



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESSES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tasracing Pty Ltd

Wednesday 26 November 2025

MEMBERS

Ms Burnet (Chair)
Mr Rob Fairs (Deputy Chair)
Mr Vica Bayley
Ms Kristie Johnston
Mr Marcus Vermey
Mr Dean Winter

OTHER PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

Dr Rosalie Woodruff
Mr Roger Jaensch
Mr Carlo Di Falco

WITNESSES IN ATTENDANCE

Hon. Jane Howlett MP, Minister for Racing

Vince Taskunas
Chief of Staff

Luke Gaetani
Senior Adviser

Tasracing Pty Ltd

Gene Phair
Chairperson

Andrew Jenkins
Chief Executive Officer

Dr Martin Lenz
Chief Veterinary & Animal Welfare Officer

Heidi Lester
Chief Racing Integrity Officer

(Support in the room) - Tasracing Pty Ltd

Dave Manshanden
Chief Operating Officer

Claire Wilemse
Chief People Officer

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Tasracing Pty Ltd

CHAIR - I welcome the minister and staff of Tasracing, along with others at the table. The time for scrutiny is two-and-a-half hours. Members would be familiar with the practice of seeking additional information, which must be agreed to be taken by the minister or the chair of the board, and the questions handed in writing to the secretary.

I invite the minister to introduce any persons at the table, including names and positions, please, for the courtesy of Hansard.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you so much, Chair. To my left I have Gene Phair, chair; to my right I have Andrew Jenkins, CEO; Heidi Lester, chief racing integrity officer; and Dr Martin Lenz, chief veterinary and animal welfare officer.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. Would you like to do a short opening statement for us?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair. The Tasmanian government is a strong supporter of the Tasmanian racing industry. As shareholder minister for Tasracing I enjoy a strong working relationship with the chair and CEO of the company. It's been a productive 12 months working closely with the company to advance the interest of racing in Tasmania during a period of significant reform.

Page 5 of the Tasracing annual report paints a bright picture for the company when looking at its five-year performance. Wagering turnover, race field fee revenue, code funding, stakes paid and breeding bonuses to industry participants all increased. While Tasracing recorded a loss before tax in the year under review, the reasons for this are clearly outlined in the annual report.

We have delivered on our strong plan for the biggest reforms to the racing industry in decades following the passage of the Racing Regulation Integrity Bill 2024. The company, with the government, understands that Tasmanian racing has now entered a new era where the highest benchmarks of integrity will be the foundation of the industry's future success.

The changes in legislation in February this year are reflected in the makeup of the table at today's hearing. The oversight, function and power of Tasmania's first Racing Integrity Commissioner, Sean Carroll, were activated at the same time and four people were appointed to a new racing integrity committee chaired by highly credentialed legal practitioner, Regina Weiss. The commissioner can set integrity in animal welfare standards and has comprehensive investigative functions across all three codes of racing.

For its part, Tasracing appointed a chief racing integrity officer with significant industry experience, Ms Heidi Lester, here at the table with us today, and the company established an integrity unit which Ms Lester leads. The unit has assumed the responsibility for the former Office of Racing Integrity, which was abolished. In just five months, the team has undertaken 476 stable and kennel inspections, issued 2193 licences and registrations, taken 3653 swab samples and delivered 536 steward actions.

Welfare across all three codes is of critical importance. During the year in review, Tasracing continued to drive initiatives to advance racing animal welfare and veterinary services in the state, in line with changing community expectations.

PUBLIC

Specifically, Tasracing continued to invest in the Greyhound Adoption Program, enhanced industry incentive programs, expanded the Equine Off the Track program, continued to implement recommendations from the Sykes review on animal welfare and delivered training supported to industry participants and owners. A total of 90 greyhounds entered the GAP facility during the year and 101 were adopted.

As you would be aware, the government introduced the Greyhound Racing Legislation Amendment (Phasing Out) Bill 2025 on 6 November 2025. Importantly, work has started on a new racing industry funding deed to ensure the financial sustainability of the Tasmanian racing industry. This is especially vital to provide certainty to the industry following the government's announcement of the phasing out of greyhound racing. Importantly, this is not a review into whether there will be funding. It's a review of what the funding model looks like beyond 2029 for both equine codes.

Meanwhile, Tasracing continues to focus on growing market share -

Mr WINTER - Chair, point of order. We're up to four minutes.

CHAIR - It's 3.27.

Ms HOWLETT - and commercial revenue in the national market.

Mr WINTER - More than three, then.

CHAIR - Opening statement doesn't matter, within reason.

Ms HOWLETT - I'd like to thank Tasracing chairperson, Gene Phair, and his board for their significant contribution over the reporting period. I also acknowledge CEO Andrew Jenkins and his executive team for their commitment across the last 12 months to our reforms regarding integrity and animal welfare, which will be the bedrock on which the Tasmanian racing industry will grow and continue to make a positive contribution to the Tasmanian economy.

CHAIR - Thank you. You will all be shown latitude as well.

Mr WINTER - Thanks, I appreciate it. Minister, thanks for being here and thanks to your team for being here as well.

My first question is to you and is in relation to last week's announcement from New South Wales police that Strike Force Chiel, along with Tasmania Police, had uncovered and arrested three individuals, including two well-known harness racing members, Nathan and Mitch Ford, who had previously been named in the Murrihy review. Are you concerned that Tasmania's harness racing has for years been used as part of a national drug syndicate? What are you going to do to ensure the integrity of the code and the industry from this point forward?

Ms HOWLETT - As you are well aware, this is a matter for the police and the courts and it's not appropriate for me to make any comment on it.

PUBLIC

Mr WINTER - Minister, when did you first become aware that Tasmania's harness racing participants were being investigated in relation to drug possession, drug trafficking and dealing with the proceeds of crime?

Ms HOWLETT - I was made aware of the extradition orders. I certainly wasn't aware last week in our Estimates hearing and I was made aware when it was publicly reported.

Mr WINTER - Were you ever told by any participant or anyone else at an earlier date that they suspected Tasmanian harness racing was being used to traffic illicit drugs?

Ms HOWLETT - No, I certainly wasn't aware of that. I don't know if the company would like to add any more to that. As I said, it is inappropriate for me to comment because this is a matter for the police and it's before the courts.

Mr WINTER - It does go to the heart of racing integrity and the viability of racing going forward. At this point in time, we have a major national drug investigation, we have participants who have been arrested, and on top of that, another participant, Olivia Weidenbach, was arrested at Sydney Airport earlier this year and has been disqualified. What is Tasracing and your various integrity bodies response going to be to this to ensure the integrity of Tasmanian racing going forward?

Ms HOWLETT - Integrity is a bedrock of the racing industry. As far as our new legislative reforms are concerned, we need to make sure integrity is our number-one focus. We will certainly not tolerate any form of bad behaviour, whether it's licensed participants, stewards or anyone in the racing industry.

Mr WINTER - You say you won't tolerate that sort of behaviour -

CHAIR - Sorry, Mr Winter, next round. Dr Woodruff.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, this is possibly to the CEO. Looking at Tasracing's annual report and looking at the thoroughbred retirement data on page 19, I find the large increase in the number of thoroughbreds that have been euthanised in the last year quite confronting: 46 thoroughbred horses were euthanised, compared to 31 the previous year, and 31 the year before that. That is a 50 per cent increase, which is substantial and very concerning. Can I please get some information about what has caused that steep increase?

Ms HOWLETT - Certainly, and I thank the member for her question. I will hand over to Andrew or to Dr Lenz to speak further to that.

Mr JENKINS - Thank you, minister, through you. If I might make a preliminary observation and then I will ask Dr Lenz to comment in further detail. I agree with the trend note that you make, as regards comparison of 2023 financial year, 2024 and then into 2025, the reporting period in question. There has been an increase in thoroughbreds euthanised, though I do note that in the 2021 financial year there was a number of 43. I suggest that there's not a significant trend here that is an increase toward those numbers of horses being euthanised. I will perhaps ask Dr Lenz.

PUBLIC

Dr WOODRUFF - It looks like it was very bad in 2021 and then it dropped to 23 in 2021-22, 31 in 2022-23 and 31 again, which looked like it was a sustained reduction and now there's been a 50 per cent increase again. What do you think's going on?

Mr JENKINS - Sure. As I say, I wouldn't suggest that there's a trend there. Yes, I acknowledge that during the reporting period there was an increase in thoroughbreds euthanised, but again, if I can defer to my colleague who may wish to add some further detail.

Dr LENZ - Thank you, and through the Chair. While on paper it may look like a figure that stands out, statistically speaking, we're looking at a five-year period; we've had other years with similar numbers. It's not a trend, as such, but it is something we're obviously always keeping an eye on and are aware of.

Dr WOODRUFF - Through you, minister. I'm not talking about statistics. I'm talking about horses - 46 horses. If you put 46 horses in this room, it is an astoundingly large number of horses that are being euthanised. Again, I asked the question why? Why have so many horses been euthanised? Is it as a result of on track injuries? Is it because they can't be rehomed? Why?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Dr Lenz.

Dr LENZ - Through you, minister. It is something we can break down further as far as the reasons for the mortalities in those 46 cases. It is data that is available and we can take that on notice.

Dr WOODRUFF - Through you, minister, I'd like that information now. Surely you would come to this committee, after such large figures, with that knowledge. I question why it's not available now to have a conversation about what's going on.

Dr LENZ - We're happy to take that -

Dr WOODRUFF - What are the reasons that 46 horses are euthanised, and who has the oversight?

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, it's been asked and answered.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, is that going to be taken on notice, or answered now at the table? Minister, what do you think?

Ms HOWLETT - Would you mind if we take that on notice, Dr Woodruff?

Dr WOODRUFF - Okay, the question is, what are all the causes for the euthanasia that has happened and what is the reason for the increase between last year and this year?

CHAIR - Just remember, we need that in writing to the secretary.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, thank you.

Ms JOHNSTON - Following on from Mr Winter's questions on integrity, particularly the harness racing question, through to the CEO, minister if I may. I have asked, I think, year on year at these hearings about the awards that are presented, or reported at least, in the annual

PUBLIC

report and raised concerns about the appropriateness, particularly of the lead trainer awards for all codes at various points. I'm particularly concerned this financial year, with the harness award winner for lead trainer Wayne Yole, and in particular for the lead female driver, Tiarna Ford. Each time I've asked those questions about the appropriateness of people receiving awards when they have, undoubtedly, brought the industry into disrepute, you've told us that there's nothing you can do, it's a policy to provide it to the person who's won the most races or had the most winners. Yet, your policy on your website when it comes to harness awards clearly states under rules 3.3, 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 that you don't have to provide these awards to them.

Why do they continue to win awards when clearly, and particularly in the harness racing circumstances last financial year, these two individuals have brought the industry into significant disrepute and, in fact, have been suspended in some cases?

Ms HOWLETT - If I might add a few comments first. Probity, integrity and animal welfare are critically important to the racing industry and, as we know, they underpin the confidence.

Public awards and recognition have a really important role to play, and I've written to Tasracing to ask for a review of the award criteria, which at present are based only on a number of winners across the season, and to reflect the hard work both the Tasmanian government and Tasracing are doing to rebuild trust and restore faith across the codes in all areas, including integrity and compliance. I've requested that Tasracing undertake a review of the annual awards given to participants, owners and trainers across the codes. The review requested that the award criteria meet current-day expectations and standards of the racing industry and work has commenced. I will hand over to the CEO to -

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you minister. I appreciate that you've done that, because your predecessors failed to do that. So thank you for doing that.

Mr JENKINS - Thank you, minister. Tasracing has indeed undertaken a review of a number of award categories. If we haven't done so already, minister, we will be formally confirming that with your office, based on your instruction for review. So, Ms Johnston, there is a change that will be implemented imminently.

If I may make the point that the eligibility for an award is related to a point in time. During the award eligibility period - it would not be reasonable to hold back an award if a licenced person was licenced and held that licence under the rules during that period of time. Of course, if any discretion occurs, a disqualification, suspension of licence, then Tasracing has the ability to apply appropriate discretion in withholding an award. We agree in principle with what you're querying.

Ms JOHNSTON - Again, Mr Yole back in March was reported and was suspended and was disqualified at that particular time. When were these awards issued?

I note that 3.5 gives you the ability to revoke any award that's been given previously for seasons, and 3.6 simply says:

Any Trainer or Driver who, in the opinion of Tasracing, conducted themselves in a manner which has undermined the integrity, or reputation, or public image of Tasracing or racing generally is ineligible to win any award.

PUBLIC

Now in what world could you possibly say that that doesn't apply to Mr Yole?

Mr JENKINS - Mr Yole was a licenced person who was eligible to receive the award.

Ms JOHNSTON - He hasn't brought the industry into disrepute? The Yoles and the Fords have not brought -

Mr JENKINS - It's not for me to make a subjective comment on. I'm simply saying that under the rules, Mr Yole was licenced during the eligibility period when the award is issued, and he received the award.

Ms JOHNSTON - What's the eligibility period, then?

CHAIR - Through the minister, please, Ms Johnston.

Ms JOHNSTON - Sorry, Chair. Minister, through you, to the CEO. What's the eligibility period? What's the period?

Mr JENKINS - It's a racing season and the seasons vary across the three codes.

Ms HOWLETT - But that review is underway.

Ms JOHNSTON - I appreciate that minister.

Mr JAENSCH - Can you confirm that the Tasmanian government will continue to support the equine codes in Tasmania, and provide an update on a new funding deed for racing in Tasmania?

Ms HOWLETT - That's a really important question. I've been clear on my support for the broader racing industry, Tasracing, its participants and our regional communities, as has the Premier. The government will develop, along with Tasracing and industry, a unified strategy to grow racing audiences and revenues across the equine codes.

Work has started on a project to assess options for the new racing industry funding deed, to ensure the financial sustainability of the Tasmanian racing industry. It's being conducted by a working group overseen by the Department of Treasury and Finance and the Department of NRE. Importantly, this is not a review into whether there will be a funding deed; it's a review of what the funding model looks like beyond 2029 for both equine codes. It's especially important to provide certainty to the industry following the government's announcement of the phase out of greyhound racing.

This measured timeframe coincides with the expiration of the current funding deed, providing an opportunity to deliver a measured transition that focuses on funding requirements of the thoroughbred and harness codes, to ensure Tasmanian racing can thrive in the future.

I acknowledge the company's comments last week recognising the work I've done to consistently advocate for the industry in this area following the government's announcement on the funding deed project last week. As I said, the existing deed is for a term of 20 years ending on 30 June 2029 and the government will continue to honour this deed. That is reflected in the interim Budget across the forward Estimates. I'm working very closely with the Treasurer

PUBLIC

as the other shareholder minister in Tasracing to ensure the future and growth of racing in Tasmania.

We're getting on with the job and this project to assess options for the next deed has commenced and Tasracing will be a part of this very important work. It's a complex process and we will work through this together, but we remain absolutely committed to supporting our wider racing industry and its participants. I will ask the chair or CEO if they'd like to add any additional comments.

Mr JENKINS - Thank you, minister.

CHAIR - You only have about 30 seconds.

Mr JENKINS - Noted, with thanks. Tasracing was very pleased to have the government's continued support confirmed recently. As the minister has stated, via the review being undertaken by the Department of Treasury and NRE, we look forward to being engaged in that process and making our own contribution to work toward a funding model beyond 2029 that provides certainty and consistency in the ability for the racing industry to work towards a point where it is deriving an increasing level of its own commercial revenue, as opposed to being reliant on government funding as a result of the government of the day selling TOTE Tasmania back in 2009. We welcome the government and the minister's support.

Mr WINTER - Minister, I want to take it back to harness racing and I might ask Mr Phair. Mr Phair, was Tasracing, either to your knowledge or the commissioner's, ever given information that members of the Ford or Langley stables were allegedly using harness racing to traffic drugs in and out of the state prior to the arrests and, if so, when?

Mr PHAIR - I'm unaware and I can't speak on behalf of ORI or the commissioner, but certainly from a Tasracing board point of view, we were never made aware of any accusations in that regard.

Mr WINTER - At a management level, was anything ever reported?

Mr PHAIR - Never reported to the board, no.

Mr WINTER - I can't ask the CEO directly, that's why.

Mr PHAIR - Okay, I can pass the question on, but there was nothing mentioned by management to the board at all about any of those accusations.

Mr WINTER - Minister, the Murrihy review found that Mitch and Nathan Ford had participated in team driving and race fixing. Do you consider it a failure of your integrity bodies that Mitch Ford was still racing as of last week?

Ms HOWLETT - What I can say is integrity is paramount. We have lifted the bar higher and it is our intention to make sure for the future of the racing industry and the codes that integrity is absolutely paramount moving forward. I will certainly not be speculating on anything that is a police matter or before the courts. I note that Standing Order 141, proceedings of committees, provides that no reference shall be made to any proceedings of a committee or

PUBLIC

the whole House, or any committee, until the same have been reported to the House, unless the House at the time of the appointment of the Chair shall otherwise direct.

Mr WINTER - Minister, you've said that integrity is paramount to the industry, and I wholeheartedly agree, but in this case we have had huge evidence. We've had an independent review done by Ray Murrihy that outlined and found that these two gentlemen had been involved in race fixing and team driving, yet one of them was still participating as of a few weeks ago. What does that say about integrity under this government that this was able to continue, even whilst they were under investigation for drug trafficking, we think? They had been accused and found to have participated in team driving and race fixing. What does it say about integrity if at least one of those individuals was able to continue to participate?

Ms HOWLETT - What it says is, since our new reforms have been introduced, we have Heidi Lester at the table here and our independent racing integrity commissioner. We are taking this incredibly seriously and that is why we made significant legislative reforms - the biggest reforms in decades, Mr Winter. I might ask Ms Lester if she would like to speak about integrity and what we are doing moving forward.

Ms LESTER - Thank you, minister. The Tasracing Integrity Unit is now approximately 10 months old, being established on 1 February, so it's unrecognisable to what the previous Office of Racing Integrity was. As part of that renewed Integrity Unit, a lot of old staff have moved on and we've got some great new staff come in.

With regard to harness racing, we have recently appointed an extremely experienced chief steward, Mr Trevor Styles, who has come across from the mainland. He's very well regarded and one of those great old-fashioned stewards who will make his mark, hold all participants to account, and will be a great benefit to our unit going forward.

With regard to the races in the Murrihy report, my understanding is that was investigated prior to my start and has been dealt with. What I can say again is Mr Trevor Styles, with his vast experience, will be reviewing every single harness race to the nth degree and holding any participant to account with those.

Mr WINTER - Minister, in those last -

CHAIR - That's three, Dean. Dr Woodruff.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, Chair. Coming back to the information that's provided about horses, both standardbreds and thoroughbreds, the Tasracing annual report lists thoroughbred and harness racing retirement and breeding data, but for greyhounds, injuries and breeding data are provided. Will Tasracing commit to providing information in the annual report about injuries and the breeding data that's not there, the same as is done for both codes, and the greyhound racing code?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Dr Woodruff. I'll ask the CEO to speak to that as far as providing additional data.

Mr JENKINS - Thank you, minister. The question would appear a reasonable one from the point of view of having consistency across the three codes of racing. I'm not in a position to make a commitment across the table but I would be very willing and comfortable to work

PUBLIC

through a process with Dr Lenz and Ms Lester around the information we have available to us and provide further information around injuries. I might ask Dr Lenz to comment further around our efforts in relation to traceability and injuries.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thanks.

Dr LENZ - As the CEO has mentioned, there is no impediment to more data being recorded. I will draw the committee's eye to the fact that there is a difference between the greyhound code and the way injuries are recorded by stand-down times, versus the two horse codes where injuries are reported in stewards' reports. When I say injuries, I mean 'incidents' are reported in stewards' reports. Those animals then are generally returned to their stables where they are part of the stables management, including their private veterinarians.

There is limited information that we are able to obtain from those private veterinarians; it's basically a privacy issue. What we do have is data that relates to when those horses return to racing, so the interval between a race with an incident where there may have been an injury, and that return to racing interval, until the horse turns up at the next racecourse.

We have, under the rules, also an obligation on our participants in both horse codes to provide information to the stewards on any incidents or injuries that have occurred either prior leading into the race, or during the race, which may have affected the outcome of that race. That is something that, once again, feeds back into the next stewards' report.

But there is a difference. In the greyhound code, we have vets who look at animals. If the stewards request an examination, for example, if that detects a problem then a standdown time is recorded. That's quite unique to the greyhound code. The standdown time is taken as an indicator of the seriousness of an injury, but it is an indirect indicator, if you understand, because once again, there is a limitation to how much information is available to the on-course vet on that injury. Further information would be obtained by a subsequent follow-up examination from the trainer's private vet, which we don't have access to.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, Dr Lenz. It sounds like, through you, minister, that there's a couple of mechanisms that you could look at providing information in the next annual report:

- the pre-information injury data that's provided to the stewards;
- the incident data that comes after a race, which may or may not include information about injuries; and
- there's also information that would come after the period of time where the horse does not come back to race, or the period of time for the horse coming back to race.

Do I need to write that on notice, that you will investigate that and provide some information back?

Dr LENZ - Just to clarify, through you, Chair, as well, information is already publicly provided in follow-up stewards' reports - you know, if the trainer complies with that rule that makes them have to advise the stewards of any issue that occurred. So, that's already provided in subsequent versions of the stewards' report.

PUBLIC

Dr WOODRUFF - It's not here in the annual report.

Dr LENZ - No, it's not, but it is publicly available, because obviously all the stewards' reports are published online.

Dr WOODRUFF - Okay, thank you. Minister, is there a commitment, then, that there will be some compilation of information provided in the annual report about injuries, and there'll be obviously a discussion about what's possible or not possible?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Dr Woodruff. I know the Chair would like to add some further comments.

Mr PHAIR - Thank you, minister, and thank you for the question. We made a commitment a number of years ago to be very transparent about injuries and deaths and so on. I draw your attention to page 16 of the annual report, which details quite comprehensively the list of injuries and retirement data for greyhounds.

Dr WOODRUFF - That's my point. That's exactly my point. Can we have the same information for standardbred and thoroughbred horses? You're exactly right. That's what everyone wants to know. Can we have the same information, please, for the two horse codes?

Ms HOWLETT - I don't think there would be an issue with that.

Mr JENKINS - Very happy to investigate and provide all the information we can gather, yes.

Dr WOODRUFF - Great. My other question following that, minister, is, why do horse trainers and owners not provide that information? Why is there a different collection of that information between greyhounds and harness racing and thoroughbred racing?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Dr Woodruff, I will get Dr Lenz to provide some further information to your question.

Dr LENZ - Thank you, minister, and through you, Chair. Yes, it is a legacy of how the systems and the data recording systems were set up, how the rules are set up. There are distinct differences. As I said, in that table that our chair mentioned on page 16, there's a great example - greyhound injuries are grouped by standdown time, which is an approximation of seriousness of injury. We don't have that sort of grading system in horses.

Dr WOODRUFF - That could have it.

Dr LENZ - It's something that depends heavily on the IT infrastructure, so the recording programs. In thoroughbreds, there's a system called Single National System (SNS), and it will record any data on injuries that are detected on race day. But because the true extent of an injury may not become apparent till after the race, there is that obligation on trainers to inform the stewards of those findings, but we don't have direct access to the veterinary information from those private veterinary practitioners.

Dr WOODRUFF - Okay, it doesn't really make sense why you wouldn't.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, next time.

Dr WOODRUFF - Just building the social licence on having that information is a good idea.

CHAIR - Can I clarify, are you taking on notice, minister, Dr Woodruff's request for information?

Mr JAENSCH - Chair, I think I can assist. I think it's not a question on notice, in that it's not going to be something which is going to be followed up directly to the committee. It's an undertaking regarding future annual reports - is that right?

Dr WOODRUFF - That's pretty much right, yes.

CHAIR - Okay.

Dr LENZ - Where the data's available.

Dr WOODRUFF - That's my understanding that there's a commitment to provide information in the next annual report and how that will look.

Dr LENZ - Where available, yes.

Mr Di FALCO - Just a quick point. I will state clearly for the record, I oppose the greyhound racing ban. Through you, minister, could the Chair or CEO tell us about their interaction with the passionate owners and trainers of greyhounds racing since the ban was announced?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you. The CEO would be best to add detail to your question.

Mr JENKINS - Certainly, minister, and through you, Chair. Post the government's policy announcement of phasing out greyhounds, Tasracing immediately undertook a comprehensive communication program with our greyhound participants to make them aware directly of the proposed policy, in addition to the announcement and media and so forth that the government had undertaken. I spent probably the subsequent 48 hours with the phone glued to my ear, talking one-on-one with as many greyhound participants as I could. I personally attended the three programmed greyhound meetings on the Monday night, Tuesday and Thursday night in the subsequent week, just to have a presence and share as much information as I could.

We continue to provide regular updates to our greyhound participants, including offers of support, given it's a very difficult position that they are placed in. We've offered access to our employee assistance program. As I say, we're providing regular updates of information as we have material matters to share with them, including making sure that they have direct access to the draft of the bill that has now been tabled and the associated fact sheet.

Indeed, only this week my team and I have convened informal Q&A sessions: Monday night at Mowbray's race meeting after kennelling closed, and we will do the same again tomorrow night.

PUBLIC

I don't necessarily have a lot more information that can be shared with our greyhound participants, but we feel it's particularly important to be visible and feel that they have a voice and can communicate with us as the principal racing authority. We will continue to act in that manner, Mr Di Falco.

We acknowledge that this is an extremely difficult time for greyhound participants, many of whom have known nothing else through their life and through multiple generations, in fact, in some cases. We will do all that we can to help them through the process of phase out into mid-2029.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, I think the chair or the CEO go to the awards for greyhound racing, mentioned in their annual report. I note that the greyhound of the year was Raider's Guide. As horrific and tragic as that dog's death was, maybe its legacy was the ending of greyhound racing because it was so horrific and so prominent. The lead trainer of this dog was Anthony Bullock, someone who has brought the industry into significant disrepute over a number of years and has had concerns raised about his conduct, including not having a kennelling licence for many years, failing to have a planning permit, and inappropriate council planning permits in relation to his kennel facilities in West Tamar.

Has Tasracing sought assurances from Mr Bullock that he now has and is compliant with his planning permit and conditions, including in relation to slaughtering of animals on his property, odour issues and the disposal of dog waste?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you. Before the CEO speaks, I want to advise that Mr Anthony Bullock was disqualified from the greyhound racing industry and a successful appeal against this penalty enabled Mr Bullock to return to the industry as a licenced participant. Mr Bullock exercised his rights of appeal through the Tasmanian Racing Appeals Board, with the result that it was upheld. Would you like to speak more to that?

Mr JENKINS - Thanks, minister. I don't concur with the assertion that Mr Bullock has brought the industry into disrepute. If we reflect upon some of the matters to which you may be referring we're going back a handful of years ago now, where ultimately it was found that Mr Bullock's worst offence was giving analgesics to a greyhound that wasn't prescribed for that greyhound while it was in pain. So on that matter, I don't think there's anything to answer there. As the minister has quite correctly stated, Mr Bullock was found not guilty of relevant charges for which he was periodically disqualified.

In terms of the council matters, they're exactly that, Ms Johnston; that's a matter for the council.

Ms JOHNSTON - It's a requirement of his trainer's licence to be compliant with council regulations.

CHAIR - Ms Johnston, please.

Ms HOWLETT - I believe he does have a kennel licence.

Mr JENKINS - I can't confirm that. That's a matter to be confirmed with the council. In terms of the award itself, as per the previous answer, Mr Bullock was eligible at the time the award was given.

PUBLIC

Mr JAENSCH - Minister, Tasmanian racing clubs are important community assets. Could you please outline capital expenditure upgrades that the company has made this financial year and how does this investment compare to previous periods?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for the question. As you correctly state, upgrading racing infrastructure provides important spaces for the community to meet and engage with our great racing product as well as ensuring our tracks and facilities remain safe for participants.

Capital expenditure payments during 2024-25 totalled \$6.66 million, up from \$6.43 million in the previous reporting period. Major items included the new kennel blocks at the GAP facility at Mangalore, which will be open soon and will effectively double the capacity at GAP.

On 1 October last year I was pleased to open the Devonport Racing Club's new race day building, which is three times the size of the original building and features dedicated equal spaces for female jockeys in the new jockey room. Of the \$2.8 million total project value, \$1.5 million was provided by the state government, with the balance funded by Tasracing from cash reserves. The Tasracing annual report also details key investment in these important infrastructure upgrades.

There is also the Tapeta synthetic upgrade at Spreyton; manure and sawdust pits at Brighton; a viewing deck at Spreyton; horse stalls at Longford; synthetic equine crossing at Elwick; running rail at Spreyton; Brighton stable works; Longford sand track drainage as well as irrigation; Spreyton stable works; Mowbray entrance works; owner's meeting yard at Elwick; greyhound roads and car park at Mowbray; light upgrades at Mowbray; Elwick 600-metre tower stabilisation; signage at Longford; CCTV upgrades statewide; membership big screen at Mowbray; and fire hose reels at Elwick.

While some of these investments may seem minor, they're a part of an overall program of works to ensure that the assets of the company continue to reflect the needs of racing participants. Andrew, I am not sure if you would like to add any further comments.

CHAIR - You have about 30 seconds.

Mr JENKINS - I am pretty well covered there.

Ms HOWLETT - I think you've done a very good job.

Mr JENKINS - Thank you, minister.

Mr WINTER - My question is to Mr Phair. When did you and the CEO find out about the shutdown of greyhound racing and who told you? Can you explain the circumstance of how you found out about this policy change?

Mr PHAIR - Absolutely. I received a phone call from the minister on the Saturday afternoon prior to the announcement by the Premier on the Sunday.

Mr WINTER - And the CEO?

Mr PHAIR - The CEO could answer that question.

PUBLIC

Mr JENKINS - Same. I think it was around 3.15 p.m. on what would have been Saturday 9 August.

Mr WINTER - Mr Phair, the question that racing industry participants keep asking me - and I've tried to get the answer from the minister and haven't been able to get it - is why is greyhound racing being shut down? We've heard a pretty passionate defence of the greyhound industry already from the CEO, Mr Jenkins, and in previous times we've heard Tasracing really stand up and defend greyhound racing. What's been the rationale that Tasracing's been able to receive for why greyhound racing has been shut down?

Mr PHAIR - It's a policy decision from the government, our shareholder ministers. That's a question for the government, not for Tasracing. We've been asked to play our role in the transition of the cessation of greyhound racing and are providing that role as part of the transition group being run by the Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner.

Mr WINTER - Minister, unless it hasn't come through, Tasracing doesn't have a reason as to why you made this policy decision, they're just acting on it. In February last year you issued Tasracing with the Ministerial Statement of Expectations, the purpose of which was to develop and maintain a competitive and sustainable racing industry in Tasmania for all codes of racing, and to uphold high levels of integrity, safety and animal welfare. One of the strategic directives is to support and promote the racing industry in Tasmania. So isn't Tasracing now in breach of your own statement by progressing with your policy to shut down greyhound racing?

Ms HOWLETT - We have been through the timeline many times before under hearings and in the House of Assembly. As you are well aware, the Premier made the decision. It was discussed with me before the announcement -

Mr WINTER - Sorry to interrupt, but I didn't ask you about that, minister. I'm asking about the statement of expectations you had given to Tasracing that directs them to support and promote racing. How is it that, on the one hand, you have given Tasracing this statement of expectations telling them they need to support and promote racing, and on the other hand you've directed them to shut down more than a third of it? How are those two things consistent with one another?

Ms HOWLETT - The policy decision has changed, as you are well aware. It's you who took us to an election, Mr Winter, in a thirsty grab for power, which didn't work out too well for you.

Mr WINTER - Minister, part of the general expectations you included was that Tasracing proactively engage with stakeholders as something Tasracing must do. Don't you think that's a bit hypocritical, given that you didn't engage with any stakeholders in the greyhound code before you decided to take away their industry, their livelihoods, their life, their family, everything that they've grown, known and loved for so many years?

Ms HOWLETT - You know I have had multiple generations in the greyhound racing code and I know how challenging it is for participants in the industry. The policy has been made. We are getting on with the job. We have introduced the legislation -

Mr WINTER - Why is that a job you need to do?

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Mr Winter, please.

Ms HOWLETT - We have introduced the legislation into parliament, we have tabled the bill and we're getting on with the job, Mr Winter.

Mr WINTER - Will you be changing the statement of expectations given that it's now impossible for them to deliver on it?

CHAIR - Mr Winter, Dr Woodruff has the call.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, Chair. Minister, at the Estimates scrutiny committee last year, we talked about the local rules of racing for greyhounds and the fact that they mandate that greyhounds should be rehomed and not killed unless approved by Tasracing. That's not the situation for horses. I spoke to you about it then and you said that is a matter for Tasracing under the local rules of racing to consider making a change in Tasmania to the local rules.

At the moment, what we have from last year's data is that 46 thoroughbreds were euthanised and 228 were rehomed, and 16 standardbred harness racing horses were euthanised and 84 were rehomed. Through you, maybe to the chair or the CEO, why aren't we looking at having the same rule for all codes in Tasmania in relation to rehoming? Can we do that? I mean, we can do it. Will you do it?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Dr Woodruff. In October last year we released a code of practice for the welfare of racehorses. At the time, Tasmania was, and is at present, one of the few states in Australia to possess such a code. Since its introduction, animal welfare standards and community expectations have continued to be raised in the media and the parliament. I will ask Dr Lenz to speak to the code of practice in relation to the welfare of racehorses in both equine codes.

Dr WOODRUFF - In relation to the issue of rehoming in particular?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes.

Dr LENZ - On the issue of rehoming of horses, we have a broad-spectrum approach to that. Once again, I draw the committee's eye to the fact that there are differences between greyhounds and racehorses in the ability to provide for the welfare of those animals because they are quite different in their needs and in size.

There are, however, some clear guidelines in the code of practice, as mentioned by the minister, as far as owners of those racehorses making provision for their eventual retirement and transition into another discipline where that is possible. That is something we've advocated for, certainly in the time that I've been here. We actively support that through financial initiatives that we run, where we basically market those off-the-track horses to the equestrian community as desirable animals to take on.

It is something that, as I said, there is a difference. You can certainly accommodate greyhounds in many a home. You do need quite some different facilities to adequately house a horse. What we don't want to see happen is horses ending up in a home situation where their needs aren't being met because of those differences.

PUBLIC

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you. I think your comments are instructive and they provide a view that I think many in the community are not comfortable about; that we treat sentient beings like animals, like greyhounds and horses, differently because of the cost and the difficulty of caring for them for their life. They are used for profit-making, but once their time is finished and their job of making profit is finished, there isn't a 100 per cent commitment to caring for that animal for the rest of their life. Instead, as we've seen, we saw on the *7.30* exposé about five years ago, nationwide, horrific images of animals being sent to abattoirs -

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, you have about seven seconds to ask a question.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, the question is, how does Tasracing expect Tasmanians to continue to feel okay about the fact there's such a high number of horses being euthanised and there isn't a commitment to caring for them at the end of their racing life? Will you look at that issue and come back and report to the minister or to parliament?

Mr JENKINS - First, I don't agree with the assertion that it's a high number of horses that are being euthanised. Ideally, we would like the number to reduce. What I would say is that, as per Dr Lenz's comments, Dr Woodruff, Tasracing is investing heavily in programs that promote the active rehoming of horses wherever that is suitable. We will continue to do so, whether it's through the Off the Track program, whether it's through private rehoming facilities or whether it's through accredited re-homers. However, there are some horses that are simply not going to be suitable to be rehomed post their racing career. There are some horses, not standard breeds or thoroughbreds, that, once they reach adulthood or even sooner, are simply not suitable to be rehomed. There's never going to be a circumstance where we can say that every single racing equine athlete that is bred is going to be rehomed -

Dr WOODRUFF - That is true.

Mr JENKINS - it's not reality.

Dr WOODRUFF - That is true, and that is the case with greyhounds, but the greyhound local rules of racing mandate that rehoming occurs.

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, please let -

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, this is just to clarify - and Tasracing can approve the killing of a greyhound if that cannot occur. Why wouldn't we have the same thing for horses, where there's still, if you say, an argument for cases, but why wouldn't there be a mandated requirement to rehome with Tasracing having the ability?

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, the CEO -

Dr WOODRUFF - Can we just get the answer to that?

CHAIR - The CEO was answering your question.

Mr JENKINS - I suggest that Dr Lenz has answered exactly that question. I don't have anything to add to that.

Dr WOODRUFF - You haven't, you just avoided it.

PUBLIC

Mr JENKINS - I can't add anything because he's answered it. I haven't avoided it. The question has been answered.

Dr WOODRUFF - You could do the same thing for dogs as for horses.

CHAIR - We will not be crossing over with banter across the table, please.

Ms JOHNSTON - If I can go, minister, through you to the Chair or CEO, to the greyhound adoption program, known as Greyhounds As Pets. They make the best pets, the most snuggliest little bugs you've ever met, and I hope that everyone can adopt a greyhound soon, which would be fantastic. Can I get some data on the actual expenditure for the GAP program? I think last year we managed to do it under data of how much it cost per dog to rehome. I note that there were 101 dogs adopted the 2024-25 period. Do we have the data around how much funding was provided to GAP as a program, please?

Ms HOWLETT - Dr Lenz has the oversight of the GAP program, so I will ask Dr Lenz to speak to that. As we know, the GAP program is a key welfare initiative for the greyhound racing industry that facilitates the rehoming of retired greyhounds and promotes greyhound ownership in the community. The government and Tasracing are committed to increasing the number of greyhounds that are rehomed responsibly, while also reducing - and this is really important - reducing the time taken to achieving rehoming.

A review of the GAP program by Tasracing senior management and the Chief Veterinary and Animal Welfare Officer identified a need to make strategic and operational changes to the program. This has seen more greyhounds rehomed in shorter timeframes, which I'm really pleased about. Dr Lenz, would you like to add any further comments?

Dr LENZ - Yes, thank you. Through you, minister and Chair. I believe it is a sizeable sum and we are just getting the exact quantum for you.

Ms JOHNSTON - Would you like me to put that on notice, or are you able to get that during the hearing?

Dr LENZ - We should be able to get that.

Ms HOWLETT - We will try to get that before the end of the hearing.

Ms JOHNSTON - Beautiful, thank you. Perhaps whilst looking for that, you might be able to answer my next question. It's in relation to the greyhound retirement preparation scheme. I understand that dogs coming into the GAP program need to be desexed and have their dental work all up to date before they enter into the program, but this scheme is for those owners and trainers before they either put their dog up for adoption through GAP program or through another means - hopefully not through Gumtree - but, through Dogs' Home or RSPCA or other approved organisation. It has for desexing, dental treatment and vaccination an amount of \$154,332. Can you provide a breakdown of how many desexings there were? How many dental treatments and vaccinations in the funding breakdown between that and the number of dogs that received?

Dr LENZ - That's for the last financial year?

PUBLIC

Ms JOHNSTON - Yes.

Dr LENZ - Give me two seconds, but we have that data. You wanted the number of dogs in the scheme total was - 361. The number of dogs total desexed - 351. Average cost to desex was - \$679. There were 95 dogs receive dental treatment at a total cost of \$37,121. There were 85 dogs vaccinated under the scheme at a total cost of that was \$6,351.

As you rightly stated, the total cost for the program for the financial year was \$154,332. To give the committee an overview, that not only benefits dogs that go into the Greyhound Adoption Program, but it also benefits any other dog that is adopted either straight out from industry to the public or via one of the ancillary re-homers that we have: Dogs Home of Tasmania and the RSPCA Tasmania. The benefit per dog is up to \$1,100, so it's a significant amount.

Ms JOHNSTON - So that's 361 dogs receiving that funding. Do you have data on the dogs exiting the industry? Obviously, 101 have gone through the adoption program. The other 260, do you have the data of where they have gone.

Ms HOWLETT - As in whether they've gone to RSPCA or the Dogs Home.

Ms JOHNSTON - RSPCA, the Dogs Home, privately, because they need to be desexed before they leave.

Dr LENZ - Yes, we will have. The total of dogs was rehomed - 193. Of those, 101 were through the GAP and total retired were 270. There were some from previous years because the number that went through the Greyhound Retirement Preparation Scheme is obviously higher. It's from the annual report.

Ms JOHNSTON - Two hundred and seventy are retired and not rehomed.

Mr JAENSCH - Minister, the Tasracing annual report outlines financial information and data for the year ending 30 June 2025. Is there any longer-term data you can share about growth in the Tasmanian racing industry and trends in the health of the sector?

Ms HOWLETT - The government is delivering for Tasmania and we're proud to support the state's racing community. I'm proud to be able to inform the committee that for the period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2025, the five-year growth in key commercial and performance metrics, including wagering turnover of \$234.8 million, is up by

- 49 per cent across the period highlighting demand and engagement in our racing product
- a 76 per cent increase in race field fee revenue demonstrating the increase owned source revenue capacity of the company
- \$16.5 million invested in code funding, which is up 77 per cent from the same period five years ago, highlighting support for participants
- stake money paid is up 81 per cent across the last five years, providing returns and confidence to those who invest in our industry, allowing this money to be reinvested in all parts of our economy.

PUBLIC

Mr WINTER - Breeding bonuses. That's next on the list, it's in the annual report.

Ms HOWLETT - Breeding bonuses up 48 per cent, recognising that a healthy racing industry requires a strong and vibrant breeding industry and that the Tasmanian breeding industry supports job creation and economic activity, particularly across regional areas in Tasmania. Over the last five years the company and the government have invested over \$23.4 million into capital expenditure in racing infrastructure. The government has returned over \$7.3 million in point-of-consumption tax funding, supporting an investment of more than \$1 million to support animal welfare initiatives each year. The company may wish to add some more information, as well.

CHAIR - You have about a minute, just so you know.

Mr JENKINS - Thank you, Chair. I would add that from a racing and programming perspective that the Tasracing team is working hard to maintain its contemporary nature in an ever-expanding and changing wagering and racing environment, not only within Tasmania, but domestically and, indeed, internationally.

We recently introduced some brand, new races that are proving extremely popular, not only from a wagering perspective, but with our communities, our owners, and our participants all across the state, including the regions. To name just three of those races: the Circular Head Cup, which is run at Burnie; the Ladbrokes Community Sporting Series, which is run on all three of our thoroughbred cup days across the state; and the Beautide, which has been run the last three years here in Hobart. It's incumbent upon us to maintain that contemporary basis of our product and we will continue to undertake that approach.

Mr WINTER - Mr Phair, I want to make 100 per cent sure of your answer. When the minister rang you in August to tell you that greyhound racing was being shut down, she did not tell you a reason why greyhound racing was being shut down? She just told you it was being shut down. There was no reason given and that was the end of the conversation?

Mr PHAIR - The conversation was exactly that, Mr Winter. We discussed that the minister was advising us that it was going to be announced the next day that greyhound racing was going to - well, announcements for the cessation of greyhound racing - there were other people that the minister needed to call to let them know. The CEO was directly after me. At the time, there was no reason, other than being a policy decision of the government at the time.

Mr WINTER - Thanks. Minister, on 2 July, racing participants received the following text message:

Tasracing is pleased to advise that TasInsure - a Tasmanian insurer that will be established by a Liberal government if re-elected - will provide workers' compensation insurance amongst its products that is expected to be applicable subject to eligibility for racing industry participants. While Tasracing appreciates that this mostly affects the thoroughbred code, we felt it appropriate to write to the industry as a whole about this initiative. We will continue to keep you updated on developments as they relate to the 2 July insurance announcement but believe it is a positive development that could assist participants with business operating costs.

PUBLIC

Were you aware that that text message was going out, and did you have any engagement with Tasracing on that text message?

Ms HOWLETT - I don't believe I had any engagement with Tasracing in relation to that text message going out.

Mr WINTER - My question, then, to the Chair is about the text message that went out with the party-political message, including the advocacy for a policy by the Liberal Party. What was the process that went through in order for that text message to go out? I believe there was also social media and a post on the Tasracing website. Did that adhere to Tasracing policies?

Mr PHAIR - There is no policy from Tasracing that we would do anything from a political nature. That is an operational text message that was sent out. I didn't send it out myself. I can defer to the CEO to answer the process on which that text message was sent out.

Mr JENKINS - Thanks chair, minister, and Chair. Thank you, Mr Winter. Ultimately, the decision to send the SMS that you're referring to resides with me. It was in no way intended as a political statement or endorsement. We felt that it was appropriate to ensure that our thoroughbred trainers in particular were aware of a possibility - given the nature of their small business operations for many of those trainers - of a potential new insurance solution, given the significant escalation in workers compensation costs that thoroughbred trainers have been facing over recent years. Again, it was not intended in any way to be partisan. It was intended to share information that we felt was relevant with our participants, Mr Winter.

Mr WINTER - Minister, I mean, the text message is partisan. It says:

TacRacing is pleased to advise that TasInsure, a Tasmanian insurer, will be established by a Liberal government if re-elected.

Do you think it's an appropriate use of government business resource to send a text message out like that to all participants, posted on social media and a website? Do you see any issues with it complying with the law or policies of your government?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Mr Winter, and I believe that's an operational matter for the current -

Mr WINTER - But I am asking you about its adherence to -

Ms HOWLETT - What I am very excited about is the prospect of us getting on with the job and delivering TasInsure. Whenever I travel around the state, I -

Mr WINTER - So you don't think there's a problem with the use of government resources on this?

Ms HOWLETT - hear about the rising cost of insurance, whether it be small business, workers compensation, et cetera, tourism operators, and it is critical that mainland operators -

Mr WINTER - So you have no problem with the government business delivering this during an election campaign?

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Mr Winter, let the minister answer your question, please.

Ms HOWLETT - As the CEO has stated, workers compensation is a very, very -

Mr WINTER - The question is specifically about using government resources like this to deliver the message. Do you think it's appropriate use of Tasracing resources?

Ms HOWLETT - It is an operational matter. It is not for me to say my personal opinion on an operational matter, Mr Winter.

Mr WINTER - You are the responsible minister. It's not an operational matter. I am asking you about whether it is an appropriate use of government resources to send that.

CHAIR - Mr Winter, please. Dr Woodruff.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, Chair. Minister, my question is about Edward 'Ted' Medhurst who is a greyhound trainer. He, infamously, was banned for eight years for shooting 11 greyhounds and that was in 2007. It's pretty incredible he wasn't banned for life but he was banned for 10 years and then eight years later - he was banned for eight years - and then 10 years later he was inducted into the Greyhound Hall of Fame. He, I understand, according to news reports, has run 50 greyhounds since 9 October this year.

Are you concerned that the Greyhound Hall of Fame still has the name of a person like that, and do you accept that there is no fame and glory in doing something like that, and having been not allowed to race at all or train at all for eight years?

Ms HOWLETT - I wasn't actually aware of that, Dr Woodruff. I will pass to the CEO of Tasracing to speak about the hall of fame and the awards.

Mr JENKINS - Thank you, minister, Chair and Dr Woodruff. I'm across in some level of detail that the charges and subsequent penalties. I do recall that at least one of those penalties was significantly reduced under appeal by the Tasmanian Racing Appeals Board, but I would need to research the details. Perhaps the most relevant consideration here is that, certainly in the case of greyhounds, a hall of fame recognition is not a matter that is managed or afforded by Tasracing. It is afforded by a greyhound racing club or clubs.

Dr WOODRUFF - So, minister, neither you nor Tasracing have any oversight, responsibility, involvement or promotion at all of anyone who is given a Greyhound Hall of Fame accolade? You don't report that in reports, you don't put that in any social media?

Mr JENKINS - No, that wouldn't be accurate to state. There will be cases where they are given individually, or is recognised with the hall of fame through a club or clubs and we will post that on socials. We will state that in an annual report, yes.

Dr WOODRUFF - So, minister, through you to the CEO, other sporting codes -

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff.

Dr WOODRUFF - That was very short. That was just a clarification.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - But he answered the question.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, and I thought I had two questions, Chair.

CHAIR - You've had two questions.

Dr WOODRUFF - I believe that was just a clarification.

CHAIR - It was a question.

Dr WOODRUFF - I thought you were being generous. I just listened to Mr Winter who asked about 20 questions of the minister then.

CHAIR - I am being lenient. A lot of it was interjection and, Dr Woodruff, you've interjected a lot, too.

Dr WOODRUFF - It's okay to interject, is it? Alright.

CHAIR - Look, I'm being very fair, being very lenient, but if you want me to rule with an iron fist and just allow you one question without asking other things in the question, I'm happy to do that. It's up to you how strict you want me to be. Think about it. Let me know.

Ms JOHNSTON - If I may go back, through you, minister, to the chair, to GAP adoption statistics. There were 100 adoptions reported in the annual report. The 'failed assessment euthanised' was five which is higher than previous years and quite concerning. Then it says, 'failed assessment, returned to owner' is zero, which I assume is the greyhound trainer/owner.

Can you please give data around how many were returned to GAP? Last year when we met we discussed the high number of dogs that were adopted out through GAP, and, through RTI documents, were found to come back to GAP because their home wasn't suitable, the owners didn't quite understand what they were adopting, in the suitability in terms of matching owner to pet; do we have data this year on how many were returned to GAP in that period?

Dr LENZ - We do. Through you, minister, thank you for the question. It is reported in the same annual report and the figure is 16. Of those dogs that were returned to the program, the vast majority were returned for reasons of change in personal circumstances within the adopting family. Without going into detail, it ranged from anywhere to marriage breakdowns to health issues, those sorts of things. GAP's policy on dogs returning to the program is something we absolutely encourage. We have a complete open door. When circumstances change, we're concerned, obviously, for the dog's welfare. If those circumstances have any potential of impinging on the welfare of the dog, we open the door and get the dog back in.

I'm also very happy to report that all the dogs that were returned to the program were subsequently successfully rehomed again. What that tells us is that the assessment process that GAP undertakes in terms of assessing the temperament and the suitability of the dog is solid, it is good. What we can't predict is obviously a change in circumstance, but we have, as I said, a very, very strong policy that we don't leave that dog in a situation where it may come to some welfare harm, so we do take them back in.

PUBLIC

We reassess them depending on the information that comes back as far as the reason for the return. Obviously, if there are behavioural reasons that turn up in a home that we were not aware of while the dogs spend time on the program, we will vigorously reassess that animal before we make a decision as to whether it's responsible to go back out, but the vast majority of the ones that were returned were reassessed fine to go out and were successfully rehomed.

Ms JOHNSTON - I have another question, I understand?

CHAIR - Yes.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you. On a different topic, through you, minister, to the chair and CEO: is Tasracing aware of any allegations of sexual harassment amongst participants or inappropriate conduct at race meets? Does Tasracing have a policy on how to deal with that and how to deal appropriately with complaints from participants?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you for that very important question. I will pass to the chair to add some comments.

Mr PHAIR - There is a code of conduct that Tasracing implemented in the last year or so, as far as all participants and employees. Misconduct of any type is included in that and can result in sanctionings, disqualifications or termination of employment, things like that. I'm unaware of any sexual misconduct allegations or anything like that in the industry. From a management point of view, I will defer to the CEO for some more information on that. Certainly, from a code of conduct point of view, it is very well documented to all industry participants and employees of Tasracing that there is a zero tolerance level as far as that goes.

Ms JOHNSTON - Does that relate to just race meets and specific areas, like geographical? Or does it relate to all conduct in training facilities, or just at meets and things like that?

Ms HOWLETT - That's a good question, and staff as well. I know that the CEO would like to speak to that.

Mr JENKINS - There are multiple protections that are in place here. As it's been quite correctly stated, there exists an industry code of conduct which covers our participants. That is an expectation that applies. It's not venue or location specific. If you hold a licence, you're expected to behave in alignment with. Separately for Tasracing staff, we have our own code of conduct which, similarly, mirrors those expectations. We undertake further training and support for our own people where we have direct control, including trauma-informed training recently for our senior leadership team that was conducted by Ms Regina Weiss. It's something that we're very mindful of and very protective of and active in relation to.

I can say that, as per the chair, I have no awareness of any such allegations. Clearly, if that type of behaviour was alleged, we would encourage that being reported either to Tasracing or through the Tasmanian Racing Commissioner's Office via what can be a confidential referral or lodgement. We have no place for it in our industry.

Mr JAENSCH - Minister, in a previous answer you touched on a fact that a healthy racing industry needs a strong and vibrant breeding industry behind it, which supports job creation and economic activity, particularly in regional areas.

PUBLIC

Mr WINTER - You're shutting down breeding next month.

Mr JAENSCH - Can you update the committee on your recent announcements in this space?

Ms HOWLETT - I'm pleased to update the committee that the Magic Millions has continued its commitment to the Tasmanian racing and breeding industry by extending the existing agreement with Tasracing and TasBreeders for a further five years. The new agreement will see Magic Millions conduct Tasmanian sales through to 2030. An extra \$1 million annually for the TasBred scheme will be invested as well.

Chair of the Magic Millions, director Barry Bowditch, said:

We commend Tasracing and the State Government, and we are committed to supporting and promoting the Tasmanian thoroughbred product to achieve the absolute best outcomes for its participants.

This investment is pivotal to the sustainability of the Tasmanian breeding and racing industry, and it was great to see Magic Millions provide the local breeding industry with its tick of approval and show some real confidence in the Tasmanian product, continuing the sales through to 2030.

We want to support and reward those who breed, buy and race the local product. And we're certain that extending the TasBred bonus to every maiden is a big step in the right direction.

Importantly, it gives breeders the confidence that they need to breed this season and into the future.

Mr WINTER - The absurdity of a Dorothy Dixer about breeding when the government's about to shut down greyhound breeding in January.

Ms HOWLETT - I thought you would be happy about that investment and the extension of the Magic Millions contract.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr WINTER - I wanted to go back to the question around the TasInsure text message.

Tasracing is listed as a State Service agency under the code of conduct. In the caretaker conventions, the caretaker conventions are very clear that resources of government can't be used and that agencies can't be used in a party political way.

Through you, Chair, was anybody in government, the Liberal government or in the Liberal Party, made aware that Tasracing was about to send this text message, and website and social media, out publicly?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, honourable member.

Mr WINTER - To the Chair, sorry, minister.

PUBLIC

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, and I will ask the Chair to comment.

Mr WINTER - No, the question is to the Chair. Just so you understand, under these -

Ms HOWLETT - I understand how it works.

Mr WINTER - I can ask either yourself or the Chair a question. I've directed this question to the Chair.

Mr PHAIR - Thank you, Mr Winter, for the question. I had no knowledge of the text message going out, let alone who instigated it, at the time. The first time that I was aware of a message, which was on social media, was a message from yourself alerting me to the fact. I immediately contacted the CEO to ask (a) was it true, and secondly, that it should be taken down. That's all I know of it.

Mr WINTER - The question was - the same question, chair - was anyone in the government or the Liberal Party made aware that this text message was going out?

Mr PHAIR - Not to my knowledge.

Mr WINTER - Are you able to check with your team? I can't ask the CEO direct questions, you see, Chair.

Ms HOWLETT - Are you able to respond to that?

Mr JENKINS - Yes, thank you. Not to my knowledge.

Mr WINTER - To you, again, Mr Phair, the State Service Code of Conduct requires agency - and in this case Tasracing is defined in this as an agency - employees and officers to use Tasmanian government resources in a proper manner. It says that the State Service principles in the *State Service Act 2000* assert that:

State Service is apolitical, performing its function in an impartial, ethical and professional manner.

Are you confident that Tasracing has not breached the caretaker conventions or the State Service Code of Conduct, State Service Principles and *State Service Act 2000* in sending out that text message encouraging people to look at the Liberal Party policy?

Mr PHAIR - Thank you, for your question, Mr Winter. I'm not an expert on the policy and the code of conduct, other than to say that the rationale around the sending of the message, as explained by the CEO, was around that this could be a benefit to the workers' compensation hurdles and impediments that participants had in place that were resulting in some businesses nearly having to shut their door. Whether it was a Liberal policy or a Labor policy, it was irrelevant; it was around making people aware of that.

In hindsight - and I've had numerous conversations with the CEO and we're both in complete alignment with this - we are an apolitical organisation and pride ourselves on that, so in no way would we be willingly participating in breaking that code of conduct.

PUBLIC

Mr WINTER - Did you make any referrals around this in terms of potential breaches of the code of conduct? Are you also aware that messages like this during election campaigns usually, or do, require authorisation? Did you make any referrals around either of those issues?

Mr PHAIR - No, I didn't. I was unaware of that.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, of the 1037 greyhounds that we understand are in the industry, could you please provide - and this might be on notice - a breakdown of the number held by each trainer, and preferably with the names of the dogs for each trainer.

Ms HOWLETT - I don't believe I have that information in front of me, and I think we would have to take that on notice.

Mr JENKINS - That's quite okay. We have the information and very comfortable to take that on notice.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you.

Ms HOWLETT - Is it possible to provide it before the end of the session, or you will take it on notice?

Mr JENKINS - Preference to take on, if we may.

Dr WOODRUFF - Another question, and it relates to injuries in the financial year 2024-25. How many dogs incurred injuries and/or died or were euthanised while racing at the track - with the name and the injury, the cause of death and the date for each of those dogs? Is it possible to take that on notice?

Ms HOWLETT - Dr Lenz?

Dr LENZ - Could you just specify the level of injury you're after? We have several levels of injury. Are you talking about the serious category, the serious injuries? Or are you talking about every stand-down period that's applied to every dog?

Dr WOODRUFF - I would be happy with all that information, if that's possible.

Dr LENZ - That's a big body of work.

Dr WOODRUFF - Is it? Are there that many injuries?

Dr LENZ - Well, the stand-down periods range from zero days and that's how injuries are approximated. A zero-day injury is an insignificant injury. We tend to concentrate on serious injuries.

Dr WOODRUFF - I recognise that. I'm really concerned about the serious injuries, particularly things that have led to death or euthanising, the name and what type of serious injury it is, the cause of death, and the date.

Dr LENZ - We do record that data very closely. I won't give an exact figure, but it's in the high 50s or maybe low 60s. It is something where we have very good data.

PUBLIC

Dr WOODRUFF - Great.

Dr LENZ - I can also advise the committee and yourself that since my appointment here, we have had a very strong policy where every injury that is potentially repairable, where the OTVs - the on-track veterinarians - determine that this is potentially a fixable injury, all those dogs are given proper pain relief and the injury is stabilised to facilitate their transfer to an off-the-track facility where further diagnostics can be applied. In most cases that's going to be an X-ray. Based on the findings of those X-rays, once again, we apply a very firm policy whereby any injury that is able to be treated is taken on to treatment and we facilitate that process through the other major scheme that we run, the Greyhound Recovery Rebate Scheme, which pays for the bulk of the treatment, if not all the treatment, in the majority of those cases.

We have dogs with - the most common injury type is obviously a right hock injury and they are all assessed further with X-rays and then taken to treatment. We also have some dogs, a much smaller number of dogs, that sustain long-bone fractures. Provided that the combined veterinary opinion - from the OTV on track and the referring veterinarian - is that there is scope for success in treatment, those dogs are taken on for treatment.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you for that lengthy explanation. That's useful.

Dr LENZ - The good news is that the number of dogs that have been euthanised as a result of those strong policies is actually minimal. In fact, Tasmania has, in the past two seasons, led Australia in minimising those mortalities for dogs with serious injuries. That is something that we're quite justifiably proud of.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, Dr Lenz. Through you, minister, can I take that? I will write that question down, so it is on notice.

CHAIR - Mr Di Falco, do you have a question?

Mr Di FALCO - Yes, I do. Minister, how many EPA sessions have been offered? How long will the government look after the mental welfare of the trainers and participants? Will there come a time when the government will wipe their hands and walk away from the people who find themselves traumatised?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you very much, Mr Di Falco, for your question. I would imagine before I hand over to the chair or CEO that the EPA program will be available after the phase-out period in 2029 as well. CEO, would you like to speak to that?

Mr JENKINS - Thanks, minister, Chair and, thank you, Mr di Falco. There is a range of phase-out considerations that are being worked through at present and that program is being led at the Premier's request by Mr Carroll, who is the Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner. What I can provide certainty around is the fact that during the initial working group discussions that Mr Carroll is chairing, the matter of participant welfare, mental-health inclusive, is high on the list of priority programs to be considered.

The working group hasn't, as I understand it, yet got to the level of policy detail in relation to how long support programs such as an employee assistance program may continue. From a Tasracing perspective, we would most certainly be supportive of an appropriate extension of an availability of an EAP and any other support that we may be able to provide beyond not

PUBLIC

only in the immediate short term as we work toward a phase-out, but logically that support ought to occur beyond the cessation of the greyhound racing. The detail is yet to be determined.

Ms HOWLETT - That's a really important program. I know the chair would like to add a bit more.

Mr PHAIR - Thank you, minister. The EAP service is available to all racing participants 24/7. The service is provided by Tasracing for any reason whatsoever and clearly a lot of those reasons are confidential. We don't need to know about them and so on. Any industry participant can partake in that EAP anytime they like. It doesn't have to be as a result of something. It can be at any time.

Mr Di FALCO - So it is open-ended, there's no limit?

Mr PHAIR - There's no limit. They are free to use that service whenever they need to use that service.

Mr Di FALCO - Even a long term? This is important in Lyons because we already have issues with mental health as it is. Even our chair is a founding member of RAW so it's an important thing for us to take care of.

Ms HOWLETT - It is.

Ms JOHNSTON - To the chair or CEO. On 18 November at the Northwest Greyhound Race Meeting in Launceston, the steward's report states that there was an inquiry held prior to the meeting in relation to Mr Gerard Alford. I understand Mr Alford has appealed the decision of the stewards in relation to fining him, but it does note that it is in relation to Facebook posts made on Save Greyhound Racing in Tasmania and the charge relates to 165A Conduct Detrimental to the Interest of Greyhound Racing and what was allegedly said is prejudiced of the interests and image of greyhound racing.

In determining the guilt or otherwise of Mr Alford and the appropriate penalty, it does state that Tasracing has made a concerted effort to educate all stakeholders and participants on respectful behaviours and appropriate use of social media. Can you elaborate for the committee what work you're undertaking at the moment in relation to respectful behaviours and appropriate standards of use of social media as part of a training package and whether that's offered just to greyhound participants or is it across all three codes?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Ms Johnson, that's a really important question. I think Ms Lester might like to speak to that.

Ms LESTER - Certainly I can touch a bit on that. Our participants have been given pamphlets on respectful behaviours and our social media policy due to inappropriate materials that are posted from time to time. In addition to that, Ms Shiralee Maher, who is our training officer is developing a course with TasTAFE and that is including a respect at work module as well. So we are really pushing respectful behaviours. Additionally, Tasracing has conducted training for Tasracing staff. It's broadly across the industry. It's not just for participants. Our staff are also required to conduct themselves in respectful manners and use social media appropriately.

PUBLIC

Ms JOHNSTON - Those pamphlets are given to everyone or just in particular -

Ms LESTER - My understanding is that information has been sent out to participants, often it's by text message because that's the preferred manner that our participants -

Ms JOHNSTON - That's gone out broadly across the industry?

Ms LESTER - Correct.

Mr JAENSCH - Minister, could you please update the committee on any key appointments made under the government's landmark racing reforms - the most significant in decades? Can you also provide any more details on the work of the new integrity unit, please?

Ms HOWLETT - These reforms were based on evidence and industry best practice, as recommended in the Monteith review. We said we would deliver them and we did. Integrity will be the bedrock on which the Tasmanian racing industry will grow and continue to make a positive contribution to the Tasmanian community.

The company's appointment of such an experienced racing integrity official in Ms Heidi Lester to the newly created position of Chief Racing Integrity Officer has been a great step forward in this regard. Ms Lester came to Tasmania from Singapore Turf Club where she was the vice president of racing. Prior to that, she was the chief steward at the Macau Jockey Club, the integrity partner at Cricket Australia and racing adviser and senior steward at the Korean Racing Authority. Ms Lester also has experience in Australia, as the chief steward for Greyhound Racing Victoria.

Our new racing regulation and integrity legislative framework has delivered strong new powers to set the framework higher for the industry. I outlined in my opening address and number of inspections, licences and actions the new Racing Integrity unit has undertaken. I will ask the company to talk about that shortly. Before doing so, I'd like to acknowledge that, as part of raising the bar when it comes to integrity in racing, we make no apologies for the new standards expected in the industry, regardless of whether you're a steward, a racing participant or owner, it's clear that the new reforms are delivering higher standards of integrity and animal welfare. When compliance with these standards falls short, action will certainly be taken.

Tasmanian racing has now entered a new era, which I'm extremely proud of. We have delivered the biggest reforms in decades to strengthen our racing industry and I'm really proud of that. I'm really pleased that Ms Lester accepted the position to come to Tasmania as well.

Mr WINTER - Minister, again, I want to confirm with you that you and no-one in your office or the government was aware that the text message about TasInsure from Tasracing was going out?

Ms HOWLETT - I can certainly tell you that I and no-one in my office was aware.

Mr WINTER - And no-one in the government was aware?

Ms HOWLETT - I can't speak for every single person in government or who works in government offices, but certainly, I wasn't aware and no-one from my office was aware.

PUBLIC

Mr WINTER - In the TasInsure document, racing is not even mentioned in their consultation piece. Can you confirm and assure participants that workers compensation for racing participants will actually be included in the TasInsure policy?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, I can certainly confirm that.

Mr WINTER - Okay, on page -

Ms HOWLETT - You should be pleased with that.

Mr WINTER - Well, let's see what happens, minister. On page 58 of the 2024-25 annual report it states that Tasracing received almost \$23 million in race field revenue. Can you provide a breakdown by racing code for those race field fees? Can you confirm that this will be a direct revenue loss as a result of banning greyhound racing?

Ms HOWLETT - I will refer to the CEO to do that breakdown, if that is possible?

Mr JENKINS - Thank you, minister. I have a figure; I will get you an exact number in a moment. The race field fee revenue generated by greyhounds is in the order of \$8 million.

Mr WINTER - Are you able to, maybe on notice, break that down exactly?

Mr JENKINS - I might have that.

Mr WINTER - Is that a direct revenue loss then, once greyhound racing is banned? Can you confirm that that is a direct and complete loss of revenue for Tasracing?

Mr JENKINS - In a simplistic sense, yes. If there's not greyhound racing that race field fee income stops. It's a loss. What should be noted, is the broader profit and loss context of the way that a racing industry operates and certainly the industry in Tasmania. What I mean by that is, there is a number of other income streams available to Tasracing - government funding being one, media rights sponsorship and so forth.

So, should race field fee income cease in due course, the net impact on Tasracing's profit and loss, on the racing industries profit and loss, is to the good in the order of about \$3.35 million. What I mean by that is that - it's often stated that the greyhound industry pays for itself. I understand why people reach that assumption, but it's not accurate. What is accurate is to say that the greyhound industry generates more race field fee income than it is paid in stakes money. Stakes money is not the only cost associated with running a complex code across multiple venues. Once you build in everything else that it costs to run the greyhound industry at a net profit line, it's actually about \$3.5 million in the red.

Mr WINTER - Is that work that you've done around this? Is that something you're able to provide to the committee in terms of the breakdown and the work you've done? I assume you've done it not just for greyhounds but also for harness and thoroughbred. Is that something you'd be able to provide to the committee, on notice, through you, Chair, perhaps.

Mr JENKINS - If it's appropriate to do so. The modelling has been undertaken. We understand code by code breakdown.

PUBLIC

Mr WINTER - Is that okay with you?

Mr PHAIR - Through the minister. If the information is available, yes.

Mr WINTER - I will put it on notice. I appreciate it.

Dr WOODRUFF - Through you, minister, probably to the CEO. This question will again probably be on notice about greyhound dog injuries. The question is, how many dogs who incurred injuries at the track but were not euthanised at the track were euthanised over the next month as a result of their injury? If I could get the information by the dog's name, the type of injury, and the date that that happened or the date they were euthanised. Also whether they subsequently returned to racing.

Mr PHAIR - Through you, minister. It will be a small number, so we will have that for you on notice.

Dr WOODRUFF - Okay, thanks. A final question in this area: how many dogs incurred injuries and/or died or were euthanised while training or trialling, also by the name and by the type of injury and the cause of death and the date?

Ms HOWLETT - If we can provide that information to you, Dr Lenz, is that on notice?

Dr LENZ - Yes, I will take that on notice.

Mr Di FALCO - Minister, based on welfare data Tasracing collects, is there any evidence to support the claims that greyhound racing in Tasmania is unsafe or unfixable?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Mr Di Falco. I will ask the CEO of Tasracing to provide comment to that.

Mr JENKINS - Thank you, minister. In terms of data that is currently available, Mr Di Falco, we are seeing a positive trend in our injury reductions and euthanasia over recent years, in particular under the strong leadership and policy development of Dr Lenz. There will of course be injuries always present but we have a view that it is heading in the right direction due to investment and Dr Lenz's leadership.

We're also committed to ensuring as safe as possible infrastructure across our two greyhound racetracks. That includes surface preparation and appropriate camber, give and consistency of the track. We've also relatively recently removed the two cable-driven lures, which have a risk of snapping and causing significant injury to the greyhounds and installed power-driven units. So we're very much committed to putting in place the best infrastructure and facilities we can to ensure the highest levels of safety for our racing dogs.

Mr Di FALCO - It seems like, from my point of view, if it's not broken, why fix it?

Mr JENKINS - That's not a question for me.

Mr Di FALCO - Yes.

PUBLIC

Ms JOHNSTON - Just a follow-up. I believe a question was taken on notice to be provided at this hearing regarding GAP total funding. Do you want me to put that on notice, given we only have a few minutes left?

Ms HOWLETT - I believe we have that total.

Mr JENKINS - It was just under \$1.1 million.

Ms HOWLETT - Just over \$1 million.

Mr JENKINS - Yes, \$1.05 million.

Ms JOHNSTON - For a total of 91 dogs?

Ms HOWLETT - It was for 101 dogs.

Ms JOHNSTON - Going back to the data provided before regarding dental care for 95 dogs at a total cost of \$37,121, I'm assuming that's just a subsidy. What percentage of the dental bill do you pay? That's extraordinarily low, and I know that taking a greyhound for dental care for a general clean is \$1000?

Ms HOWLETT - Any dog is around that cost.

Ms JOHNSTON - How much subsidy is provided? Is it a percentage or is it a fixed amount?

Dr LENZ - Thank you for the question. I can give you very accurate figures. We run a rebate up to \$400 for a male dog to be desexed and up to \$500 if that dog happens to be a rick, where one of the testicles is retained. For a female desexing operation, we rebate up to \$500. For a dental exam and treatment, if it's done at the time of the desexing, we rebate up to \$200. If the treating vet makes a decision that they want to separate the desexing from the dental for hygiene and medical reasons, we subsidise another \$200, so a total of \$400 for separate dental. We subsidise up to \$100 for a C5 vaccination and we also have a subsidy for any greyhound aged seven years or over if a decision is made to do some pre-general anaesthetic blood tests to check on safety of performing the procedure, of up to \$100.

Ms JOHNSTON - Do you provide any subsidy in relation to hereditary illness?

CHAIR - Ms Johnston, next question.

Ms HOWLETT - Chair, do you mind if I provide an update to Mr Winter for a breakdown of some code funding?

Mr JENKINS - Mr Winter, to give you the exact race field figures, you're quite right, the \$22.9 million includes international greyhounds, we were pretty close, \$8.1 million; harness \$3.4 million; thoroughbreds \$10.5 million; and international race field fees \$900,000.

Mr WINTER - Could you confirm you committed to providing on notice that modelling you were talking about earlier? Will you still do that?

PUBLIC

Mr JENKINS - Yes, noted.

Mr WINTER - I appreciate it.

Mr JAENSCH - Do you have some supplementary information, Dr Lenz?

Dr LENZ - I do; I want to correct the record. I did say it was a big table that I was looking at and I slipped into the wrong row. The total number of dogs treated under the scheme was 205 and of those, the total number desexed was 196.

Mr JAENSCH - Minister, in your opening address you commented on Tasracing growing its own-source revenue and the government working with the company to ensure it maximises returns in a competitive national market. What steps has the company taken to ensure it extends the reach of Tasmanian racing to a broader audience, both national and international?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you for the question, it's really important. I'm pleased to update the committee on some important commercial and digital announcements. During the reporting period Tasracing launched a new updated corporate website, tasracing.com.au. The move provided greater security, flexibility for delivering content and enhanced analytical capabilities to enable better understanding of its customers. Website traffic has grown significantly, with tasracing.com.au views increasing by 9 per cent from 2.9 million to 3.2 million. Tasracing Live, a live streaming product, also benefited from the new platform, with noticeably improved streaming stability and an 11 per cent increase in viewing minutes.

Strategic content creation and targeted engagement across social media platforms delivers impressive results, with total account followers growing by 7 per cent. This was achieved through 2.9 million social impressions across Facebook, Instagram and X as well as LinkedIn, with minimal paid campaigns compared to the previous -

Mr WINTER - 'With minimal paid campaigns compared to the previous year' - it's in your annual report.

Ms HOWLETT - Mr Winter, would you please stop interrupting me?

CHAIR - Mr Winter, please let the minister finish.

Ms HOWLETT - It's very important information. Tasracing's 10-year contract and partnership with Sky Channel, which expires in December this year, will be extended under revised terms for further five years effective from January 2026.

I want to take the opportunity to acknowledge the substantial work done by Mr Jenkins to deliver this agreement and will shortly invite him to provide some further context to it. From our summer racing festival to our regional meetings, this extension will ensure Tasmanian racing product is widely available.

I'm also pleased to update that Ladbrokes has reaffirmed its commitment to racing in Tasmania, extending its partnership for another five years during the reporting period. These announcements, in addition to the Magic Millions deal through to 2030 that I discussed earlier, mean that there's evidence for confidence in Tasmanian racing and its sustainability as well.

PUBLIC

Mr WINTER - On page 58 of the annual report it states that Tasracing received almost \$1.5 million in sponsorship income. How much of that relates to greyhound racing?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Mr Winter. I will ask the CEO to provide that to you.

Mr JENKINS - The majority of that sponsorship income relates to the overarching statewide principal partnership with Entain Australia and New Zealand, who we trade with as Ladbrokes. The contract does have volume, tiers and minimums in it. I would have to take on notice the exact relevance and considerations as related to greyhound racing, content and volume, number of meetings, et cetera.

Pleasingly, the extent of our partnership with Ladbrokes has placed us in a position where, at this point in time, we have not had any discussions, rhetoric or questions from Entain in relation to any impact on the partnership agreement or the quantum of the sponsorship. If it's appropriate to do so, subject to commercial confidentiality, I may be in a position to provide further detail.

Mr WINTER - If that's okay with you, minister, I will put it on notice and then whatever you're able to provide, subject to commercial-in-confidence, we'd appreciate it.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, whatever we can provide, we will.

On that same page, it states Tasracing received more than \$2.1 million in 'other racing income'. Can you outline whether that includes vision and broadcasting rights, if there's anything else it covers? Will this income be impacted by the greyhound racing ban?

Mr JENKINS - 'Other racing income' includes a number of considerations where non-fees, acceptances, so on and so forth. I would have to go through the next level of detail, Mr Winter, in order to provide a breakdown in that regard.

Mr WINTER - I appreciate it. Is that okay to take that on notice as well, minister?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, happy to.

Mr WINTER - Great. In terms of life expectancy for tracks, I want to take you to thoroughbred racing in Spreyton. Can you confirm that the Spreyton track is now well past its original life expectancy? What options has Tasracing considered for the track before it eventually undertook, as I understand it, renovation some few months ago? If so, can you take us through the costs that were estimated for what I assume is a total renovation, or whatever you call it, synthetic track? What are the options that were considered by Tasracing, and what costs are we likely on the hook for in the next few years around Spreyton?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Mr Winter. I'll allow the CEO to speak about the refurbishment that took place at Spreyton.

Mr JENKINS - The Tapeta product or surface at Spreyton is nearly 15 years old, I think. At the time it was constructed, as I understand it, in that climatic environment and location - I am not sure exactly what the life expectancy was at the time it was built. Where we are at this point in time is that the surface is deteriorating. It's just getting worn. It picks up foreign matter over time, whether that be horse faeces, grass, dirt, other sand, whatever else is getting around

PUBLIC

the place. It simply means that the product is not able to bind the way that it does when it's young.

You're quite right, Mr Winter, we have undertaken a number of renovations in my time here, but the most recent one, seven or eight months ago, was the most significant that we have undertaken. That included the introduction of some new chemicals, or wax and oil, which are a binding agent, and also the introduction of new product itself to try to get more of a balance in the profile, i.e. more clean product versus the effectively contaminated products.

That worked well for three or four months, and we are now starting to see that the product performance is deteriorating. Therefore, our intention at this point in time is to prepare it as best we can to get through Devonport Cup in early January. We will make an assessment at that point in time as to what needs to happen next. More than likely it will be another retreatment to buy us at least another six to nine months. We have included in our recently updated CapEx plan, endorsed by the board, a full replacement of that surface in, I think we said the 2028 financial year. There's only so much you can top it up.

Mr WINTER - What's the estimated cost of that?

Mr JENKINS - It is somewhere between \$7.5 million and \$10 million.

Ms HOWLETT - Chair, can I clarify something in relation to Mr Winter's question before. I have directly spoken to Ladbrokes, and to Entain, TABCorp and Sportsbet as well, and they certainly have confidence in the Tasmanian racing industry.

Mr WINTER - Thank you.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, Susan Gittus is the current manager of the Greyhound Adoption Program. There are questions about the number of greyhounds that she has on her own personal property. Previous drone footage has shown very large numbers - 30 dogs - on her personal property. At the time, only two greyhounds were registered to her husband, Nathan Gittus, who is a trainer. Can you please tell me whether it's true that there are so many greyhounds at the Gittus property? Why are dogs being held there or going there, for assessment or foster care, and has that been approved?

Ms HOWLETT - What I can say regarding her employment as a GAP manager, Ms Gittus is endorsed by Tasracing for her experience and commitment to greyhound welfare. Tasracing supports her involvement with industry participants as it builds within the greyhound industry and aids GAP's work. I will ask Dr Lenz or Mr Jenkins to speak further to that.

Dr LENZ - Thank you for the question. I know this has come up several times over time. There's no mystery. Ms Gittus is a lover of greyhounds, and the majority of the dogs that you reference are dogs that are retired on her property. She does not - and I want to make that absolutely clear - she is not currently operating as a private assessor of greyhounds outside of the work that she does for GAP. Where she used to run a program - Greyt Life - that program is no longer active, so there are no assessments of greyhounds occurring privately on her property outside of the work that she does at GAP.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, Dr Lenz. Through you, perhaps to Dr Lenz. The question is whether there's a conflict of interest with her role as manager of GAP, and how did the

PUBLIC

greyhounds get there, and if any money has been, or is being, paid to Ms Gittus, and who is paying for them? So, they left the GAP program, went to Ms Gittus's property. A clarification of how many greyhounds have gone there from the GAP program would be appreciated. The question is, who is paying for them, if anyone - the owners, the trainers, GAP, Tasracing? Could you provide some information, please?

Dr LENZ - Sure. I don't know how to make that any clearer, but these are dogs that she has privately retired to herself. They are dogs that were racing dogs. Most of them are aged at this stage, but she has a whole range of age ranges of retired dogs that were, my understanding, her privately owned dogs. There's no - and the term that's been bandied about is feeder kennel - there is no feeder kennel. These are her own, privately-owned dogs. There is no money that's being paid for her to retire her own animals to herself, by GAP or by anybody else.

Dr WOODRUFF - Or no veterinary costs paid, or any of those other things that might happen? Her husband, as I understand, is a trainer, but she no longer has a training licence herself. So, she's just looking after those dogs. How many dogs are there?

Dr LENZ - I don't know that number, but I believe that the number you mentioned is 30 dogs, and yes, she has a significant number of dogs that are retired animals. She provides all the financial means to look after those 30 animals. She is a greyhound lover at heart, and this is how that is demonstrated. She keeps 30 retired greyhounds on her property and looks after them to a very high standard.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, perhaps Dr Lenz might be able to answer this veterinary question. Does Tasracing provide any subsidies to breeders, owners or trainers who want to test their dogs for progressive retinal atrophy? It's a relatively cheap test to conduct and obviously prevents significant issues later on so we're trying to breed out that particular disease.

Dr LENZ - Picking up on Mr Winter's earlier comment, the breeding of racing dogs is obviously slated to be finished -

Ms JOHNSTON - Yes, by 1 January, hopefully.

Dr LENZ - There is a provision in the legislation that was tabled for participants to engage in breeding for pets. It would certainly be something that I, and I'm sure, Tasracing would support for the breeding of pets for there to be a provision for something like the condition you mentioned, some effort made to reduce the incidence of that condition.

Ms JOHNSTON - At the moment for racing dogs, obviously they're only bred for racing purposes and there's no subsidy or encouragement provided to owners or breeders to actually test for this. We don't want dogs being bred -

Dr LENZ - No.

Ms JOHNSTON - I hope that the legislation does go through. Obviously that's my personal view, but if it doesn't, we need to make sure that this particular condition, which is quite disastrous for the animals -

Dr LENZ - At the moment, the main determinant of breeding success is obviously breeding for speed, breeding fast dogs. It would certainly be highly desirable for other things

PUBLIC

to be taken into account when breeding decisions are made. That would be something we would certainly favour.

Ms JOHNSTON - Going back to the data around GAP funding, if I understand the minister correctly, I heard her say \$1.05 million for GAP - was that the correct figure?

Ms HOWLETT - That's right.

Ms JOHNSTON - For the 101 dogs that GAP has rehomed, that's \$10,396 average per dog. Last year we were reporting it to be between \$17,000 and \$18,000. I'm wondering, since there's been significant investment in GAP and the facilities there, why that number has reduced from \$17,000 to \$18,000 per dog down to \$10,000 this financial year. What's the difference there? If you've invested more, I don't understand how the cost has gone down.

Dr LENZ - The figure from the last financial year, the \$17,000 you mentioned, was actually quite high across Australian rehoming jurisdictions. I believe we've been fortunate in terms of looking at where some of those costs were and whether they were going into helping us prepare the dogs or being spent on other things that perhaps weren't critical to that welfare focus. I'm pleased to say we have managed to funnel more of the money into actually assessing the dogs first of all but also training our staff and getting them to be able to train the dogs to make them able to be rehomed in better shape, but also in a shorter timeframe. As you'd appreciate, the timeframe from getting them onto the program to being able to be responsibly rehomed is the main determinant of cost.

Mr JAENSCH - Minister, the Tasracing annual report talks about new animal welfare funding that's being provided. Can you please outline some more details about the Greyhound Recovery Rebate Scheme and the Racing Animal Welfare Grants Program?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the honourable member for his question. As we deliver the government's major racing reforms, last year I said in parliament that we would lift the bar higher in relation to animal welfare and integrity standards. These grants are good evidence of the commitment of the government and Tasracing to animal welfare and the way it positively influences operational decision-making at all levels.

Funding for the Greyhound Recovery Rebate Scheme of at least \$5500 per eligible injury was made available during this reporting period. The scheme helps ensure that all greyhounds with repairable racing injuries could be provided with the best veterinary care available to optimise their quality of life, regardless of whether they've returned to racing or were rehomed. This initiative provided \$130,724 for the treatment of 61 greyhounds and was a major contributor to maintaining a low euthanasia rate of greyhounds due to track-related injuries during the reporting period.

The Racing Animal Welfare Grants Program was established by Tasracing to provide funding for eligible groups and individuals providing animal welfare initiatives for active and retired racing animals in Tasmania across three grant categories. There were nine successful applicants for the second annual round of the program with a total of \$54,647 paid.

Dr Lenz, would you like to add any more comments to that?

CHAIR - You have about 50 seconds.

PUBLIC

Dr LENZ - The RAWG program is in its second year and we've once again extended it out not only to our existing stakeholders but also we reached out in particular to some of the greyhound re-homers. We will, in all likelihood, run the same program again and broaden that invitation to anyone who's looking after our animals when they retire from racing.

Mr WINTER - My question is to Mr Phair around the deed. You and I have been here before. In GBE hearings in November 2023, I asked you about the deed and you said your position was that your participants and people wanting to invest in the industry need certainty around the funding going forward. You said that Tasracing would like a decision as soon as possible about the deed. I asked if you put a proposal to government. You said you had within the last six to eight weeks. That was on 22 November, so more than two years ago.

Can you run the committee through why two years later we still don't have a new deed and why there isn't that certainty for the industry going forward to this point? What have been the issues in terms of negotiating a deed with government over the course of the last two years?

Mr PHAIR - Thank you, Mr Winter, for the question. I think it's unfair to say that there is no certainty. I think the government has been very clear in that there is a funding deed that will be provided to the industry. The quantum of that is still being determined by Treasury and Finance.

From our point of view we've made our recommendations, we've made our plea, so to speak of, around those comments that were made in 2023 and still stand. Participants want confidence that they can invest in the industry. I believe the government's announcement last week provides that confidence that they can invest in the industry, particularly from a breeding point of view. The time taken from when they think about servicing a mare to a horse actually making it to the races is a long period of time, as you know. That certainty is paramount as far as the breeding industry is concerned. I believe that certainty has been provided.

Mr WINTER - With respect, I think participants are wondering if they can really trust what the government says, given that the government said they gave full confidence to the greyhound industry and three weeks later went and did a deal to shut them down.

You're right, though, in terms of the conversation about breeding for horses. We saw last year's Magic Millions being a disastrous result, particularly for a couple of our leading breeders. Do you concede that the lack of having a deed is debilitating and driving prices down at our thoroughbred and standard bred sales?

Mr PHAIR - No, I don't believe that's the case at all. There is a number of contributing factors to the decrease in prices and the number of horses that were sold at the yearling sales. I think across Australia, probably without the Magic Millions on the Gold Coast as an exception, the prices are down. There's a cost-of-living issue around people with disposable income being able to spend money on buying horses and so on. There's a number of factors in play around why people may not have spent as much money at the yearling sales last year as they did the year before.

Mr WINTER - One of the factors earlier this year with those sales at the Magic Millions was a number of owners boycotting the sales because they couldn't get access into the stalls on race day, particularly at Elwick but also, I understand, at Mowbray. Can you explain to the

PUBLIC

committee what Tasracing is doing to ensure that owners can get access to see their horses on race day?

Mr PHAIR - Thank you for the question. I think we are on record as saying that safety is our number one priority for all participants, whether they are racing participants themselves, or owners or people who just want to go to the races and see the animals. We won't put that safety at risk. Until such time as we are able to provide a safe environment, as far as -

Mr WINTER - That's the question, when's the safe environment happening?

Mr PHAIR - Well, we are working on that. I can probably defer to the CEO for a greater update, but certainly that's paramount in our mind.

Mr JENKINS - In terms of the infrastructure, Mr Winter, the difficulty we have, in particular at Elwick, is that the original design is patently unsafe, where you have horses and people and potentially the general public or owners traversing an area where there isn't a physical separation between unlicensed persons and horses. If you were to head along to, say, Moonee Valley or Caulfield, when as an owner or a fan you go and view a horse or horses in the stables, you're behind a fence. It's a very safe and simple system. What was identified in the external safety audit, quite logically, is that it is a massive red flag to have unlicensed persons wandering around the stables. Where I'm going with that is that at this point in time we do not have the funding for an infrastructure plan to tear down the Elwick stables and start again.

Mr WINTER - Do you have a quote?

Mr JENKINS - No, we don't.

Mr WINTER - No estimated costs or anything?

CHAIR - Mr Winter.

Mr JENKINS - Look, finger in the wind, \$5 million. But the other consideration here around that of course is integrity. Ms Lester is on record having written to Tasracing operations and indeed the commissioner to advise her view that you ought not have unlicensed persons in the stables for risk of contamination -

Mr WINTER - Is this only for thoroughbreds?

Dr WOODRUFF - Chair.

Mr WINTER - Sorry, I shouldn't have interrupted; I apologise.

CHAIR - Quickly finish.

Mr JENKINS - Yes, of course. At this stage the restriction is in place for thoroughbreds and we have asked the independent safety consultant to come back and observe some harness meetings and make a specific assessment on those operating mechanisms. We would love to have owners in the stables, please don't misunderstand, but I would much rather have an unhappy owner than a dead one.

PUBLIC

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, this is to the Tasracing CEO. On 27 May, the Magistrates Court in Devonport found racehorse trainer, Liandra Erin Gray, guilty of committing an act of cruelty against a horse when she whipped it with a padded racing whip. The magistrate found it had indeed caused or was likely to cause unreasonable and unjustifiable pain or suffering to an animal. Is Tasracing looking at adjusting the local rules of racing to ban the use of whips in training and racing?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Dr Woodruff, and I know Mr Jenkins would like to speak to that.

CHAIR - The time allocated for scrutiny of this organisation has now expired.

Thanks to the office holders and staff for your attendance. Thank you to the committee and the minister and members. Thank you very much.

The witnesses withdrew.

The committee adjourned at 7.30 p.m.