and obviously they aren't supposed to be off-lead in any other areas. That's extremely limiting as a greyhound owner.

Mr WINTER - And often breached in a fine way to be honest.

CHAIR - Yes, and the only reason why those regulations are in place is because we treat the greyhound as a commodity, not as a dog, and that's how we've been treating greyhounds. We separate them out for some reason. How important is it to get this transition process under way so that we can make changes to regulations and things like that, that allow greyhounds to be treated as dogs - so to be able to be run off-lead? I have a greyhound and two labradors, and I cannot take them all to the local dog park because my poor greyhound, Freddie, has to stay on-lead while everyone else gets to run free.

How important is that, not only the welfare of the dogs themselves, but also to the rehoming opportunities? It's a challenge if you are a greyhound owner and wanting to obey the law, and I recognise that there are some that do not, but it's a challenge.

Ms DAWKINS - Well, if I could just touch on some of my experience working with the other SPCAs and RSPCAs around the world. I have been meeting with RSPCA UK lately and they had no idea. They're like, 'You do what now in Tasmania?' Never heard of anything like it before. Obviously, in English culture there's a long history of greyhounds as pets. They had no idea; they've never separated them, no-one ever suggested that they should.

CHAIR - They're in the Bible as companions.

Ms DAWKINS - And the behaviour assessments are just like any other dog. I think it is something that we have put in place, I think some would argue, because of live baiting and that we've got a lot of small dogs and cats in the community that we wanted to protect; I get that, but as there's no longer any live baiting and animals are not being trained for that, to me it just doesn't make any sense.

Mr WILD - Yes, I would agree with that. The sooner we treat them as the dogs that they are, I think the better off we are.

Mr WINTER - I wanted to go back to the question about the timing of the breeding and the urgency - or lack of sort of urgency - some say and some say it's not. What would it actually mean to the implementation process of rehoming the dogs if there was a delay in the legislation going through to a later point in March or April?

Ms DAWKINS - I think I already answered that by saying that we've been waiting for so long, the community has been waiting for so long. I'm just not sure what another three or four months, how that would benefit anybody, is really all I can say to that.

Mr WINTER - So, you can't quantify the - I guess I'm looking for some quantification around -

Ms DAWKINS - We cannot quantify that. I'm not sure if Mark can, but from a financial position I can't.

Mr WILD - Yes, I think a delay in the legislation is just a delay in the rehoming. I do not necessarily think there's in terms of money to quantify. I'm not 100 per cent sure what you're wanting to quantify in terms of -

Mr WINTER - I know I asked it earlier, but what are we actually going to be dealing with if this waits until March? How many additional dogs we'd see or what the impact would be going forward? I don't think [inaudible] disagree. One of the first questions for the parliament is going to be, is there urgency in this at all? I am hearing that you're saying there is urgency loud and clear and we heard from earlier guests that there isn't. So, from my point of view, I'm just trying to quantify what would actually happen. You're saying you don't have the information and perhaps we'll be able to find witnesses who will be able to.

Mr WILD - From a rehoming point of view, it's not going to make too much difference in terms of the sense of the work that we do, but from an animal-welfare perspective it brings more dogs into the industry and into the sector that we've been advocating and fighting really hard for a long period of time to try to do something about.

In terms of what's being bred and coming in, that's probably a question for the industry and so our rehoming efforts, we're keen to get those under way as soon as we possibly can because we know there's an animal-welfare impact on every dog that's in the industry and every new dog that's coming in, as well as every existing dog in the industry.

Mr WINTER - Hypothetically, if the bill were to go through in March or April, and I hope it doesn't, but if it were to go through in March or April, is it still possible to achieve the policy outcome of having all dogs rehomed by June 2029?

Mr WILD - Every day that ticks by makes it harder at the end of the day. Whatever we mentioned, 1036 dogs to rehome in the space of three-and-a-half years is going to be a challenge. We're up for the challenge, but there's going to be a challenge. To delay that makes that job even harder.

PUBLIC

Mr WINTER - Do you think it would be possible, though, if the legislation goes through in March or April?

Mr WILD - What would be possible?

Mr WINTER - Would it still be possible to -

Ms O'CONNOR - You would just do your best.

CHAIR - Put the animals first.

Ms DAWKINS - We always do our best.

CHAIR - We're not the only state whose embarked on this. In fact, we are one of the last jurisdictions to have embarked on banning greyhound racing. Are you able to inform the committee about some of those experiences?

The sky hasn't fallen in all the other countries that have banned it and we're hearing constantly of tracks being closed down. In the US, the home of greyhound racing, there's only one state has continued with greyhound racing. Only seven more jurisdictions allow greyhound racing across the globe. New Zealand is transitioning at the moment.

What are some of the lessons that have been learnt by other animal-welfare organisations around that transition and how important it is to protect and put animal welfare in the centre of that transition process?

Ms DAWKINS - They have been learning, certainly in New Zealand. I'm sure you've been following around the ensuring that that euthanasia clause was within that legislation very early on because of the threats that were being made about how people were going to dispose of their animals, also transporting them to other jurisdictions that allow racing; that's not appropriate, so they've closed those loopholes as well.

Whereas as far as the US experience, there are a couple of states in the US that are working with the New Zealand groups who are rehoming because they want to rehome more greyhounds because it's been such a positive thing for their community to shut down greyhound racing and have those beautiful dogs as pets.

In some ways the people who I speak to at the RSPCA around the world are shocked by the amount of funding that goes into greyhound racing in Tasmania still. In some ways being an island where we are, we forget that the rest of the world moves on, and we get stuck in a moment sometimes. That's how I feel about greyhound racing in Tasmania - that we've progressed long beyond this.

A judge recently said, he likened greyhound racing to whaling and it was the first time I'd heard somebody - and it's a pretty conservative role being a judge in Tasmania and I read that and I reread it and I went back and read it again because that's how I feel. I didn't know that somebody in that sort of situation, Justice Brett, would also feel the same way.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - We've just about come to our time. Thank you very much for your appearance today. I appreciate it and thank you for the work that you do on behalf of the wonderful many thousands of creatures in Tasmania.

Before we conclude, I need to make a final statement. What you have said here today is protected by parliamentary privilege. Once you leave the table, you need to be aware that the privilege is not attached to comments that you may make to anyone, including the media, even if you're just repeating what you've told us here today. Do you understand that?

Witnesses - Yes.

CHAIR - Excellent. Thank you very much and thank you for your time.

The committee suspended from 11.24 a.m to 11.44 a.m.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Thank you very much and welcome to today's hearing of the Joint Standing Committee on Greyhound Racing Transition. Thank you very much for your attendance today. I don't think I will introduce the members. I think you all know who we are.

If you could please state your name and the capacity in which you're appearing before the committee, just for today's record and for hearing.

Mr HALL - Stephen Hall, I'm Principal Adviser, Legal Services, with Biosecurity Tasmania.

Ms WILSON - Deidre Wilson, I'm acting Chief Operations Officer with NRE Tas.

Ms YAN - Anita Yan, Deputy Chief Operations Officer with NRE Tas.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, and I can confirm that you've received and read the guide sent to you by the committee secretariat?

WITNESSES - Yes.

CHAIR - As you'd be aware, this hearing is covered by parliamentary privilege, allowing individuals to speak with freedom without fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place outside of parliament. This protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside parliamentary proceedings. This hearing is public and the public and media may be present or watching online. Should you wish aspects of evidence to be heard in private, you must make this request to the committee at the time.

We don't need to swear you in because you've done that previously. However, I will get Stephen to do that - if you wouldn't mind reading the statutory declaration before you.

Mr STEPHEN HALL, PRINCIPAL ADVISER (LEGAL), BIOSECURITY TASMANANIA, DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT TASMANIA, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. I know that Deidre and Anita have done that previously, so we will move straight to opening statements. Would you like to provide the committee with an opening statement before we launch into questions?

Ms WILSON - Thank you, Chair. The Department of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE Tas) administers legislation within the Racing portfolio. In accordance with the Premier's announcement on 10 August 2025, the department has developed the Greyhound Racing Legislation Amendments (Phasing Out Reform) Bill 2025 to enable the phase-out of greyhound racing in Tasmania.

The bill provides for a staged and considered transition to 30 June 2029, when greyhound racing will cease. This approach allows sufficient time for rehoming of greyhounds and allows participants including owners, trainers and breeders to adjust and plan for the future. The bill amends the *Animal Welfare Act 1993*, the *Dog Control Act 2000* and the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024*. As you're aware, some provisions will commence from 1 January 2026, subject to passage in 2025, while others will take effect from 1 July 2029.

The bill was drafted by the Office of Parliamentary Counsel, as the government's legislative drafting experts. In drafting the bill, the department consulted with the Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner to ensure that the legislative provisions are appropriate to support the transition. This included an analysis of legislation and other jurisdictions and overseas. The department also consulted with the departments of Treasury and Finance and Premier and Cabinet for amendments to the *Dog Control Act*; and internal experts within NRE Tas on amendments to the *Animal Welfare Act* and the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act*. Additionally, the commissioner also organised for the department to brief the Transition Working Group and greyhound racing participants, and, of course, the department engaged with the minister's office.

The department believes this bill provides a clear legislative framework and a balanced and practical pathway to 30 June 2029, safeguarding animal welfare while allowing industry participants time to transition. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the bill today.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, Deidre, I appreciate that. Obviously, this is an opportunity to be briefed on the provisions of the bill that's before us. For those who might be watching at home, it's available on the parliamentary website, along with the clause notes and the fact sheets, which are the normal things that go with the bill and to make a bill package.

Can you broadly outline to us the nature of the bill, in that it's in a couple of parts; and the fact that we have the finalisation, or the ending, of greyhound racing coming to effect on 30 June 2029 and the provisions around that, and also the need for a transition period? A fair amount of the bill is replicated in two parts. Could you please explain why that's the case?

Ms WILSON - Yes. One is that we took advice from the Office of Parliamentary Counsel around the best mechanism to amend legislation, to give effect to the government's policy. That advice was that it would be appropriate for there to be transition provisions - which is part 4, and then for there to be provisions that would apply post-2029. As you would see, some amendments will operate from 1 January, and the others will come in at the closure date.

CHAIR - Thank you. I will open up to questions. Cassy?

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Chair. If the bill is passed this year - if you're speaking to industry participants now, what does that mean for the industry from 1 January 2026?

Ms WILSON - Well, as has been noted, greyhound racing can continue through the transition period, but there are some controls that are put in place in terms of regulation of the industry through this period. Breeding of greyhounds for racing purposes is prohibited during the transition period. There are some extra controls around euthanasia for animal-welfare reasons that have been put in place, which is that that can occur only with written consent of Tasracing.

It also includes the legislative requirement for the commissioner to put in place the transition plan or the 'closure' plan, which is the word that's used in the bill and there's also a number of provisions to support the careful management of greyhound racing. There's consent required from Tasracing for transfer of registered greyhounds to a new owner; consent required from Tasracing to race an overseas or interstate greyhound in Tasmania. There's also a provision around registered greyhounds that have reached the age of six years or that have not raced for a 12-month period will be deemed retired and deregistered, some with an exception.

In discussion with the commissioner in terms of the fact that there are some greyhounds that are not registered within the industry, there is a provision that will apply only during the transition period for the commissioner to have additional powers and that's to enter and inspect premises for the purpose of conducting an audit or investigation during the transition period. That was, as I said, to enable the commissioner to look not just at registered greyhounds but more broadly around greyhounds that may not be currently registered.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. Why was it thought necessary, and was this advice that was provided to you by the Office of Parliamentary Counsel, to have the two provisions in there specifically? The first one is the breeding provision, and the second one is the restrictions/prohibitions on euthanising dogs.

Ms WILSON - Well, in that case, this was actually around the careful construction of the act and our advice to OPC about what we wanted and felt needed to be delivered. That was based on advice primarily from the commissioner, Mr Carroll, and looking at the work that had been done in other jurisdictions. So, taking lessons learned to make sure that there was an appropriate and staged approach to this, if this bill is passed.

Ms O'CONNOR - So in New Zealand, for example, their greyhound racing industry will close in the middle of next year and the industry had basically two years to transition; what do you think has been learned from looking across the Tasman at how the New Zealand government is enacting its end to greyhound racing? Would you like to talk about some of the differences with this legislation which allows for twice as long?

Ms WILSON - Look, in this case we were focused on looking at the New Zealand jurisdiction in terms of their drafting of their legislation, so we were looking at it from that perspective. The commissioner was looking at it from the perspective of the transition plan, so he was looking at the lessons learnt from other jurisdictions around how that transition can be made orderly and how that could be progressed with the welfare of participants and animals front and centre. I don't think I could talk about the particular differences, but we were looking at the legislation and how it was drafted.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, and I guess the significant structural difference, because in the New Zealand legislation they've also front-ended the euthanasia ban, but it's half the time allocated for the industry and rehoming organisations to adjust. I'm happy to move on for now.

Ms RATTRAY - A couple of questions, if I might. This committee, under its terms of reference, looks at the legislative requirements for the transition, yet I'm actually looking at them and we are still working. I'm just interested if you're going to take on board anything that comes from this committee in regard to the transition, and is that part of what you're focusing on?

Ms WILSON - I think there are two aspects: one is that there is a bill that's been tabled before parliament which gives effect to the government's commitment and the government's commitment was to close the industry by 1 July 2029, so, there's one aspect. The hearings you're having today and the questions you can ask us about the bill hopefully will inform you of how we've developed the bill and how we consider that it's appropriately drafted and stepped out.

PUBLIC

The second part of that question, though, is about the transition. You've heard from the commissioner, but I could say that under this bill we've put in legislation, if it's passed in the bill, a requirement for a closure plan that is to embed into that that there is a requirement and it's in legislation.

The role of the committee, and the commissioner has said this, and I don't want to speak for him, but I have heard him say that he will develop that transition plan mindful of feedback, and he's seeking feedback.

Ms RATTRAY - So the work of this committee will inform somebody about this process.

Ms WILSON - That's probably a matter for the government. Having said that, there is the legislative requirement for a plan. Whenever recommendations are made, the government, the commissioner and NRE Tasmania would have regard to those as standard practices.

Ms RATTRAY - There is version 3 of an information document kicking around. I would respectfully request that it's tabled for the committee's information.

Ms WILSON - Yes, we can certainly table that.

Ms RATTRAY - Would you like to speak to version 1 and 2 and how you got to 3?

Ms YAN - The information sheet was developed based on feedback from the last hearing a few weeks ago where we heard that we needed to provide some easy-to-understand information about the bill. The information sheet was developed to provide a plain English version of the bill to inform the community and participants. The information sheet was updated based on the feedback that we have received.

Ms RATTRAY - From the industry, or from whom?

Ms YAN - Including from industry.

Ms RATTRAY - They rang up and said you have this completely wrong?

Ms WILSON - Through the commissioner.

Ms YAN - Through the commissioner. We weren't aware of questions from Mr Gatehouse. However, we did hear from the commissioner's office and then we updated the information sheet accordingly.

Ms RATTRAY - That was version 2?

Ms YAN - Version 2 was updated when we internally noticed some clarity that was needed, and it was again around the whelping and conception of greyhounds.

Ms WILSON - I would like to say a thank you to Mr Gatehouse for raising the concern with the fact sheet. We did not intend to provide that, to create uncertainty. We were looking to put forward a simple graphic and some information that would be more consumable. We did listen and that is evidence that we are listening. I'd like to say that it was good that he raised it.

Our intent was to put something out that was simple and easily digestible. But in making it simple we lost some of the import and intent and the specifics. We then spoke and we put some of those specifics into the information sheet to provide clarity.

Mr HALL - In that original version of the sheet the information was correct in that it said that a dog that was whelped before 1 January 2026 was exempt, but it didn't go further and say that 'and a dog conceived before that date and born afterwards was also exempt'. We've added that additional information in.

Ms O'CONNOR - Which is in the bill, of course.

Mr HALL - That's what the bill says. It was correct, but incomplete. Therefore, that led to -

CHAIR - Oversimplified.

Ms YAN - It was a clarification and didn't change the intent of the bill itself.

Mr WINTER - Thanks for being here. In terms of the announcement from the Premier back on 10 August [2025] and then getting to this point has been quite fast. The initial announcement - I'm just looking at - there was a bit of confusion. Some people thought that it was just defunding the industry. Others thought it was being banned. So, I wanted to understand the pathway to get to this point. At what point did the government provide you with its policy position and that included the ban by 30 June 2029?

Ms WILSON - The Premier in the media release of 10 August [2025] announced that this measure would be undertaken, that your committee would be formed, and then we have moved forward with developing the bill.

Mr WINTER - One of the components that I didn't know about until I read the bill was the ban on breeding coming in from 1 January. At what point did that piece come into the legislation?

Ms WILSON - When we had discussions with the Racing Integrity Commissioner, Mr Carroll, we looked at, and he is on the record as saying that he undertook a jurisdictional analysis, and we worked based on that. It was the advice from the commissioner that this was a necessary requirement for the orderly transition of the racing industry to closure.

Mr WINTER - Did you look at the ACT model? Because, as I understand, the ACT has banned greyhound racing in that territory, but there are still registered trainers and breeders who are operating in the ACT and racing their dogs elsewhere. Is that something that you considered in the drafting of the legislation?

Ms WILSON - We did look at other jurisdictions' legislation, but the determination and our approach here was to ensure, as the commissioner has said, that there was an orderly transition leading up to 2029 and part of that orderly transition was around ensuring that breeding was managed, so that the greyhounds that were left in the industry as at 2029 could be appropriately rehomed.

PUBLIC

Mr WINTER - So, who made the decision that the policy would then extend to have a ban on breeding?

Ms WILSON - As I say, that was our recommendation and it was based on advice from the commissioner.

Mr WINTER - So, you provide that recommendation back through to, presumably, the Racing minister, that this is what the bill should look like. Is that about what happens?

Ms WILSON - Yes.

Mr WINTER - The policy intent as it was originally announced in August, as we talked about, although reading the release is actually pretty clear, there was a ban on -

Ms WILSON - It was clear.

Mr WINTER - Perhaps it was, but certainly the public conversation was a little bit different. Why wouldn't it have been possible to simply undertake the ACT model here and achieve the policy outcome as outlined in the media release 'shutdown greyhound racing by 2029' but continue the other components of a race including the training and breeding of dogs?

Ms WILSON - As I have indicated, this was around looking at the Tasmanian context. It was around understanding what we considered, and based on advice from the commissioner, around what an orderly transition in the Tasmanian context would look like, and that was around those two key elements, which was industry certainty, so they could understand how this phase-out would occur, managing animal welfare in terms of the number of greyhounds that would be left in 2029 for rehoming and, of course, this is now before the parliament, so this is now a bill that will be considered and debated by the parliament.

Mr WINTER - If it simply banned the greyhound racing itself, could the dogs not have been transferred to other jurisdictions -

Ms O'CONNOR - And tortured over there?

Mr WINTER - Well, 'raced', I think, is the word that -

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, to suffer.

Mr WINTER - Well, you were very polite to our earlier guests, Ms O'Connor.

Ms O'CONNOR - But you're not a guest.

Mr WINTER - Sorry?

CHAIR - I think we'll get the question answered.

Mr WINTER - And I think you understand that there's a lot of people in this industry who do the right thing. The question is, why that transition couldn't have happened in that way?

Ms WILSON - As indicated, this is around an orderly transition. The proposal in the bill is staged. It's staged based on a look at what other jurisdictions have done, their learnings,

advice from the commissioner, and it's around ensuring that greyhound transition is orderly and appropriate.

Mr WINTER - What's disorderly around the Australian Capital Territory model though? Where greyhound racing was shut down but they're all still able to breed and train in the Australian Capital Territory.

Ms WILSON - In the transition period, the breeding controls are around ensuring that we have, as I've indicated, that we can manage the number of greyhounds that we have in the system and that we're able to rehome. Post 2029 in terms of the breeding prohibition that sits under the *Animal Welfare Act* and - well, breeding is actually in the *Dog Control Act* - there is a prohibition on breeding for the purposes of greyhound racing, but you can still breed dogs.

Mr HALL - It is in the *Animal Welfare Act*, as amended after the [inaudible]. Yes, I think the policy rationale for the breeding phase out and prevention of breeding during the transition period is whenever you have a legislative change like this, you can get perverse outcomes of a sudden onrush of breeding activity to qualify for the grandfather clause. I think the bill's predicated on a policy decision that the welfare issues are not just with the actual racing of the dogs, but it's the whole industry in which breeding is a very significant part.

It's legislation like this bill here. It's designed to actually phase out - so the phasing out needs to begin at the beginning of the transition period. That's the underlying policy and that's based on the advice from the Racing Commissioner as to how to give effect to that.

CHAIR - Can I ask then, following on from Dean's question around the difference between Australian Capital Territory? I mean, obviously for Australian Capital Territory, if you're conducting training or owning or activities, it's a hop, skip and a jump to go to a jurisdiction where you can race. Whereas obviously it's a hop, skip and a jump across a large body of water for the Tasmanians to be able to do it. Can you perhaps speak to the transition provisions in the bill in relation to the movement of greyhounds, both import and export for the transition? Obviously, that's much easier to monitor and ensure compliance with when you have a body of water you've got to get them across as opposed to the Australian Capital Territory where it's just down the road. Can you speak to how that that was constructed in terms of those provisions, please?

Mr HALL - It's not banned outright during the transition period. Registered greyhounds in Tasmania can race on mainland jurisdictions; they can be sold into mainland jurisdictions. There are some controls over the transfer, meaning when a registered greyhound becomes registered by someone else. It's not a ban, though. It's just simply really a traceability and to ensure that it's orderly. The control on bringing greyhounds into Tasmania is again all about making sure that now that everybody knows what's coming, there isn't suddenly perverse outcomes and perverse practices become entrenched - the impacts on the welfare of the animals.

It's just to make sure that Tasracing, and the other thing that is important to understand is the Rules of Racing as they currently apply will continue to apply through. So there's already controls under the Rules of Racing about where you can race greyhounds and how to register them, they'll continue. There's also that additional control just there to make sure that there's not suddenly some unusual new practice begins that impacts on the welfare of greyhounds

based on the fact that the phase out is coming. You just need to get the consent of Tasracing and that way they know when interstate greyhounds are coming in.

CHAIR - It's easier for compliance: I am assuming that is the purpose of it.

Ms WILSON - As indicated, it's a traceability.

Ms RATTRAY - Has there been any thought given to - there's a bit of a heavy workload of legislation possibly in the other place, but it certainly is in the Legislative Council, so this piece of legislation might not get to the members for a decision. So what happens to the 1 January 2026 date? What thought has been given to that?

Ms WILSON - Tabling and, of course, the passage of the bill through the House is a matter for the Leader of Government. I'd answer in two ways. First of all, and I think we had this discussion before, the bill commences on a date or as otherwise proclaimed. That's the first point. The second point is that where there's a date, and there is another date around breeding, but it also says 'as prescribed.' So, there is the capacity to prescribe a different date for that particular clause. If the will of the parliament is that this bill is not passed this year, obviously the government may then ask the commissioner and the department for advice about what that may mean in terms of the welfare of greyhounds and we'd provide advice at that time. At this stage, we've got a bill before the House.

Ms RATTRAY - I mean, for all intents and purposes, this bill might be sent to a committee of the Legislative Council.

Ms WILSON - And that will be a matter for the parliament.

Ms RATTRAY - So, those dates are quite fluid, in that respect?

Ms WILSON - I wouldn't say that they were fluid. I would say that the bill has a date which is anticipated for it to start, but obviously when you draft, if you've got a specific date and it's at the will of the parliament, the OPC's recommendation was that we set a date but noted that it could actually be when proclaimed.

Mr HALL - There's also an ability to make regulations during the transition period, under the Schedule 8 in the -

Ms RATTRAY - Alright, so you're expecting that there will be draft legislation to go with the bill when it's presented?

Mr HALL - No, that's just in case, for example, the timeframes change there's an ability to make a regulation which provides an additional exceptional defence to, for example -

Ms WILSON - It's the breeding.

Mr HALL - The breeding, yes. That's assuming that the dates were left as they were and not amended in some way. Nevertheless, even if that happens, there is still some flexibility there to ensure that no hardship or unfair outcomes result.

Ms O'CONNOR - Just going back to what Ms Rattray said earlier, one of the reasons - certainly I am - interested to explore the bill and the detail of the bill is because this committee has been given a transition oversight role. We have a bill before us. We have the people in the department who are part of the drafting process in front of us. In terms of the staging, the industry participants who were here this morning say that it's rushed, they need more time. I think we established that they would like some more time in order to try to reverse the policy decision. But, in terms of the time that's been provided for, noting which runs up to the expiry of the racing deed, is it your advice that this amount of time that's provided for as a transition period for the industry allows for a fair and, as you would say, Ms Wilson, orderly transition that protects the welfare of the animals and also makes sure that the industry is treated with respect as we end this industry?

Ms WILSON - The advice from the commissioner was that the bill is critical to provide certainty to industry on the transition to ensure that orderly process of the closure of greyhound racing on Tasmania. When we were asked to work on this bill, and we discussed this with the commissioner and his office, yes, we put forward what we thought would be a reasonably and appropriately staged process.

Ms O'CONNOR - Because there was an understandable confusion among participants this morning about some of the details of the bill, and this is a group of people who have been and feel blindsided, what kind of effort will the department and Tasracing be putting into engaging with industry participants about the legislation, and if it passes this year - if it does - what does that trip in terms of the department's engagement with industry and also the regulators around animal welfare?

Ms WILSON - What I would say first up is that in this stage now, I'm more than willing if industry wished to reach out to talk with them around the bill, of course. We will do that. That would be fine and happy to. Post if the bill was passed, the government has set in place the Tasmanian Greyhound Racing Transition Working Group. The commissioner has indicated and has expressed a keen desire for industry to be involved. If the bill is passed, that will be the key mechanism for management of the transition - it'll be through the commissioner and that transition working group.

Our role will be, if the commissioner requires any support, we will give that, but he has indicated that he has 10 objectives. He has the scope that he's going to look at, which is quite broad. In terms of those animal welfare issues, he will be looking to a whole-of-life greyhound welfare strategy, so it'll primarily sit with the transition group. But obviously, the department remains available and open to work with the commissioner and we would continue to also have a role under the *Animal Welfare Act* in terms of our normal - how would I put it - our normal obligations in terms of the *Animal Welfare Act*.

Ms O'CONNOR - This goes back to one of Mr Winter's earlier questions about the process around the genesis of the legislation. What are all the inputs to the bill, from the government policy position to what the commissioner has advised he needed to the Office of Parliamentary Counsel, experience of other jurisdictions? Are you able to detail the inputs to this legislation? What's informed it?

Ms WILSON - I think you just did that for me. Primarily, this is a situation where the government of the day has made a policy statement and that guided many of the guideposts for this. I might pass to Anita to talk about our process.

Ms YAN - In terms of the draft bill, in addition to the commissioner, we also consulted with other agencies. We consulted with the Department of Treasury and Finance, the Premier and Cabinet because they administer the *Dog Control Act* as well as internally with Biosecurity Tasmania and also with those experts in the department on the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act*, and the commissioner organised for us to brief the transition working group and also the greyhound participants in that session to take them through the substance of the bill.

Ms WILSON - And as noted, as you indicated, there was the opportunity to look at other jurisdictions' legislation and processes and to also rely upon, if I could say so, Stephen, also Stephen, as our advisor to OPC. Stephen has extensive experience in development of legislation including the *Biosecurity Act 2019*, which I think was still the biggest bill I've ever seen.

Ms O'CONNOR - It's about two or three metres thick from memory.

Ms WILSON - And also in his substantive role deals with a range of advice on animal welfare and biosecurity.

Mr HALL - In Biosecurity, we deal with animal welfare, food safety, biosecurity, obviously, AgVet chemicals. All of those involve interaction and implementing standards and legislative mechanisms that are national and also involve a lot of interaction with other states. The one example we had from another state, leaving aside the Australian Capital Territory, was obviously New South Wales, which -

Ms RATTRAY - Didn't quite get across the line.

Mr HALL - But they did have a bill. So we looked at that, obviously, and that informed the drafting instructions for here. But essentially, the other thing about it as far as a drafting exercise, we'd just come off the development and passage of the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act*, so there'd been a complete overhaul of the racing legislation, so the people that were involved in that process too were involved and consulted with. Actually, I had a lot of current expertise and insight we were able to draw upon. I think even though it looks like it was done quickly, because it was, it actually was at the end of quite an extensive evolutionary process that's been occurring anyway over the last 10 years, I suppose.

Ms RATTRAY - Just a question around your engagement with Tasracing - we heard this morning from industry participants that they'd had a meeting with Tasracing, and pretty much the CEO could give them nothing - no answers to their concerns or questions. So, what relationship -

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, that's what they said.

Ms RATTRAY - I did say that that's the information we received. I'm interested in how you're communicating with Tasracing, who are also at the coalface of this. It's been referred to as a 'three-legged stool' and one of those legs has been taken. I'm wondering what that looks like?

Ms WILSON - Thank you, for the question. I think that one of the key things is, as my understanding, they sit on the Greyhound Racing Transition Working Group. The

commissioner has been engaging with Tasracing and will continue to engage with Tasracing through the transition process if this bill is passed.

Ms RATTRAY - You're relying on the commissioner and that working group to give all the information that'll be needed for the code participants, so they have that full understanding. Is that pretty much it?

Ms WILSON - I'm indicating that they have been engaged - I can't talk for Tasracing. We will, obviously, if Tasracing have any questions, and they will, they will raise them through us or through the commissioner and that's appropriate.

I think that, in terms of the transition period, the role of Tasracing is actually pretty clear, in terms of how this is drafted. Post 2029, then the provisions actually fall in the *Animal Welfare Act*, which actually sits with the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania - that then transitions to us. We're the appropriate people to look at what post 2029 looks like, obviously in partnership potentially with the RSPCA which undertakes some of the animal welfare inspectorate activities under agreement with the department.

Ms RATTRAY - I have another question and I'm not quite sure if it even belongs here, but I'll ask it anyway and we'll see. I've been informed that there's no prohibition on the movement of racing greyhounds out of Tasmania born or bred prior to 1 January 2026 or whatever that other day to be prescribed might look like during that transition period. I'm trying to get my head around the fact that this closing - and I know it's not your policy; you're just implementing policy - but when you were building the legislation or putting the legislation together, if there's such a strong issue with the welfare of greyhounds, why would that be allowed? You're sending them to virtually to another place, and who knows what their welfare conditions are like.

Ms WILSON - Can I clarify the question? Is it around breeding -

Ms RATTRAY - Well, I'm asking -

Ms WILSON - Yes, sorry. I'm actually genuinely asking. Can you clarify it for me?

Ms RATTRAY - Obviously, there's an ability to be able to still put those greyhounds that are bred prior to 1 January 2026 - or whatever that date is, it might be 31 March, it might be whatever, I'm not sure what that is - in the transition period can go to the mainland. If there's welfare concerns, how come that's in this bill to shut down the racing industry, but send them somewhere else to let them race?

Ms WILSON - There are two issues. One is that when you introduce a reform like this, we had to take into account that there will be a start date. At that start date you would have animals that would be pregnant. How do you how do you manage those animals?

Look, participants may well - now they've got a date, but before this they didn't have a date - so they may well have been breeding dogs in anticipation of whelping and that they could undertake racing of those dogs. That was seen -

Ms RATTRAY - I think that's mostly the idea.

Ms WILSON - That was deemed to be reasonable phasing-in approach. In terms of movement of dogs, there's no prohibition on the movement of dogs through the transition period. People can still -

Ms RATTRAY - So there were no welfare concerns for any other jurisdiction?

Ms WILSON - Our concern is Tasmanian jurisdiction. That's what we provide. That's what our legislation is about. It's a matter for other jurisdictions how they manage their animal welfare. That's not unusual. There can be different standards around animal welfare in different jurisdictions. What we are looking at is the phased transition in this jurisdiction.

Ms RATTRAY - In your mind, there were no issues with welfare here now, but it's post July 2029 when they don't have any racing and they need to be rehomed?

Mr HALL - There's always a balance of considerations here. When you ban something, like this legislation will do, immediately before the ban occurs or before the prohibition occurs, people make decisions, commercial decisions -

Ms RATTRAY - And have made decisions.

Mr HALL - and they have already made the decision before the ban occurs. There is a general principle with legislation, whether it's about this or anything, that it won't have retrospective effect. If you banned the ability for a dog that was conceived before the ban took effect, it would effectively give that ban a retrospective - so that's to make sure that doesn't happen. Obviously, it's Tasmanian legislation, so really, it can only control things that are occurring in Tasmania. So we can't ban New South Wales, what goes on there. We can only ban people's activities and decisions and behaviours here in Tasmania.

Ms WILSON - And the balance in this is around not breeding for racing purposes in Tasmania going forward.

CHAIR - Can I ask the question - it's a nuts and bolts question really around the bill and the definitions between commercial dog race and a greyhound race? Because, as indicated before, there's some confusion about what's allowed for activities for greyhounds both in the transition period, but then obviously, from 1 July 2029, and a lot of confusion about what can happen.

Ms WILSON - Really the purpose of that clause was to, I suppose, not transfer the effort from greyhounds into other like activities with other dogs. What it does is after the transition through amendments to the *Animal Welfare Act*, it will be an offence to race greyhounds anyway, including time trials with or without a lure. As you've said, it will also be an offence to race any other dog breeds in a way that replicates current greyhound racing, so it'll be a matter of fact whether any activity involving other dogs, breeds of dogs, will come within the definition of a commercial dog race.

But it is really clear in the bill, if you have a look, that commercial dog race means a race between two or more dogs in pursuit of a mechanical or electronic lure where certain other actions occur, such as gambling, for example. The intent here was to, as I say - we were trying to cover all the different scenarios that might play out and avoid perverse outcomes.

CHAIR - In terms of the definitions between, obviously, breeding for racing purposes will be banned, but pets are still there. Can you please provide the committee some guidance about how you define what a pet is?

Ms WILSON - In this case, and I'll go to Stephen in a moment. We're not defining pets; it's racing. The prohibition is on the breeding for the purposes of racing, and we have that definition of commercial racing within the bill. That ensures that people understand what that means.

Mr HALL - With anything like that, it would be a question of fact. If there was some sort of compliance action being taken against someone, you'd have to prove it beyond reasonable doubt. You need evidence to show, like communications between someone saying, 'I'm breeding up some dogs for you to race,' or you had a tip off from another witness saying this is happening. You couldn't just - 'someone's breeding a greyhound, I think it's for racing, so therefore I'm going to prosecute.' You obviously need evidence there.

There are some other provisions in the amended *Animal Welfare Act* which talk about supplying a dog that a person knows or reasonably ought to know. Obviously, you'd need to have evidence to prosecute a charge there that the person knew or that any reasonable person doing what they were doing with the knowledge they had knew that these dogs were going to be for racing, so they couldn't just plead ignorance. Again, it would be for the authorities to have to prove these things.

Ms WILSON - To provide that reassurance, yes, there is no prohibition on the breeding of greyhounds for non-racing purposes.

CHAIR - We heard passionately from someone this morning about how much they loved their dogs and the breeding of them and that enjoyment of having pups, and that still will be allowed - it's just the definition that it won't be for racing purposes. There's nothing preventing the breeding of greyhound pups. It is the activity which follows that.

Ms WILSON - That's correct.

Ms O'CONNOR - In the scenario where parliament does pass the legislation this year, from the agency's point of view, given that you have responsibility for the *Animal Welfare Act*, what is the agency's understanding of how animal welfare outcomes will be protected under this framework? I note you can't comment on resourcing particularly, but there's a resourcing question here in terms of oversight compliance. How much of that sits with the Racing Integrity Commissioner and the responsibilities of his office and how much will sit with NRE Tas? What is the role of NRE Tas during the transition period, apart from providing advice to the minister and Tasracing from time to time?

Ms WILSON - The primary responsibility under the *Racing Integrity Act*, it sits, in terms of racing, with the commissioner and with Tasracing. You'd be quite aware that that new model was put in place recently and was a significant reform. Primarily, the Premier has asked that the commissioner take a lead on the transition, and the bill will require that plan to be put in place.

As I've said, the Greyhound Racing Transition Working Group will play a pivotal role. There will be some requirements in the transition period around ensuring compliance, but one

of the reasons for a bill to be put in place is that then people understand what the rules are and, in most cases, people are compliant once they understand what the rules need to be. In terms of Tasracing's and the commissioner's requirements, that is what will be in the transition plan.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you for that. Will Biosecurity Tasmania - it's statutory role under the act - will that be an add-on to the Racing Integrity Commissioner's work? Where are the people going to be who undertake inspections for example, who are keeping eyes on an industry that'll be reeling and in transition and keeping an eye on those dogs?

Ms WILSON - First of all, there is the commissioner. As I probably indicated earlier, through the transition period the commissioner has some additional powers around audit and entry and that's primarily because that is enabling the commissioner to undertake an oversight at the highest level, the transition plan. The next layer down is that there would be the ordinary business of Tasracing and stewards in terms of their ordinary inspections and management of industry under the Rules of Racing.

Obviously, we would also, as an agency, if there was a specific complaint or matter raised around an animal welfare matter, normally that may well sit with the RSPCA, but we do joint investigations, led by the commissioner and/or Biosecurity Tasmania or RSPCA - may undertake compliance activities. It's a tiered approach and the tiered approach sits with the oversight of the commissioner. The commissioner has the capacity, under his ordinary act, to set standards and also directions. There are also his general powers that also would apply through this period.

Ms O'CONNOR - Can I ask about the regulation making powers that'll be in place - and I think Mrs Rattray asked about this in part earlier - what kind of regulations might be attached to this legal framework? Have any been foreseen?

Mr HALL - It's really just there as a safeguard in case - and there almost always is - something unforeseen or some outcome that you had. There is an ability there in the transition to provide some defences or provide some additional. That's in the three-year transition period under Schedule 8 of the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act*, which will sunset, essentially, at the end of that. After that it'll be the *Animal Welfare Act* or the *Dog Control Act* and there's the ability to make regulations under there generally for the welfare or management of dogs.

Ms O'CONNOR - Can you foresee that there'll be any need to engage with the industry around changing the rules of greyhound racing?

Ms WILSON - I couldn't answer that question. That's really a matter for the commissioner. He's not responsible for the Rules of Racing, but in terms of the transition plan, that would be a matter for the commissioner and Tasracing.

Ms O'CONNOR - A governance question: if you have a whole new legislative framework and a phase out in place, in governance terms, would the department recognise that the Rules of Racing may need adjustment during the transition period?

Mr HALL - It may do. It's predicated on as much as it's possible that there be the status quo and that there be as little disruption - with those safeguards that are in the bill about breeding and moving. After the transition period, and that's in the bill, basically, greyhound

comes completely out of the racing legislation and it then becomes under the *Dog Control Act* and the *Animal Welfare Act*, just like any other dog.

Ms WILSON - As I say, I think it would be a matter for the commissioner and Tasracing. I can't predict what would be required, but what we have is a stand-alone bill and the bill has what we believe are the appropriate provisions to manage the transition and then post 2029.

Mr WINTER - In terms of the creation of the bill, did you consider compensation as part of your jurisdictional analysis at all?

Ms WILSON - That's a matter for the government. What we considered was the orderly transition and ensuring that through things like the prohibition, the controls on breeding to ensure that by the end of the closure date that we had, as the commissioner has said, a reasonable capacity to rehome greyhounds.

Mr WINTER - You may have answered this earlier, but I want to be crystal clear. The engagement with industry: did anyone from industry see a copy of the bill or have any engagement before the day it was tabled in the House?

Ms WILSON - We provided a briefing for industry at the request of the commissioner. I believe it was on the day that the bill was -

Mr WINTER - Yes, so there was no other engagement from anyone from industry?

Ms WILSON - Well, I would point out that the commissioner did provide some advice - that the commissioner did seek to engage with a wide range of people and stakeholders, including participants and sought to get a participant on to the working group. His advice was sort of clear that we needed this legislation. But I think in a response to a question that you asked on 7 November, he said that the advice from industry to him was that industry were -

Ms RATTRAY - Shell shocked?

Ms WILSON - No, I would say - weren't going to take part in any consultation and development of feedback to myself, but I could take to NRE Tasmania as far as the bill was concerned. Now, I can't - so that was the advice we received.

Mr WINTER - And what about Tasracing? Was Tasracing directly involved or engaged in the development of the bill?

Ms WILSON - As indicated, they're on the Greyhound Racing Transition Working Group and we provided a briefing to them -

Mr WINTER - But not consulted about the bill itself?

Ms WILSON - We developed the bill in consultation with the commissioner. The commissioner had undertaken a range of engagement and, as I indicated, we looked at other jurisdictions to see if we could learn and we did. We took into account other jurisdiction's legislation and experience.

Mr WINTER - Obviously, the department does a lot of bills. You talked about a huge bill. Is it unusual that there'd be no exposure draft or direct engagement with the people directly impacted, in your experience?

Ms WILSON - In this case, there was an announcement from government on 10 August around the banning of greyhound racing by a particular date. We had advice from the commissioner and general understanding that when you have a ban like this, it's important to provide certainty to industry by getting something out that says, 'Hey, this is how it is going to work,' to provide certainty, but it also helps manage the animal welfare aspects of any change like this. This was something where it was deemed that it was important to get information out quickly so that people could consider how this transition would occur.

Mr WINTER - Can you name another time, from NRE's point of view, where a major change like this has not had an exposure draft provided to the impacted people or public consultation or any piece at all?

Ms WILSON - We do a range of legislative reform pieces and each one of them you take into account what you need to do for that piece of legislation and what's the best approach for that piece of legislation in terms of how it's to be developed. In this case, it was considered that it was appropriate to put in front of people what that transition would look like and how it would apply to them and particularly when industry participants were providing advice that they would prefer to engage when they understood what was going to happen, what was planned.

Mr WINTER - Who made the decision that there would be no public consultation of the draft bill, or there wouldn't be a draft bill provided for public consultation?

Ms WILSON - We have developed the bill. The decision was made to table the bill.

Mr WINTER - Who made that decision?

Ms O'CONNOR - Political question there.

CHAIR - I don't think that's fair to ask.

Mr WINTER - If the answer is you're not sure, that's fine. Was the decision made by the department?

Ms WILSON - I think that's a question for the government.

Mr WINTER - I think, from that, I can deduct it wasn't made by you or the department, which is fine. We can ask that in another forum to other people. In terms of the bill itself, you talked at the start of your contribution about the extra controls that are included and just looking at the fact sheet, being that transition period between - with the TasRIC to oversee the Greyhound Racing Plan, greyhounds aged six-plus or inactive for 12 months deemed retired. What was the evidence behind that particular clause that greyhounds aged six or over or inactive for 12 months would be deemed retired? Where did that come from?

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Ms WILSON - It was advice from the commissioner, is my recollection. He'd already started to do his audit and it was recognising that it would be appropriate to have a mechanism in the act to ensure that dogs of a certain age moved into that retirement phase.

Mr WINTER - Is there something inherent about a dog not racing for 12 months that would deem it unsuitable to continue to race?

Ms WILSON - No, and there is an exemption in the bill. It's 12 months, unless -

Mr HALL - This was on the advice of the racing commissioner and I think it was something that was independent of the closure. It was one of the things that was being considered in the general regulation of the greyhound industry, is to best practice for animal welfare. The exception is a dog within the transition period that had not raced for 12 months due to a medical or veterinary reason. If you could provide evidence that it was now sufficiently recovered and it can continue racing within the 12-month transit -

Mr WINTER - Is that at the discretion of the commissioner, or is that deemed that if you present that -

Mr HALL - Tasracing, so it provides an exception that if you can demonstrate that - obviously, with veterinary evidence -

Mr WINTER - The question is if that evidence is provided to Tasracing, do they have to allow the dog to continue to commence racing again or is it up to their discretion?

Mr HALL - It's discretion in the sense they've got to be satisfied that that is a reason they can -

Mr WINTER - If they are satisfied, then they must allow the dog to -

Mr HALL - That's a legal question for that process at that time -

Ms WILSON - Because there could be other factors that you have to take into account -

Mr HALL - under the mechanisms there for them to do that regulatory role.

Mr WINTER - In terms of the transfers of dogs in and out of the state requiring Tasracing consent, again, can you explain what the reasons could be where Tas Racing would or would not allow a dog to be transferred interstate?

Ms WILSON - There are some provisions in the bill around making sure that when they come in that they're appropriate -

Mr HALL - If they can be satisfied - they need to be satisfied that the housing and the arrangements for the dog are suitable for welfare and also to make sure it is consistent with and give effects to the transition closure plan, because that might have, it may or may not, this is a matter for - it may have some planning in there for an orderly phase out involving when interstate greyhounds can come, so they need to take that into account.

Mr WINTER - Does the commissioner have some controls around when he or she can or cannot allow or disallow?

Mr HALL - It's Tasracing.

Mr WINTER - Sorry, Tasracing can or cannot allow the transfer, or is it totally up to their discretion?

Ms WILSON - It's Tasracing. My understanding is that they could develop criteria. The other thing is that the commissioner does have those, as I said earlier, he does have his general powers of advice for if that was required and may be considered in the transition plan.

Ms RATTRAY - Dean asked a question around compensation and obviously there's none in this, but what did you see in the other legislation that you looked at to preface this one?

Mr HALL - Generally, that was left flexible for the government to come up with. It can actually be problematic trying to build, especially when you're developing one like this, in legislation itself mechanisms - it's generally left - there's a number of ways you - potentially regulations could be made. I'm not saying that's a policy decision or anything that's been made.

Ms RATTRAY - You haven't done a paper to hand over to government.

Mr HALL - No.

Ms WILSON - That would be a matter for the transition plan and, as I said, it's a policy decision for government. The Tasracing Integrity Commissioner under this bill has to do a transition plan and that transition plan will be developed.

Ms RATTRAY - Your discussions with the Australian Capital Territory didn't give you any idea of what it was worth to exit the industry?

Mr HALL - That's why we got that three years and the ability to make a transition plan. This is really just setting up the legal architecture to do that work.

CHAIR - Can I ask a question around part 3, which amends the *Dog Control Act* and lifts restrictions that are currently imposed in relation to muzzling and things like that. That's going to take effect from, as I understand it, July 2029. Obviously, the rehoming organisations have a lot of work to do in the transition period, and that will be over a period of time, so it won't be all at once. But it is a challenge for them, and we've just heard that.

The restrictions placed by the *Dog Control Act* on greyhounds in terms of muzzling in off-lead areas can sometimes be seen as a barrier to adopting a dog or fostering a dog. Has any consideration been given to the implementation of that earlier in the transition phase, if it's identified that it's an issue for rehoming organisations that this is a barrier from people actually adopting those animals?

Ms WILSON - I think because it's a situation where it's a phase out, no, we didn't consider putting that in place earlier. It was really to say, look, this is the transition period, some of the activities do continue, so the controls that are in place now were considered to be appropriate. Post-2029 there are some changes that will be made. The simple answer is no, we

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didn't look at that, because we considered that - although I understand what you're saying - we considered that during this period that the current rules would apply.

CHAIR - Sure. I don't want the perfect to get in the way of the good. I assume that there's an ability if it becomes an issue in that transition phase that it's identified, we could always come back and amend the *Dog Control Act* to the separate piece -

Ms WILSON - We're in the hands of the parliament.

CHAIR - In the hands of the parliament to do it.

Mr HALL - The thinking was during the transition period - greyhounds are a racing animal, and there is still a greyhound racing industry, so all the mechanisms are in place around that. But then after that, it changes to 'they are dogs'.

CHAIR - As it should be. Thank you. Any further questions from the committee? No further questions? Thank you very much, for appearing before us today, I really do appreciate it.

As you would be aware, what you've said here to us today is protected by parliamentary privilege, and once you leave the table, you need to be aware that privilege is not attached to comments you may make to anyone, including the media, even if you're just repeating what you said to us today. Do you understand that?

WITNESSES - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you very much for your time today, I appreciate it.

The committee adjourned at 12.53 p.m.