PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

DEBATES OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

DAILY HANSARD

Wednesday 25 November 2026

Preliminary Transcript

This draft transcript of debates is issued in advance of the final Hansard for the use of the members of the Legislative Council and copies made from this may not be protected by parliamentary privilege.

Wednesday 25 November 2026

The President, **Mr Farrell**, took the Chair at 11 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People and read Prayers.

LEGISLATION AND REGULATORY REVIEW (NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT TASMANIA) BILL 2026 (No. 34)

LEGISLATION AND REGULATORY REVIEW (JUSTICE) BILL 2026 (No. 35)

LEGISLATION AND REGULATORY REVIEW (TREASURY) BILL 2026 (No. 36)

LEGISLATION AND REGULATORY REVIEW (HEALTH) BILL 2026 (No. 37)

LEGISLATION AND REGULATORY REVIEW (EDUCATION) BILL 2026 (No. 38)

LEGISLATION AND REGULATORY REVIEW (BUILDING TASMANIA) BILL 2026 (No. 39)

LEGISLATION AND REGULATORY REVIEW (PREMIER AND CABINET) BILL 2026 (No. 40)

First Readings

Bills received from the House of Assembly and read the first time.

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I move -

That the second readings be made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

Motion agreed to.

TASMANIAN COMMUNITY FUND AMENDMENT BILL 2025 (No. 55)

Consideration of Bill as Amended in Committee of the Whole Council

[11.11 a.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I move -

That the bill, as amended in Committee, be now taken into consideration.

Motion agreed to.

Amendments read first time.

Amendments read second time.

Amendments agreed to.

TASMANIAN COMMUNITY FUND AMENDMENT BILL 2025 (No. 55)

Third Reading

[11.13 a.m.]

Mr PRESIDENT (Mr Farrell) - The question is that the bill be now read the third time.

The Council divided -

AYES 11	NOES 3
Ms Armitage	Mr Gaffney
Mr Duigan	Ms O'Connor
Mr Edmunds	Ms Webb (Teller)
Ms Forrest	
Ms Glade-Wright	
Mr Hiscutt	
Ms Lovell (Teller)	
Ms Palmer	
Ms Rattray	
Ms Thomas	
Mr Vincent	

Bill read the third time.

CONVERSION PRACTICES PROHIBITION BILL 2026 (No. 45)

Consideration of Bill as Amended in Committee of the Whole Council

Ms O'CONNOR (Hobart) - Mr President, I move -

> That the bill as amended in Committee be taken into the consideration of the whole Council.

Motion agreed to.

Amendments read the first time.

Amendments read the second time.

Amendments agreed to.

Ms O'CONNOR - Mr President, on this day, when we're shepherding in a kinder and safer Tasmania for LGBTQA+ people, I move -

That the bill be now read the third time.

Bill read the third time.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

[11.20 a.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, in consultation with the Clerks, I move -

That the sitting be suspended until the ringing of the division bells.

This is to enable some paperwork to be facilitated.

Sitting suspended from 11.20 a.m. to 11.48 a.m.

SENATE VACANCY

Letter from Government House

[11.48 a.m.]

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, I have correspondence from Government House.

Government House
Hobart

25 November 2026

Dear President

I enclose a copy of a letter that I have received from the President of the Senate notifying me that, pursuant to the provisions of Section 21 of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution, a vacancy has occurred on 25 November 2026 in the representation of the State of Tasmania as a result of the resignation of Senator the Honourable Jonathon Duniam.

I have also written to the Premier and the Speaker of the House of Assembly to advise them of the vacancy.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Wells
Governor

The letter from President Lines, President of the Senate.

> Your Excellency
>
> Pursuant to Section 21 of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution, I notify Your Excellency there is a vacancy in the representation of the State of Tasmania following the resignation of Senator the Honourable Jonathon Duniam on Wednesday 25 November 2026.
>
> Yours sincerely
>
> Sue Lines
> President of the Australian Senate

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Joint Sitting - Senate Vacancy

[11.50 a.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) (by leave) - Mr President, I move -

> That so much of Standing Order 329 be suspended to allow for a joint sitting of the Houses to be arranged sooner than seven days after receipt of the Governor's message.

In speaking to that, Mr President, given that tomorrow will be the last opportunity this year, and equal representation in our Senate for Tasmania is extremely important, I respectfully seek the support of honourable members.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Joint Sitting - Senate Vacancy

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) (by leave) - Mr President, I move -

> That on Thursday 26 November 2026, at 9.30 o'clock in the morning, the Legislative Council meet the House of Assembly in the House of Assembly Chamber for the purpose of sitting and voting together to choose a person to hold the place in the Senate and the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, rendered vacant by the resignation of Senator, the honourable Jonathon Duniam.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Joint Sitting - Rules Adopted

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) (by leave) - Mr President, I move -

> That the Joint Sitting Rules as distributed to members in the House be adopted as the rules for the joint sitting of both Houses.

Motion agreed to.

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) (by leave) - Mr President, I move -

> That a message be transmitted to the House of Assembly requesting its concurrence therein and that such message contains the proposed rules for the joint sitting of both Houses.

Motion agreed to.

SUSPENSION OF SESSIONAL ORDER

Greyhound Racing Bill - Time Limits for Second Reading Contributions

[11.52 a.m.]

Ms LOVELL (Rumney) (by leave) - Mr President, I move -

> That so much of the Sessional Order No. 7 in relation to Second Reading Speech contributions on Bills be suspended.

This is for the purpose of the second reading debate on the Greyhound Racing Legislation Amendments (Phasing Out Reform) Bill 2025 (No. 66).

By way of explanation, as members would be aware, this bill has been sitting on our notice paper for some time. The debate had commenced prior to the Chamber amending the Sessional Orders and imposing time limits, so I'm moving this motion in the interest of consistency and fairness. Some members were able to speak to this bill without having to consider a time limit. I think it would be only fair that the remaining speakers have the same option.

Motion agreed to.

GREYHOUND RACING LEGISLATION AMENDMENTS (PHASING OUT REFORM) BILL 2025 (No. 66)

Second Reading

Continued from 15 April 2026 (page xx).

[11.53 a.m.]

Mr EDMUNDS (Pembroke) - Thank you, Mr President and members. I rise today to resume debate on the Greyhound Racing Legislation Amendments (Phasing Out Reform) Bill 2025, a debate that should never have been interrupted in the manner that it was and legislation that is a betrayal of so many decent Tasmanians.

Before I turn to the substance of this bill, Mr President, to the deeply flawed economic assumptions underpinning it, to the evidence uncovered across two separate parliamentary committee reports and to the future of racing in Tasmania, I want to start by addressing the extraordinary events of 16 April this year and what has transpired in the seven months since.

Mr President, this Chamber prides itself, rightly, on being a House of review. We are a deliberative Chamber. We are not a rubber stamp for the executive government of the day, nor are we a theatre for political stunts. Members in this place take their responsibilities seriously. They read the bills, they read the committee reports, they listen to stakeholders on all sides of an argument, they weigh the evidence and they come into this Chamber prepared to debate and to vote according to their conscience and their judgment. On 16 April 2026, honourable members came into this Chamber ready to do precisely that. The second reading was moved the day before the debate commenced. I had, with the assurance that we would debate the bill the following morning, moved the adjournment. I feel like a bit of a mug for moving that adjournment. Then midstream, when the government realised that the numbers in this Chamber might not be going their way, when they thought they were going to lose the vote, they pulled the plug and pulled the debate.

The government did not adjourn this bill because new evidence had suddenly emerged. They did not adjourn it because they needed to consult further with participants whose livelihoods they were proposing to destroy. They adjourned it because they counted the heads in this Chamber, realised they were heading for defeat, and decided to cut and run rather than allow the Legislative Council to exercise its constitutional function and to vote on a government bill.

Worse than that, was the sheer disrespect shown to this Chamber - and I don't mean to embarrass her - and to the Leader of the Government in this place. The government pulled the bill without even having the basic courtesy to inform the Leader beforehand. Think about what that says about the Premier's attitude towards the Legislative Council. To treat the Leader of the Government in this Chamber, and by extension, every single member sitting around this room, as an afterthought while frantic backroom head counting goes on down the corridor, is an insult to the conventions and the dignity of this parliament. Then, adding insult to injury, the government declared publicly that it would not bring this bill back on for debate until it knew it had the numbers to pass it. Pause and reflect on the absurdity and the cynicism of that position.

First, what does it say about the government's respect for parliamentary democracy? 'We will only allow the upper House to vote on our legislation once we have already locked in the outcome outside the Chamber.' That turns the entire concept of parliamentary debate on its head. Debate in this place is meant to inform members' decisions, not be treated as a formality to be scheduled only after the executive has twisted enough arms behind closed doors.

Second, and perhaps more importantly for my colleagues in this Chamber, look at the impossible position the government has put members in by adopting that posture. I know my colleagues in this place. I've worked alongside most of you on committees and across the Floor of this Chamber. I know that every single member here makes their decisions on the merits of the policy and the legislation before them. Some members may have entered this debate inclined to support the bill. Others may have been inclined to oppose it. Others may have been genuinely weighing the arguments and waiting to hear the full debate before reaching a final view. By announcing to the media and to the public that they would not bring the bill back until they had the numbers, the government has effectively weaponised any members' thoughtful reconsideration. They've made it infinitely harder for any member in this place to weigh the debate and change their position because the government has framed the very resumption of the debate as proof that they have already secured the votes. It is a classic piece of political wedging, designed not to persuade members on the merits, but to box them in.

I want to say this clearly at the outset of my contribution today: I respect every single one of my colleagues in this Chamber at the end of the debate, no matter how they vote. Whether a member votes for this bill or against it, I respect their integrity. I respect the work they've put into their decisions and I respect their right to represent their electorates and their conscience as they see fit. What I do not respect, and what this Chamber should never tolerate, is a government treating the Legislative Council like a pawn in a political game.

To understand why this bill is such a mess and why the government has struggled so badly to defend it, you have to look at how this policy was born. This policy had zero legitimacy from day one. I think, as I said when we were debating the disappearance on the Notice Paper, that it was built on foundations of quicksand. Because it was never born out of any genuine animal welfare conviction, nor out of sound economic planning, nor out of any coherent vision for the Tasmanian racing industry. It was born out of pure, unadulterated political opportunism.

Let us cast our mind back to the 2025 state election campaign. For six solid weeks during that campaign, the Premier and the Liberal Party stood in front of cameras, looked Tasmanians in the eye and told them one thing over and over again: you cannot trust Labor; Labor will do a deal with the Greens. For six weeks that was the Liberal Party's scare campaign. I know for a fact they were at Elwick Racetrack telling an industry that the Liberal Party was a staunch defender of Tasmanian racing and it was Labor that was the threat that would sell them out to the Greens.

Of course, there is the letter received by Ben Englund at the North West Greyhound Club, committing the Premier and his party to the future of the racing industry. I will read that into my contribution. This is a letter from the Premier of Tasmania, who's still the Premier of Tasmania, to Ben Englund from the North West Greyhound Racing Club:

Dear Mr Englund,

Thank you for your correspondence on behalf of Tasmania's greyhound racing industry. I have pleasure in responding on behalf of all Tasmanian Liberal candidates. I know that the racing community, and more broadly the Tasmanian community, want a racing industry that is fair, humane and sustainable across all three codes, including greyhound racing. The government is committed to support the longevity and sustainability of the racing industry, which, as you know, generates close to $208 million in economic activity for Tasmania and which involves more than 6400 people.

Work has already started on developing a new racing industry funding deed to ensure the ongoing financial sustainability of the Tasmanian racing industry. I understand this is the industry's number one priority and I recognise the industry needs certainty and we will deliver that. The government also remains committed to providing funding support for a training solution on the north-west coast once we have received additional advice from Tasracing and other stakeholders.

We'll continue to back Tasmania's racing community and the vital jobs in regional Tasmania and the many families and other small businesses it supports.

Yours sincerely,
Jeremy Rockliff MP (TBC)

And then what happened, Mr Premier? - Ah, Mr President.

Ms Rattray - Mr Chamber, Mr Premier.

Mr EDMUNDS - I'm off to a flier.

Ms Rattray - So many titles.

Mr EDMUNDS – Yes, sorry.

And then what happened the moment the election was over and the Premier needed to cobble together support on the crossbench to cling to power? Within days, the very Premier who had spent almost two months accusing Labor of plotting a deal with the Greens, walked straight into a room with the Greens and handed them the exact policy he had spent weeks warning Tasmanians against. Mr President, that is a complete, total cynical, political sell out. There's no mandate for this policy. None.

Not a single Liberal candidate went to the 2025 election promising to shut down Tasmanian greyhound racing. In fact, they campaigned on the exact opposite. There was no Treasury modelling done before the announcement. There was no social impact assessment. There was no consultation with Tasracing. No consultation with the clubs in Hobart, Launceston or Devonport and no consultation with the hundreds of working-class Tasmanian families whose lives and livelihoods are built around this industry.

It was a policy scribbled on the back of an envelope to buy a few votes in the House of Assembly and everything that has followed, the chaos, the contradictions, the ballooning transition costs, the legal uncertainty, the six-month freeze of this bill, is the direct result of a policy that was conceived in bad faith. Even when the bill stalled in this chamber in April, what did the government do in May 2026? They declared that regardless of whether parliament passes this legislation or not, they will unilaterally cut off all public funding to end greyhound racing after 30 June 2029.

Think about the arrogance of that: They come to parliament asking for legislative authority to phase out the industry and when parliament exercises its right to scrutinise that legislation, the executive effectively says, 'well, if you don't pass our bill, we'll starve them through our funding deed anyway'. That is contempt for the parliament, plain and simple. Because this policy was announced without a shred of analysis behind it, it fell to this chamber to demand that the Joint Standing Committee on the Greyhound Racing Transition do some actual work on it.

Even while the committee was stacked with those who opposed the industry, they have delivered us reports littered with evidence that the entire pretence of this policy is false. Let us first look at the financial and economic reality, which the Greens have repeatedly tried to sell this ban to the Tasmanian public on the premise that greyhound racing is some kind of massive, unsustainable drain on the state budget and that shutting it down will somehow save taxpayers millions of dollars. Let us look at the hard numbers from the 2024-25 financial year, the exact figures put before our inquiries and examined in detail. In the 2024-25 financial year, Tasracing received $37.8 million in baseline public funding through the Tasracing Funding Deed, plus an additional $4.2 million in targeted government grants, bringing total public support for the Tasmanian racing industry to $42 million.

Now, how has that funding been distributed across the three codes? Let us look at the actual net operating subsidy, that is, total code-specific expenditure minus the direct revenue each code actually generates for Tasracing through race field fees and wagering taxes. So, in financial year 2025, thoroughbred racing cost $34.56 million to run and generated $12.97 million in direct race field fees, requiring a net taxpayer subsidy of $21.5 million or 62.5 per cent of its operating costs. Harness racing costs $15.08 million to run and generated $3.81 million in direct race field fees, requiring a net taxpayer subsidy of $11.27 million, or 74.7 per cent of its operating costs. Greyhound racing cost $11.61 million to run and generated $8.4 million in direct race field fees, requiring a tax subsidy of just $3.21 million, or 27.6 per cent of its operating costs. Even if you include the $870,000 spent on the Greyhound as Pets program, the total net subsidy is $4.08 million, or 32.5 per cent.

Let me repeat those percentages so every member in the Chamber hears them clearly. Harness racing relies on taxpayer subsidies for 74.7 per cent of its costs. Thoroughbred racing relies on taxpayer subsidies for 62.5 per cent of its costs. Greyhound racing relies on taxpayer subsidies for 27.6 per cent of its operating costs. Greyhound racing is, by a country mile or the Flemington straight, the least subsidised and most financially self-sustaining racing code in Tasmania. It generates $8.4 million in direct race field fee revenue, more than double the $3.81 million generated by harness racing, despite costing $3.47 million less to operate.

In fact, if you look at the numbers, greyhound racing actually cross-subsidises the rest of the Tasmanian racing industry and what happens to the finances of Tasmanian Racing if you

shut greyhound racing down? You do not save $11.61 million. You immediately wipe out $8.4 million in direct race field fee revenue. Furthermore, as Tasracing itself had to admit to the committee, shutting down greyhound racing does not eliminate Tasracing's fixed corporate overheads, shared track maintenance, media and broadcast costs or administration. Instead, those stranded corporate and venue overheads simply get dumped onto thoroughbred racing and harness racing, making the two remaining codes even more expensive to run and even more dependent on the Tasmanian taxpayer.

And look at the bigger fiscal picture that the committee's November 2026 report brought to light. Under the current Tasracing Funding Deed, which expires on 30 June 2029, public funding is indexed at 2.5 per cent per year, yet Tasracing has already put forward a proposal for a new 20-year funding deed post 2029, covering only thoroughbred and harness racing, with greyhounds completely excluded, that would cost taxpayers more than $1.2 billion over two decades. Think about that. While the government tells Tasmanians we have to ban greyhound racing to save money, while Tasmania is simultaneously asking taxpayers to sign a $1.2 billion cheque over 20 years just for two codes with zero binding KPIs, zero wagering return targets and zero accountability.

And what about the cost of the transition itself? This is where the government's incompetence becomes truly staggering. You could fund greyhound racing's modest net operating subsidy of $3.21 million for a decade for less than what the government is going to blow on destroying the industry, writing off public infrastructure and kennelling over a thousand dogs. From a fiscal perspective, this bill is pure economic vandalism.

Let us also address the animal welfare argument because the government and its allies want to pretend that the only people who care about animal welfare are the people who want to shut the industry down. I reject that premise entirely. We all want the highest possible standards of animal welfare in racing. Nobody in this Chamber tolerates cruelty, neglect, or avoidable injury, and I will reflect on when this House, and many members were here when we did this, passed the then, what were we calling it - landmark -

Ms Thomas - *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act*.

Mr EDMUNDS - They are exactly the words I was looking for.

I will read this media release after we sat quite late to move that legislation and moved some pretty handy amendments in good faith with the government. I thought it was Legislative Council working at its best actually. So, here's the media release from 15 August 2024 from Jane Howlett, the minister for Racing at the time.

> The Tasmanian Parliament has passed landmark legislation, which will strengthen Tasmania's racing industry and delivers on a key election policy commitment.
>
> Minister for Racing, Jane Howlett, said the Racing Regulation and Integrity Bill 2024 and the Racing Regulation and Integrity (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2024 are critically important to all three codes of racing.

And there are quotes here.

> 'This reform provides the framework to establish the new independent Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner, with comprehensive oversight of the administration and regulation of the racing industry.' Minister Howlett said.
>
> 'This legislation is evidence-based and meets industry best practice.
>
> 'It incorporates the recommendations of the Monteith Review, and reflects the feedback received from stakeholders and the community.
>
> 'We will ensure Tasracing is appropriately resourced to be operationally responsible for all three codes of racing including pre-race day and race day management, stewards, and daily animal welfare.
>
> 'I want to rebuild trust and restore faith in racing across all three codes and see them thrive.
>
> 'That's why I brought these Bills to Parliament as soon as possible, to deliver our election commitment.
>
> 'This legislation is an important part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future and the Tasmanian Government is a proud supporter of Tasmania's racing community and the passionate Tasmanians who are part of it.'

I will reflect some keywords from that statement: oversight, evidence-based, best practice, reflecting feedback and evidence, resourcing, rebuilding trust, restoring faith, animal welfare. There are a lot of ticks from me.

Members probably know I am a racing enthusiast. Like many people in my electorate, I enjoy the sport, love the animals and the social interaction and fun that comes with that industry. The real question before us is, how do you actually achieve genuine, lasting improvements in animal welfare? Do you achieve it by shutting down a regulated legal industry in one small state, pushing dogs, trainers and wagering into interstate jurisdictions? Or do you achieve it through rigorous independent oversight, enforceable breeding caps, world-class track-safety engineering and genuine accountability? We do not have to speculate about the answer to that question because another Australian state, South Australia, faced serious animal welfare and integrity concerns in its greyhound racing industry very recently and showed the rest of the nation what real leadership looks like.

Let us look at what the Malinauskas Labor government in South Australia did and why it has become the gold standard across Australia. In August 2023, when serious welfare and governance issues came to light in South Australian greyhound racing, the South Australian government do not panic, and they did not cut a cynical backroom deal to ban the sport. Instead, they commissioned an independent inquiry led by former Victoria Police Commissioner, Graham Ashton AM APM. In November 2023, the Ashton review delivered 87 comprehensive, hard-hitting recommendations covering governance, integrity, track safety, breeding and whole of life traceability. And what did the South Australian government do next? They didn't just accept the recommendations and hope for the best. They passed dedicated legislation, the *Greyhound Industry Reform Inspector Act 2024*, establishing a completely independent

statutory greyhound industry reform inspector with sweeping powers, free from ministerial and industry direction, to oversee a strict two-year reform program from July 2024 to July 2026.

And look at the results reported in September 2026, when the reform inspector delivered his final report. Greyhound Racing SA completed 73 of the 78 recommendations for which it was accountable, a 93.5 per cent completion rate, with the remaining few well underway. They implemented a comprehensive greyhound traceability system that tracks the circumstances, location, ownership and fate of every individual greyhound from birth to end of life. They overhauled track safety, introducing double-arm laws, expanding straight-track racing, and establishing an independent race injury review panel modelled on best practice. They banned surgical artificial insemination ahead of the national ban. They tied future government support and social licence strictly to measurable, verified reform outcomes.

That is what competent government can look like. You identify the problem; you bring in independent expertise; you legislate tough, enforceable statutory standards; you put an independent cop on the beat to enforce them; and you drive genuine cultural and safety reform. Compare that to Tasmania. In Tasmania, this House and the other place passed brand new racing integrity legislation just two years ago, creating the independent Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner, and before that commissioner was given the time, the resourcing or the statutory levers to do the job in greyhound racing, the Premier threw it all out the window to appease the Greens.

I want to talk now about the behaviour of this government over the past seven months since they pulled this bill from the floor of this Chamber in April. When a government has a strong policy argument, it relies on facts, evidence, and respectful persuasion. When a government has no argument, when its policy is an uncosted, unmandated backroom deal, it resorts to smears, stunts, and personal abuse. That's exactly what we've witnessed from the government, and specifically from the government whip, the Member for Clark, Mr Vermey, for the past seven months.

Instead of answering the financial questions raised by the committee, instead of explaining how Tasracing will manage a $1.2 billion post-2029 funding deed without greyhound racing's $8.4 million in race field fees, and instead of producing a single credible rehoming plan, the government has raised a relentless personal smear campaign against my party, against our former leader Dean Winter and against our current leader Josh Willie. This might make people uncomfortable - I'm not particularly comfortable doing this myself - but it's a matter of fact and a matter of record. Let's put the exact words of Mr Vermey's media releases on the *Hansard* record today so every member in this Chamber can see the level of discourse the government has stooped to.

On Friday 14 August 2026, under the headline, [TBC 12.16]

> Labor's Greatest Shame,

Mr Vermey issued a release stating,

> Josh Willie must put animal welfare before Dean Winter's ego. How many more dogs will die due to Willie's weak leadership?

Following the track injury to Angry Mac in Hobart in October, Mr Vermey issued a media release titled, [TBC 12.17]

> Blood On Their Hands,

declaring,

> This is Dean Winters' badge of honour. Every bit of abuse, every death, every injury is blood on Josh Willie's hands. All for what? Dean Winter's ego.

and on Monday 12 October 2026 under the headline, [TBC 12.17]

> More Harrowing Evidence.

Mr Vermey went even further, claiming,

> Mr Winter needs to front up today and explain why he's proud of the death of greyhound Angry Mac. Mr Winter needs to explain why animal abuse is a badge of honour.

And I will note these media statements were coming out thick and fast, but he hasn't stood in front of a camera to back any of it in.

First, I know for a fact that each time one of these stories made the news, Mr Winter was on the phone to the connections of the injured animal, checking in on them and their dog. I also know for a fact that Mr Vermey did not. These dogs were just pawns in the Liberal political games. The 14 August media release referenced a dog named Rojo Coco. Following the government's media release and reporting by media outlets, Tasracing had to issue the following comments directly contradicting Mr Vermey, and I quote, [TBC 12.18]

> Media reports that the greyhound Rojo Coco suffered a serious injury during race one in Launceston are false and misleading.
>
> Rojo Coco did fall during the race, resulting in a small graze and a minor nosebleed.

A video circulated widely of the dog running around in its open space enclosure happily. Mr Vermey nor the government have never apologised, nor have they contacted the participants, Katie Grubb and Josh Wright, to ask how the dog is.

Let's unpack the sheer dishonesty, hypocrisy and absurdity of those attacks, because every single premise of Mr Vermey's rhetoric collapses under the weight of basic facts. First, greyhound racing in Tasmania is a completely legal industry. It operates under the Liberals own legislation, the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024*, administered by regulators appointed by the Liberal government, on tracks that Tasracing and the Liberal government have owned, managed and maintained since they came to office. If Mr Vermey believes the tracks at Elwick and Mowbray aren't safe, or that current welfare standards are failing, he's not indicting the opposition. He's indicting his own government's stewardship of the racing portfolio for more than a decade.

Second, even if this bill had passed the Parliament this year without a single day of delay, greyhound racing, under the government's own legislation, continues operating until 30 June 2029. Every race meeting held in August 2026, every meeting held in October 2026, and every race meeting scheduled for the next two-and-a-half years, would still be taking place under the government's own phase out timeline. For a government whip to stand and claim that the opposition has 'blood on their hands' for racing occurring in 2026 when his own bill keeps the industry racing until mid-2029 is either breathtaking ignorance of his own government's legislation or deliberate cynical deceit.

Ms O'Connor - Do you think we should do it like New Zealand?

Mr PRESIDENT - Order.

Mr EDMUNDS - Third, let us remind the House again of the most obvious procedural fact of it all. It was the Liberal government that stopped this bill from being debated, not anyone else. On 15 April 2026, it was the government that moved the adjournment in this Chamber because they didn't have the numbers. It was the government that refused to bring the bill back on the notice paper for seven months. You cannot adjourn your own bill, lock it in a drawer for half a year, and then issue press releases accusing the Opposition, or anyone else for that matter, of delaying it.

And fourth, let's look at the accusation that Labor does not care about animal welfare or that anyone in our party is proud of an injury to a racing greyhound. That is a disgusting, gutter-level slur and I reject it with contempt. I was proud to serve as shadow minister for racing when this parliament debated and passed the landmark racing integrity reforms only two years ago. Where do those reforms come from? They did not come from a sudden burst of enlightenment from the government. They came after years of the Labor Party and dedicated whistleblowers and participants raising serious, documented concerns in this parliament about animal welfare and integrity failures across the Tasmanian racing industry, particularly in harness racing. It was Labor that relentlessly pursued Ben Yole and his stable for the massive breaches of animal welfare laws, the race fixing and the appalling treatment of their own workers. For years Labor stood up in parliament and called out integrity failings, race fixing allegations and welfare breaches when the government wanted to sweep them under the carpet. We fought for an independent Tasmanian racing integrity commissioner, separate from Tasracing's commercial promotion arm, precisely because we believe that integrity and animal welfare must never be compromised for commercial convenience -

Ms O'Connor - They are.

Mr EDMUNDS - So we will not take lectures on animal welfare, and we will certainly not tolerate smears about having 'blood on our hands' from a government whip whose own party has managed the tracks, written the laws, kept the industry running until 2029, and pulled the very bill we're debating today.

Let me conclude by setting out clearly where the Tasmanian Labor Party stands not just on this bill but on the future of the entire racing industry in our state. Labor supports the Tasmanian racing industry. We recognise that racing across thoroughbreds, harness and greyhounds is an important part of Tasmania's social and economic fabric, particularly in our regional communities in the north, the north-west and the south. It supports thousands of jobs, small business trainers, breeders, farriers, vets, feed suppliers and club volunteers. Finally, I

would like to acknowledge the greyhound participants and acknowledge the pain that they've been through. I know enough greyhound racing participants to know what this sport means to them. I know how much they love their animals and I know how much they've been hurt by this debate and this sell-out by the government. They did not deserve this in the first place, and they certainly have not deserved the last six months of further torture. Since this bill was delayed, they have had to have mental health support provided on track. It has been their lives, families and investments in limbo. It has been totally unfair.

I want to see the Tasmanian racing industry thrive and for it to thrive over the next 20 years, three things must happen. It must be strong financially, we cannot keep writing blank cheques without accountability, nor can we vandalise the industry's revenue base by arbitrarily shutting down its most self-sustaining code and leaving taxpayers on the hook for a $1.2 billion funding deed. Every code must earn its keep, meet clear commercial and wagering benchmarks and reduce its reliance on the public purse over time. Two, it must have a positive modern culture. Tasracing, racing clubs, participants, and administrators must embrace transparency, accountability and modern workplace and governance standards. Three, it must uphold the highest animal welfare standards possible. Like South Australia, we should be investing in independent oversight, enforceable breeding and traceability rules and safer tracks, giving the Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner the tools and backing to drive real reform across all three codes, rather than scapegoating one code to satisfy a political deal.

This bill is bad policy born of a bad political deal, backed by bad economics and handled with bad faith from start to finish. It will hurt regional Tasmanian families. It will cost taxpayers tens of millions of dollars in transition -

Ms O'Connor - Rubbish.

Mr PRESIDENT - Order.

Mr EDMUNDS - and stranded infrastructure costs. In my view, it will irrevocably weaken the financial viability of thoroughbred and harness racing and it will do nothing to guarantee better outcomes for greyhounds.

Legislative Council should not reward cynical backroom deals. We should reject this bill and we should get on with the real work of reforming, strengthening and securing a sustainable, ethical future for all three codes of Tasmanian racing. Labor strongly opposes the bill.

[12.25 p.m.]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears - Minister for Education) - Mr President, I rise to speak in support of the Greyhound Racing Legislation Amendments (Phasing Out Reform) Bill 2025. I know many here today, as well as the communities that each one of us represents, has a really keen focus on this bill and I am standing as the member for Rosevears representing my community and I want to add my name to those who are supporting this legislation today.

This bill gives legislative effect to the government's decision to phase out greyhound racing in Tasmania and establishes the legal framework necessary to manage that transition in an orderly and in a responsible manner. I'm concerned about the outcomes we could see in the event this legislation is rejected by this Council. We're going to talk a lot today and we're going to listen a lot today about all the details of the legislation and what it will bring to the industry. My concern is what will happen if this legislation doesn't go through. If this bill does not pass,

the decision to phase out greyhound racing will lack the clear legislative framework needed to put it into effect, and that is of great concern to me.

The government position on greyhound racing is clear and without this legislation, we would leave greyhound owners, breeders, trainers and industry workers uncertain about what happens next and leave regulators with a clear pathway to manage the transition. And we all know, and we can't shy away from the fact, that there are some wonderful people in this industry doing really wonderful work. There are also others who, I'm sorry, simply are not.

Without a clear pathway to manage transition, I think it's also going to create uncertainty around breeding, registration and the ongoing care of racing greyhounds. Without clear rules and dates, people may make decisions based on different assumptions about what will be permitted, what obligations will apply and how long existing arrangements can continue. The uncertainty would not serve participants well, would not serve regulators well, and it certainly would not serve the greyhounds themselves well. It could make the transition harder to manage and risk delaying the welfare protections and oversight that this bill is designed to provide. Passing the bill gives everyone a clearer set of rules and it does give us a way forward.

I have racing participants in my electorate, some of whom I know treat their animals with love and kindness, but sadly, that is not the case for all. The purpose of this bill is to ensure that Tasmania's legislative framework appropriately reflects the government's decision and provides clear statutory arrangements during the transition period and beyond. We should recognise the people who have treated their greyhounds with care, and I take seriously the uncertainty this transition creates for participants and workers. This responsible phase-out provides clear rules, realistic transition arrangements and support to rehome and care for the dogs.

The bill amends three principal statutes:

- *Animal Welfare Act 1993*
- *Dog Control Act 2000*
- *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024*.

Together, it's those amendments that create a framework that supports the closure of the industry, strengthens oversight of greyhound welfare and updates Tasmania's racing legislation to reflect the future absence of greyhound racing as a regulated racing code.

A significant feature of the bill is the prohibition on breeding greyhounds for racing purposes. Once the reforms commence, further breeding for racing will not be permitted, subject to the transitional arrangements established under this legislation. The bill also introduces controls relating to the registration, transfer, and management of greyhound racing during the transition period. These provisions are important because they ensure that the phase-out occurs in a controlled and predictable manner, and that is really important. Without clear legislative restrictions, there could be a risk that breeding and racing activities could continue in ways that are inconsistent with the objectives of the reform program. This bill removes that uncertainty and it provides clear legal parameters for regulators and for participants alike.

The bill also places a stronger emphasis on animal welfare and that is what this is all about. As greyhound racing transitions to closure, it is essential that appropriate arrangements

exist for the ongoing care and the management of greyhounds. The amendments provide additional safeguards relating to the treatment of greyhounds and establishes requirements that continue beyond the cessation of racing activities. These provisions recognise that the conclusion of racing does not bring to an end the responsibility to ensure that greyhounds are appropriately cared for. The reforms relating to euthanasia are particularly noteworthy. The legislation establishes clear requirements and oversight mechanisms intended to ensure that euthanasia only occurs where justified on animal welfare grounds or otherwise authorised by law. These provisions reflect the community's expectation that appropriate welfare protections remain in place throughout the transition.

The bill before us today also makes a number of consequential amendments to the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024*. Those amendments are necessary because the principal racing legislation currently provides for the regulation of three racing codes. As greyhound racing is phased out, the legislation must be updated to reflect a two-code racing industry comprised of thoroughbred and harness racing. The bill therefore amends a range of provisions relating to integrity functions, appeal mechanisms, racing administration, rules of racing, stewardship and regulatory powers. Collectively these amendments ensure that the broader racing framework remains coherent, effective and fit for purpose once greyhound racing ceases.

Importantly, the legislation also establishes savings and transitional provisions. Any significant reform of this nature requires careful management of the period between the government's policy decision and final implementation. Transitional arrangements provide certainty regarding existing registrations, regulatory responsibilities, enforcement powers and administrative processes. They allow regulators to continue performing their functions while ensuring that the legislative framework supports the orderly winding down of the code.

Good legislation should not only establish an endpoint; it should also provide a clear pathway for getting there. That's precisely what this bill is seeking to do. It establishes the legal mechanisms required to cease breeding for racing purposes, it strengthens welfare safeguards for greyhounds, it provides regulators with clear powers during the transition period and it modernises Tasmania's racing legislation so it accurately reflects future policy settings.

This isn't a question about who loves animals. I'd like to think most of us love animals. We must strive, though, to ensure that animal welfare is at the forefront of our decision-making. We also recognise that industry and participants are seeking certainty and confidence as to their pathway forward, because uncertainty is really hard to live with. These amendments before us provide a clear, workable and a legally robust framework. They support regulatory certainty, they support effective administration, and they support animal welfare outcomes.

I want to acknowledge those who have advocated for this legislation and those who have advocated against it. There is a lot of passion around this. I know, because I did go to an election on this matter when I stood for the Legislative Council seat, Rosevears, alongside the member for Huon. So, I have been tested on this policy in my electorate. In fact, it was while I was door knocking some months into my campaign I went to a front door - usually at the beginning of the day, you're really scared every door you knock on because you're not sure what's behind it, but by the end of the day you've got your armour up a bit more - but I went to this door, a lovely lady answered the door and very quickly shut me down. She said 'no, no, not going to vote for you, I'm voting for a different candidate,'

Ms Forrest - They're the ones who are telling you the truth.

Ms PALMER - I find the only people you can absolutely rely on to tell you the truth are the people that tell you they're not going to vote for you. I said that that's fine, thank you very much.

Ms Rattray - Did you ask for her number two? That's what I always do.

Ms PALMER - A couple of days later, I got a lovely letter from this lady, and she wanted to personally thank me for the stand that I was taking on the phasing out of greyhounds. This policy was on the table during my election. It was pretty clear on the doors, on the streets, in supermarket, how everyday people did feel about the phasing out of greyhound racing. My electorate is the whole western side of Launceston and then all the way up the West Tamar. This is an electorate that has a really diverse range of people in it. My electorate is actually home to quite a number of industry players, some really big industry players and I wasn't sure how this policy would actually affect my chances at the election, considering my electorate. But here I am, my electorate did speak on this and it was loud and clear. I did go to an election on greyhound racing. It was one of the very, very clear issues.

I'm proud to stand here today as the member for Rosevears, and I feel very confident when you consider that I was re-elected with this policy as one of the main issues, to again be the member for Rosevears. So, I feel confident that I am representing my electorate in saying that I support and I commend this bill.

Ms O'Connor - Hear hear.

[12.37 p.m.]

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT (Huon) - Mr President, I too rise to support the Greyhound Racing Legislation Amendments (Phasing Out Reform) Bill 2025. I will start by saying that, for me, greyhound racing is inherently harmful to dogs, gambling is inherently harmful to humans and taxpayer funding of racing is inherently irresponsible. People within the industry will be affected by this bill, which is why a fair transition plan that supports them matters and guess what, we now have one, along with a proposed closure plan that will set out any financial assistance.

One thing I think we need to be honest about in this debate is where the Tasmanian community actually is on greyhound racing. In 2023, an EMRS poll found that 62 per cent of Tasmanians opposed the greyhound racing industry, 46 per cent strongly opposed it and just 11 per cent supported it. When people were asked specifically about taxpayer funding, the result was even clearer, 74 per cent opposed public funding of greyhound racing. Then in 2025, another 503 Tasmanians were surveyed. They were asked whether they supported the Liberal government's plan to phase out greyhound racing, 74 per cent again said yes and 14 per cent said no. That is not a community that is divided down the middle.

We have seen the same sentiment expressed in other ways. Whilst outdoor knocking, a bit like the member for Rosevears, during my recent election I heard overwhelmingly - and I kind of want to say, 'every man and his dog' but I didn't write that in here - but I did hear overwhelmingly that the support for taxpayer funding to be used to prop up this industry just wasn't cutting the mustard. In 2022, 13,519 Tasmanians signed an e-petition, calling for an end to taxpayer funded greyhound racing. It became the largest e-petition ever tabled in this

parliament. I'm not counting the Neil the Seal petition because that was a *Change.org* one. So, this record still stands. Then the House of Assembly voted 22 to 11 for the phase out of legislation. Liberals, Greens and every Independent voted for it. In April this year, more than 1000 people put their names to a two-page open letter in the *Mercury* supporting the phase out. They weren't all from one particular political tribe. The signatories included former Liberal premier Will Hodgman; former Labor premier, David Bartlett; former treasurer, Michael Aird; and former governor, Kate Warner.

History is full of things that we once defended and later looked back on and thought, how on earth did we put up with that?

Not long ago, caning kids was just considered normal discipline. Cigarettes were sold as sophisticated, even healthy. Asbestos was a miracle building material. Racial segregation was written into law. Slavery was excused as an economic necessity and women were denied the vote simply because that was convention.

Every time society had a story, it told itself, its tradition, its people's livelihoods, it's just the way things are and every time, as the evidence mounted and our moral understanding caught up, these stories started to sound less like wisdom and more like excuses.

That is where Tasmania now finds itself with greyhound racing. The community has moved. I think it has moved because despite all the promises of reform, there are two fundamental problems with greyhound racing that the industry has never really been able to solve.

The impossible problem number one is injuries and death. We hear repeatedly that racing can be made safer and I don't doubt that people within the industry have worked very hard to make it safer, but safer is not the same as safe.

Tasracing's largest annual report records 261 on-track injury incidents in 2025-26. That is about five reported injury incidents every week.

Now, statistics can become very clinical when we talk about them in this place, but every one of those numbers is a dog and this is the question that I keep coming back to. What is the acceptable number? How many broken legs are acceptable? How many serious injuries, how many dogs dying on a racetrack are we prepared to accept for an activity that ultimately exists as gambling entertainment? That question was put to the industry representatives during the Joint Select Committee process and, tellingly, nobody could really answer it because there isn't a comfortable answer and if people believe better tracks will eventually solve this problem, I think we need to look at what has happened very recently in Queensland.

The Q opened up in Brisbane last year. It cost around $90 million. This was meant to be the future of greyhound racing, a purpose built, state-of-the-art facility specifically designed to make racing safer and yet its first full year of racing reportedly produced 801 recorded injury incidents and seven on-track deaths or euthanasias.

There were fractures of the radius and ulna, femur, humerus, tarsus (I hope I said that correctly because I wasn't sure how to pronounce that one) and spine. It caused enough concern that the Queensland government commissioned an inquiry. I think that that example matters enormously because if a brand new $90 million facility designed with modern safety measures

specifically intended to reduce injuries still produces serious injuries and deaths then at some point, we need to ask whether we are dealing with a problem that actually can be engineered away.

I don't think it can.

These dogs are running at extraordinary speeds in packs around a track chasing a lure. A better designed track cannot remove the fundamental risk of the activity itself.

The *ABC* recently released race footage of obtained under Tasmania's Right to Information processes showing greyhound's falling, colliding, being injured, being trampled and in some cases killed after competing on Tasmanian racetracks.

The report said that the footage covered dozens of races, including forty races with dog falls from the previous 12 months that had not been uploaded to the Tasracing website.

ABC also reported that Tasracing said it had not broadcast incidents where racing animals fall or are injured, describing this as a practice since 2011. That is an appalling lack of transparency. Are we comfortable continuing an industry where serious injury and occasional death are predictable consequences of the entertainment? I am not.

The impossible problem No. 2 is what happens to the dogs afterwards. This is the part of the system I think is sometimes strangely absent from the debate. Greyhound racing requires a continuous supply of dogs. Dogs are bred, some race successfully, some don't, some retire, some are injured, but eventually all of those dogs have to go somewhere. In 2015 prominent Tasmanian trainer Anthony Bullock appeared before a parliamentary committee. He told the committee that around 30 per cent of his dogs went through the Greyhound Adoption Program. The remainder - simple maths here - 70 per cent were put down. Now, I don't think anyone seriously argues today that we should go back to that and thank goodness for that, but stopping the killing doesn't make the underlying mathematics disappear. It just means the dogs have to go somewhere else.

Increasingly, the industry has relied upon ordinary Tasmanians to solve that problem. Families adopt them, people foster them, volunteers transport them, rescue organisations care for them, rehabilitate them and find homes for them. People fundraise for them and many of those people don't actually support greyhound racing. There is something deeply uncomfortable about that - and it comes with a real cost: financial cost, emotional cost, time, vet bills, food, transport, kennelling, and sometimes the heartbreak of taking responsibility for an animal that has arrived with significant physical or behavioural needs. Meanwhile, more dogs keep getting bred. It is like trying to empty a bath with the tap still running. The Racing Integrity Commissioner himself told the Joint Select Committee that the rehoming situation had reached a tipping point and was unsustainable. I think those are incredibly important words by the Racing Integrity Commissioner. There are only so many Tasmanian households able and willing to take on a large dog.

This brings me to my next point - should the government be using taxpayer funds to prop up an industry which not only harms dogs but also harms humans? I want to make this point: what is the point of racing? Well, the point is that you can bet on it. If you couldn't bet on it, would we still do it? Because other sports like footy or basketball are, in themselves, entertaining, the industry can operate by raising revenue from ticket sales, broadcasting to

audiences, memberships, merchandise and sponsorships. It doesn't need the wagering to exist. The greyhound industry only exists because it takes money from losers. A race meeting can proceed with very few spectators present. It doesn't need lots of people in attendance, because significant wagering occurs through bookmakers and betting platforms. The point I'm trying to make is that greyhound racing is not primarily financed by the spectators, the memberships, the television audiences or sponsorship. It is financed by the wagering, so greyhound racing is not just associated with gambling - economically it depends on it.

I've made that point because it is well-established that gambling causes real harm in Australian communities. It drives debt, financial insecurity, family conflict, mental health problems and relationship breakdown. Where an industry's survival depends on wagering, its business model is inseparable from the social and economic costs that gambling imposes on Tasmanians. That is why I don't believe propping up the greyhound industry is an ethical use of taxpayers' money.

The public purpose doctrine is a legal rule that says government bodies can only spend public money if it helps the community as a whole. Courts usually let lawmakers decide what a public purpose is, as long as the choices make sense and promote the general welfare, safety or health of the community - because that's what we are - we are custodians of public money. Taxpayers expect us to spend it on genuine public purpose and to do it efficiently, effectively, economically and ethically. Is subsidising greyhound racing the best use of taxpayers' money and does it serve the broader public interest? I don't believe it does. Economist Saul Eslake crunched the numbers in his 2025 report *The Financing of Greyhound Racing in Tasmania,* and what he found is pretty blunt. Take away the government funding and the industry can't pay its own way. This is a little different to what we heard from the member for Pembroke, but I'm going with the economist on this one.

Mr Edmunds - Not the facts in the report. That's all I read out.

Ms O'Connor - Why don't you sledge Saul on the way through.

Mr PRESIDENT - Order.

Mr Edmunds - I didn't sledge Saul.

Mr PRESIDENT - You will all have an opportunity to speak.

Mr Edmunds - Well, I've been dragged into this, Mr President.

Mr PRESIDENT - We're not to promote a quarrel. There is a standing order about promoting quarrels and we won't have any quarrels, and we won't have any interruptions. We'll let every member speak because that's how we do it. We did a very good job yesterday and I'm sure we can do a very good job today.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Saul Eslake, a leading Tasmanian economist, says it's:

> Almost entirely dependent on government funding – and to a much greater extent than in any other jurisdiction.

That's dependency, not just assistance. Tasracing claims the industry is worth about $53.9 million to the Tasmanian economy. Even if we do accept that, Eslake says that is only about 0.2 per cent of our gross state product and employment. Here's the kicker: in 2023 Tasmania spent about $12.70 per person on greyhound racing. The Australian average is $5.27. No other jurisdiction backs it more generously per person. The real policy question he raises is: if greyhound racing is unable to generate enough revenue to survive without government support and wagering linked income, should public money continue to support it? For me, the answer is no.

I don't think any decent person would pretend this is easy and I have to acknowledge the racing participants here. There are people in the greyhound industry who are good people, who care for their dogs and have built their lives around the sport. The social connection and heritage felt by participants needs to be acknowledged. They deserve respect, fair treatment and practical support. Yes, the process hasn't been great, with a clear lack of consultation - and that is never a good thing. A parliament that votes to end an industry has an obligation to help people through the transition, which is why I welcomed the arrival of the transition plan. My quick summary of that plan is that it will:

- gradually reduce the racing and the number of racing greyhounds
- track every greyhound through the transition
- prepare and rehome retired greyhounds
- restrict euthanasia
- provide financial and practical assistance to industry participants
- provide retraining, counselling and hardship assistance
- give the Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner oversight of the transition.

In essence, the plan is designed to progressively shrink the industry and the greyhound population before 2029, rather than allowing racing to continue at its current scale and then dealing with a large number of dogs and participants when racing suddenly stops. This is a great plan which addresses a lot of the concerns that have previously been raised.

There are times when good leadership means listening closely to our communities and reflecting what they tell us, but leadership also requires us as members of parliament to zoom out and look at the bigger picture, to consider perspectives beyond the visible and vocal bubble of a community and to weigh the long-term interests of Tasmania as a whole community. That means listening to experts, respected community leaders and people with different experiences, and considering impacts that may not always be obvious at first. Good leadership is making a judgment about what we believe is in the broader public interest.

In summary, I've established that:

(1) The evidence around animal welfare has become harder to ignore.

(2) The industry continues to produce more dogs than Tasmania can sustainably absorb once their racing lives are over.

(3) The industry cannot hold itself up without taxpayer funding or gambling revenue.

(4) It's an inappropriate use of taxpayer funding.

(5) Community expectations have shifted and it is rapidly losing its social licence.

(6) There is a good solid transition plan to get us out of this mess that does not slam the door closed tomorrow.

The Legislative Council now has a choice, and I urge members to support this bill, not out of hostility to those involved in the industry, but out of responsibility to the future and as stewards of the public funds that we are responsible for. Do not let any perceived patronising remark from any contributor to this overall debate sway your vote and remember, as our knowledge grows and community expectations change, so too must our laws and institutions.

[12.55 p.m.]

Ms THOMAS (Elwick) - Mr President, I rise to speak on the Greyhound Racing Legislation Amendments (Phasing Out Reform) Bill 2025. After very careful consideration, I cannot support this bill. Whilst my position probably won't be of any great surprise to people, what might be of surprise is that this decision did not come easily to me. Despite my previously declared interest in the racing industry, specifically as a shareholder in thoroughbreds, initially I was not against banning greyhound racing, as I will explain further on in my contribution.

At its core, this legislation seeks to do something very significant. It seeks to make greyhound racing and breeding illegal in Tasmania. To prohibit it. That is not minor reform. It is not a regulatory adjustment. That is the permanent shutdown of an entire industry, the prohibition of an entire industry. The prohibition of an industry that's been operating in this state for more than 90 years. Such a decision demands one thing above all else, and that is evidence. Clear, compelling, objective evidence that there is a problem so serious, so systemic, that prohibition is the only reasonable course of action. But that evidence has not been provided. The Premier has said that greyhound racing is at the crossroads, that it is in decline and that it no longer aligns with community expectations, citing concerns about animal welfare. But where is the evidence to support that claim? Because the evidence that has been provided tells a very different story.

Through questions I placed on notice to the government, we know that between 1 February 2025 and 26 March 2026, 131 of the 135 licenced trainers had their kennels inspected across 116 properties. Just one animal welfare breach was identified. One. That is not evidence of a system in crisis. That is not evidence of an industry that has such poor animal welfare outcomes that it ought to be shut down. That is evidence of an industry that is being monitored, regulated and importantly, largely complying, that is meeting animal welfare standards. The government's own answers to my question show the animal welfare concerns cited by the Premier are completely unfounded. The full response to question No. 25 of 2026 forms part of the *Hansard* of 26 March 2026, if anyone cares to read the government's response to the long list of questions I provided in full. Interestingly, over the course of the year since

we've started this debate, we've heard the narrative shift from broad terms of concerns about welfare and cruelty in greyhound racing to concerns about the safety of greyhound racing. The narrative has shifted -

Ms O'Connor - It has not. They're the same thing.

Ms THOMAS - Much of the discussion has focused on the inherent risk of death or injury associated with greyhounds racing each other on one-turn tracks. The narrative shifted from being about concerns about -

Sitting suspended from 1.00 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

QUESTIONS

State Coastal Policy

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for HOUSING and PLANNING, Mr VINCENT

Minister, the state coastal policy has protected our coastlines from inappropriate development for the past 30 years, but we see from an instrument that's before the parliament that there's an intent to weaken the State Coastal Policy. Minister, the Tasmanian Planning Commission's report into the significant amendments proposed to the State Coastal Policy made a number of recommendations including developing a suite of guidelines to aid planning authorities in interpreting risk and impacts, tolerable risk, and intended life, public benefit and location dependency, natural and cultural coastal values, et cetera.

My questions to you are:

- Have the guidelines that Tasmanian Planning Commission recommended be developed been developed?
- If not, why not and how do you expect planning authorities to accurately evaluate risk without them?
- Will you commit to releasing these guidelines prior to the passage of the amendment to the State Coastal Policy?
- Has the state coastal hazard mapping been reviewed and updated?
- Will you commit to a full review of the State Coastal Policy as recommended by the Tasmanian Planning Commission and the State of the Environment Report 2024?

ANSWER

Thank you for the question, member of Hobart. Yes, the commission's report on the amendments to the State Coastal Policy also makes a number of other broader recommendations. These recommendations include the preparation and implementation of guidance to support the amended State Coastal Policy, coordination of any consequential planning scheme amendments, establishing a program for reviewing and updating coastal hazard mapping, re-establishing the State Coastal Advisory Committee and the commencement of a broad review of the policy. All of those have been accepted except for the one about re-establishing the State Coastal Advisory Council. That is because we believe there are already

systems in place that have moved on since that was originally in place, but all the other recommendations are accepted. Thank you, Mr President.

Supplementary Question

[2.34 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR - Supplementary question, or more clarity in relation to my earlier questions: can the minister confirm that the guidelines recommended by the Tasmanian Planning Commission have been or are being developed, and these are the guidelines to assist planning authorities in assessing risk. Has the state coastal hazard mapping been reviewed and updated, given the likelihood of more development on the coast as a result of your government's intended changes to the State Coastal Policy.

ANSWER

Mr VINCENT - To make sure I give you an accurate and correct answer, I'll seek proper guidance on that and answer, if I can, tomorrow. If not, as soon as I can.

Ms O'Connor - Through you, Mr President: there's a few other questions I've asked earlier you said you'd come back to us on, so maybe tomorrow?

Mr VINCENT - Yes, they are still being worked on with those ones as well. As soon as I have that I'll respond properly and accurately.

Family Violence Definition

Ms WEBB question to MINISTER for WOMEN and the PREVENTION of FAMILY and SEXUAL VIOLENCE, Ms PALMER

[2.35 p.m.]

Thank you, Mr President. Minister, noting today begins the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence and also the government has tabled its Family Violence Reforms Bill 2026, presumably to mark this significant community campaign, I am again raising the matter of the definition of family violence. It appears the bill does not include the requested amendment to the definition of family violence requested by key stakeholders, including the peak body Tasmanian Family and Sexual Violence Alliance (TFSVA), leaving Tasmania as a national outlier that limits the definition of family violence to intimate partners and significant relationships. My questions are:

(1) Did you raise the need for this definition to be broadened during the development of the current bill as the minister responsible for the prevention of family violence?

(2) Are you aware of the TFSVA's recommendation, in its submission to the consultation draft of the current bill, that if the intent of the government is not to expand the definition of family violence, the act should be renamed as the *Intimate Partner Violence Act* in line with the definition and reflected in the national plan to end violence against women and children?

(3) Why has the government apparently decided not to amend the family violence definition to bring it into line with other national jurisdictions?

ANSWER

Thank you very much, Mr President. I will seek some advice.

There was a number of questions in that question, so I will just get the member to remind me if I miss anything. This matter actually falls within the portfolio responsibility of the Attorney-General. However, as minister for women and the prevention of family violence, I can certainly assure Tasmanians and the House that the government remains committed to a strong, evidence-informed family violence response that prioritises the safety of victim/survivors, supports prevention and early interventions, and holds perpetrators to account.

The government has heard domestic, family and sexual violence stakeholder feedback about broadening Tasmania's family violence framework to better reflect contemporary understandings and align our laws with the concept of family violence in the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032. Stakeholders have highlighted that the current framework is primarily focused on intimate partner violence and may not fully recognise violence occurring in other family, caring and dependency relationships. That's inclusive of elder abuse, sibling violence, violence between family members and violence by children and young people towards parents. Our government certainly recognises the importance of these issues and the experiences of all victim/survivors.

We must carefully balance any potential definitional change with broader legislative reform, ensuring any reform strengthens outcomes for victim/survivors while supporting a sustainable, effective, and appropriately resourced response and service system. Our immediate focus remains progressing critical reforms that strengthen victim/survivor safety and perpetrator accountability, including reforms relating to coercive control, technology facilitated abuse, serial family violence perpetrators and other changes arising from the consultation on the 2025 Family Violence Discussion Paper.

Through the Attorney-General, we are progressing significant reforms to strengthen Tasmania's response to family and sexual violence, including implementing the National Family and Domestic Violence Risk Assessment Framework, and of course we are in the process of developing Tasmania's next Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan.

These reforms provide an important opportunity to listen to victim/survivors, engage with stakeholders and community, and consider how Tasmania's response can continue to better support safety, recovery and healing. As this work progresses, we will certainly and carefully consider longer-term policy and legislative issues, including how Tasmania's framework can align with the emerging national approaches and also with community expectations, while reflecting the needs of Tasmanians. Our focus remains on ensuring any future reforms are informed by evidence centred on the experience of victim/survivors and contribute to a coordinated, sustainable and effective service system.

As minister in this portfolio, Women and the Prevention of Family Violence, I am working closely with the Attorney-General. I am aware of the TFSVA's submission and we certainly continue to have conversations around this.

Ports Infrastructure Replacement Funding

Mr EDMUNDS question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr VINCENT

[2.41 p.m.]

Minister, you might not have seen, but today in the Public Accounts Committee the Auditor-General warned that Tasmania's port infrastructure is 'rapidly approaching end of life' with 'no clear pathway to funding the cost of replacement' and noted you only approved a quarter of TasPorts' community port funding request.

Why is your government still extracting $10.7 million in dividends and planning to take 92 per cent of TasPorts' profits next year, forcing the company to borrow money while wharves crumble?

ANSWER

Thank you, Mr President, and thanks for the question. I wasn't aware of what happened at lunchtime. What I will say is that there's been enormous changes over the period I've had - we've totally changed the board, CEO and a lot of the management. One of the things that very much stood out to us when we started to look at that was that there was not an infrastructure plan that existed on a big enough timeframe - over 10, 15, 20 years - that you could actually manage the assets properly and for whatever reasons, I don't know why that is, but we've made enormous changes in the boards. It's a highly skilled board now that has 5-, 10-, 15-, 20- and 30-year asset management plans in place.

I'll read this into relation to what we're actually doing so you have a better understanding from our point of view on that. Our ports are integral to Tasmania's economy and we certainly know that, being an island state. Last financial year they saw over 14 million tonnes of freight and commodities transit the wharves. There are over 2500 vessel visits, including our vital cruise ship industry that brought 240,000 visitors and crew to our shores.

We acknowledge the findings of the Auditor-General's report into ports infrastructure and we are already seeing change in the organisation. In recent years, we have brought in a new board and CEO to TasPorts and the approach to their asset management has already changed. It has also already strengthened its approach to project governance, investment planning and risk management. These improvements provide a strong foundation for addressing the long-term infrastructure renewal task.

Let's not forget TasPorts began 20 years ago, bringing together all Tasmania's existing port authorities under one roof. Until that point, they had all competed against each other for business and TasPorts inherited those legacies, including their infrastructure.

It's only now that we're starting to see legacy agreements reach a point where they can be contemporised. That includes ensuring the fees paid to TasPorts are sufficient to invest in the infrastructure it has.

We operate four key commercial ports on mainland Tasmania: Burnie, Devonport, Bell Bay and Hobart, and it's a lot of infrastructure for a small state. The 2027 Port Master Plan process is already underway and we will consider the long-term role of each of these commercial ports and its infrastructure needs.

Its pleasing TasPorts' customers have been well engaged in this process and we're about to begin community consultation.

TasPorts will use this work to develop a prioritised long-term infrastructure strategy, including investment and funding pathways. They will develop a board approved framework covering asset condition, infrastructure risk, renewal needs, costs, funding gaps and project delivery as part of the work.

Once this work is complete, attention will focus on the non-commercial ports TasPorts owns around the state. These are important community assets, and while they don't necessarily have ships docking at them, the infrastructure still requires significant investment to ensure they are fit for purpose while returning no revenue to the company.

While this master planning continues, we will still be investing. TasPorts has invested around $240 million in QuayLink in East Devonport. We have worked hard with the federal government to be able to invest $180 million in Berth 6 at the port of Macquarie Wharf and Hobart will build a new home for the *RSV Nuyina*.

Ms Forrest - With lots of federal funding.

Mr VINCENT - They are significantly investing in the remediation of Berth 4, Burnie to ensure Bass Strait shipper, Straight Link, has a suitable home for decades ahead. TasPorts is also finalising work to deliver $30 million into the replacement of the ship loader at Bell Bay.

And while there will always be more to do, we are investing in and will continue to do so to ensure our ports are fit for purpose and remain our vital link to mainland Australia. Mr President, our producers exporting their goods rely on it and we will, of course, not let that link fail.

We're also ensuring Building Tasmania looks at infrastructure planning right around the state. We have to ensure we have a good plan for delivery of all our infrastructure spending. That's what Building Tasmania has to be about now, bringing our infrastructure delivery together under one roof and being able to engage well with our government, businesses and companies so the state we all love is on the same page.

Building Tasmania are right now, delivering a Bass Strait transport strategy, looking to see what the airlinks are needed for our islands. This is a vital link considering it will inform TasPorts' master planning and we appreciate the Auditor-General's work in this space and I'm pleased the work is already underway to remedy his concerns.

Mr Edmunds - And specifically about the dividend?

Mr VINCENT - I will need to check the dividend and come back on that because that's an annual recommendation, depending on what the needs may be.

Thank you.

TasPorts - Legacy Contracts and Strategic Asset Plan

Ms FORREST question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr VINCENT

[2.49 p.m.]

My question is a follow-up somewhat from the member for Pembroke. You may need to take this on notice. You mentioned the legacy contracts but, as I understand it, a number of the legacy contracts have ended some time ago. Are you able to provide a list of legacy contracts still in place and when they expire?

Regarding the matter you raised about the development of a strategic asset management plan, are you shocked that TasPorts didn't have a strategic asset management plan until very recently, and probably after the audit office started their audit into port infrastructure?

ANSWER

I will certainly seek advice on those legacy agreements. I know several of them ran out just in the last 12 months and were renegotiated. Some were talked about in this House in terms that the people really didn't understand what they meant to the future and what they meant to the past of being tied into legacy agreements that did not really give any revenue for doing that. So, I will seek proper and more detailed information on that.

And the second part of your question, sorry?

Ms Forrest - Were you surprised about the lack of a strategic asset management plan?

Mr VINCENT - I can honestly say that when my staff and I took on this portfolio I was surprised that there wasn't an asset plan that went longer than the short period did. I can't remember exactly what the short term was, but I'd always worked on 5, 10, 15, 20 at least in asset management plans in everything else I've been involved with. But I certainly didn't see a strong area of that in TasPorts.

Ms Forrest - Should have been no surprise.

Mr VINCENT - But the new board and the new CEO have worked pretty diligently to get that in place. Thank you.

Ms Forrest - Mr President, there should be no surprise after the GAA inquiry into TasPorts.

TT-Line - Fuel Cost Breakdown in Relation to Middle East Conflict

Ms FORREST question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr VINCENT

[2.51 p.m.]

That said, TT-Line told the Public Accounts Committee, and we've heard further evidence from the Auditor-General today, around the fact that TT-Line entered into the fuel crisis period heavily and prudently hedged, which we expect them to do. They did record some significant windfall gains under those hedges but also saw them apply a 15 per cent fuel levy to tickets during that period. Have you sought a breakdown of fuel costs and prices paid over the entire financial year to assess the accuracy of the claims made by TT-Line that they were set to lose a significant amount of money due to the conflict in the Middle East. That was the reason for the imposition of the fuel levy, when the financial report doesn't provide any detail that would give a member of the public any assurance. They ended up paying $15 million, thereabouts, less on fuel with similar volumes over the previous financial year compared to this financial year.

ANSWER

Thank you. I'm not aware of the lunchtime discussion over that, but we will certainly seek some more information. What I can say is that I haven't met too many people in the rooms of learned gentlemen that fully appreciate and understand the complexities of fuel hedging at various times. Through it all, the board does take it into account and receive advice on it, but they are always giving us a monthly update on their fuel usage against the 15 per cent rebate, and the board would have had to have been taking some more information into it. With fuel hedging, you can lose as quickly as you gain. So, for the sake of always giving correct and accurate answers to this, I'd like to take that on notice and get proper information for you there, please. Thank you.

Child Safety Officers - Vacancies

Ms LOVELL question to MINISTER for CHILDREN and YOUTH, Ms PALMER

[2.53 p.m.]

This is a follow on from a question I asked last week around the number of vacant child safety officer positions across the state. I understand the minister might have some more information today, so I will put that again today. Thank you.

ANSWER

Thank you very much for that, Mr President, and I thank the honourable member for the question. Our government certainly is firmly committed to improving outcomes for children and young people through strengthening our child safety workforce. This continued commitment was demonstrated through our 2026-27 budget with new funding for the Children and Youth portfolio, including $3 million over two years for child safety workforce initiatives. That was to support the retention and, indeed, the attraction of frontline workers. There was $5.1 million over two years to support the continuation of the advice and referral line staffing levels and $21.5 million over four years in particular towards the recruitment of up to 48 child safety positions to help ensure every child and young person engaged with child safety services has an allocated child safety officer.

The data that I'm able to provide today is additional information and it actually includes the additional full-time equivalent child safety officer positions funded through the 2026-27 Budget. The department commenced filling those roles following a dedicated recruitment campaign earlier this year. The figures that I provided last week did not include this additional allocation; therefore, vacancy rates provided today will look a little bit different because I have this added information.

In the six weeks since the pay period ending 7 October, we've seen an overall increase of 7.76 FTE child safety officers on the ground in Tasmania. I'm advised that at the end of the most recent departmental pay period ending 18 November - I note that your original question asked for the 19th, but I've managed to get to the 18th - across the state there were 111.2 FTE filled child safety officer positions and 28.8 FTE vacancies.

By region, the vacancies were: in the south, 19.9 FTE vacancies, which includes an additional allocation of 17 FTE child safety officers funded through the 2026-27 Budget; in the north, 4.8 FTE vacancies, which includes an additional allocation of 8 FTE child safety officers funded through the budget; and in the north-west, 4.1 FTE vacancies, which includes an additional allocation of 6 FTE child safety officers funded through the 2026-27 Budget.

A dedicated child safety officer and child safety wellbeing worker recruitment campaign was undertaken by the department in recent months. I am pleased to advise that as of 18 November, 42 employment offers have been accepted following this process, with 18 successful applicants having now commenced. I understand the remaining successful applicants are expected to commence over the next two months, further strengthening our child safety staffing levels across the state.

The government remains committed to progressively recruiting up to 48 additional child safety officer positions over the four-year forward Estimates, with funding for 31 additional FTE in the 2026-27 year, representing the first stage of the recruitment program to deliver on this commitment. These outcomes demonstrate strong progress in building workforce capacity, particularly in critical frontline roles that support vulnerable children, young people and families. The government certainly remains committed to building a stable, skilled and sustainable child safety workforce to ensure children and young people receive the support that they need.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Marinus Link's Fibre-Optic Capacity

[2.58 p.m.]

Mr DUIGAN (Windermere - Minister for Energy and Renewables) - Mr President, on indulgence, I would like to respond to a question from the member for Mersey that I took on notice near the end of the last sitting in late October, regarding the fibre-optic capacity of the Marinus Link interconnector. I would take the opportunity to say that government has been clear and consistent that Project Marinus is a good thing for Tasmania. The reasons are well known and on the public record.

One of the benefits of the project is the additional fibre-optic infrastructure that would strengthen telecommunications connectivity between Tasmania and Victoria, while improving

the resilience of Tasmania's communication links with mainland Australia. Should both stages of Marinus Link proceed, telecommunications capacity is estimated to increase by around 150 times compared to the existing Bass Strait fibre-optic links.

We should be excited by this additional fibre-optic connectivity as the Project Marinus Stage 1 Final Investment Decision Assessment Report states:

> Marinus Link's optical fibre system, installed for HVDC system control, will have excess capacity beyond what is required for operational purposes to manage the flows of electricity through the interconnector. This would allow for additional internet and telecommunications capacity in Tasmania and has several important benefits for the State. Marinus Link could also provide greater telecommunications redundancy in the event of future outages of existing telecommunications connections, for example Basslink.

These telecommunication benefits are one of the many reasons the government continues to support the project.

Regarding the substance of the question, tomorrow I will table a detailed response to question No. 72 of 27 October 2026 in which I'll provide further information.

The project has been subject to some of the most extensive scrutiny of any infrastructure projects in Tasmania history. As the project proponent, MLPL is responsible for project delivery, obtaining the necessary approvals and complying with permit conditions. Burnie City Council is the planning authority for the projects planning permit and decisions on the planning matters raised by the member are matters for Burnie City Council to determine. It is important to recognise that different project activities are subject to different approvals, permits and statutory frameworks. It is the government's expectation that all proponents, including MLPL, comply with permit conditions, approval requirements and any decision of a court or tribunal. Tasmania's planning tribunal and court process operate independently and should be respected. Decisions regarding approvals, compliance and the conduct of legal proceedings that matters for the relevant statutory authorities, tribunals and courts, not ministers.

MLPL has advised the installation and use of the fibre-optic cables and related infrastructure are exempt from separate planning approval requirements to the extent that they are or will be used for the purposes of electricity transmission. MLPL has also advised planning permit DA2022/76 remains in effect and that the company will continue to progress developments authorised by that permit. The possibility of future use of spare fibre-optic capacity for data connectivity would be a separate planning matter and does not affect the project's ability to proceed with the development and the use already authorised under the existing permit. To date, Marinus Link Pty Ltd has not completed a business case for commercialising surplus fibre-optic capacity and has not entered into any commercial arrangements for providing access.

The honourable member also asked about the statement of expectations for data centre and AI infrastructure, and I would like to take this opportunity to update members that the government finalised and released the Statement of Expectations for Data Centre and AI Infrastructure Developers Tasmania on 13 November. The statement makes clear that Tasmania welcomes investment in data centres and AI infrastructure where proponents contribute to economic growth and jobs, support the state's energy and renewable energy

objectives and engage constructively with local communities and comply with all applicable planning, environmental and regulatory requirements. In short, government is clear about its expectations. We welcome investment that delivers benefits for Tasmanians while operating within Tasmania's established regulatory and approval frameworks.

In relation to Marinus Link specifically, I'm advised that MLPL does not anticipate that access to any future surplus fibreoptic capacity would be provided exclusively for AI infrastructure developers, nor does MLPL intend to operate data centres itself. Should any future proponents seek to utilise surplus fibre-optic capacity in connection with a data centre or AI infrastructure project, it would be expected to comply with all applicable planning, environmental and regulatory requirements, including the state government's statement of expectation. I look forward to providing the member with a detailed response to his other related question tomorrow. Thank you.

GREYHOUND RACING LEGISLATION AMENDMENTS (PHASING OUT REFORM) BILL 2025 (No. 66)

Second Reading

Resumed from above (page xx).

[3.04 p.m.]

Ms THOMAS (Elwick) - Mr President, resuming after the lunchbreak, I want to put on the record before I start, or restart, my contribution, we will break again at 4.00 p.m. until 4.30 p.m. I've had some people message me confused about why do we stop, start, when do we start again? So, for the people watching along on the broadcast we will break at 4.00 p.m. and then resume at 4.30 p.m.

I acknowledge there is inherent risk involved in greyhound racing. I also acknowledge that greyhounds are bred to run fast, very fast in fact - at speeds up to 70 kilometres per hour. A racetrack is a place where we can let greyhounds exhibit their natural behaviour to run with agility and speed in a pack, together with their breed while chasing a moving object with no real-life moving objects harmed in the process. Don't these beautiful dogs deserve this chance? As sentient beings, don't greyhounds deserve to express their natural instincts in a safe environment? If they run at full speed in a dog park, a backyard, or in bushland where the surface is uneven, they may injure themselves there too. They may also chase and catch live prey. There's no vet on standby to provide immediate assessment and care in a dog park or in a backyard or in a bush reserve. There's no regulator mandating how long the animal should be rested for, should that occur. It could be argued, Mr President, the tracks are a risk mitigation solution, allowing these beautiful animals to express their need to run fast, as they were born to do. These dogs love to run fast. In fact, they appear a lot more excited at the starting boxes with their mates than they do when led around protest parades in knitted jumpers, Mr President. Just watch them at the starting boxes and you'll see how excited most of them are to chase the lure. All this talk about sentient beings and what they want and deserve, Mr President, is ultimately about what we want for them as humans, what fits our ideological narrative, let's be honest. And yes, we are all entitled to have different views and to respectfully agree, but we absolutely should not demonise others for taking a different view. And Mr President, I'm really sorry that some of the debate, online in particular, has gone down that path.

We also need to keep this issue in perspective. Animal welfare laws apply across all forms of animal ownership and rightly so. If we are to say animal welfare concerns justify prohibition, then we must be consistent in how we apply this logic. Because the reality is that animal cruelty is not confined to any one regulated industry. It exists across the broader community. The RSPCA in Tasmania received almost 2000 cruelty reports in 2024-25 and took in 379 dogs, of which ten were greyhounds. The RSPCA laid 56 charges against four individuals and had a further 20 matters pending. This tells us something important. The vast majority of animal welfare concerns are not occurring within the highly regulated greyhound racing industry, where there was just one welfare breach in 2025 -

Ms O'Connor - Well you know that the RSPCA has no jurisdiction.

Mr PRESIDENT - Order.

Ms O'Connor - It's a misunderstanding.

Ms THOMAS - But elsewhere, often in unregulated or less visible settings -

Ms O'Connor - Not doing your research.

Mr PRESIDENT - Order.

Ms THOMAS - The RSPCA checked 5196 animals, 52 per cent were dogs. There are more complaints and concerns about the welfare of dogs in our broader community than in the highly regulated greyhound industry. But are we talking about banning pet ownership because a minority of pet owners do the wrong thing?

Just to be clear, Mr President, I understand RSPCA does not have the jurisdiction to investigate greyhound owners. I have done my research.

Ms O'Connor - Oh good. They do [3.08.20 inaudible].

Mr PRESIDENT - Order. I just remind honourable members to let members have their say. You will have an opportunity to have your say. I know it's testing, but we've got to do this in an orderly manner and allow every member in here to say their piece without being intimidated. So, continue, honourable member.

Ms THOMAS - Thank you, Mr President.

And keeping this issue of animal welfare in perspective, let's also talk about the inherent safety risk to working dogs on farms. The *Animals* journal 2024 edition 14 included an article titled 'Owner-reported Health Events in Australian Farm Working Dogs' which reported the results of a study by Pattison, Isaksen and Cogger. A total of 125 farm dog owners were recruited at a public working dog event and interviewed about the health of their dogs in the preceding 12 months. Information was provided about 526 dogs. Most dogs were kelpies. Approximately 9 per cent of the dogs had been sold, 6 per cent of dogs had died and 1 per cent had been retired from work. About one quarter of the 444 dogs under the respondents' care had an illness or injury in the previous 12 months. One quarter. Most injuries were fractures, tendon or joint injuries, or puncture wounds, and most dogs with an illness had arthritis. Traumatic injuries were recorded in 12 per cent of the dogs, 53 of the 444. The most commonly recorded

reasons for injuries were accidents involving vehicles and injury by livestock. A little less than half of the injured dogs and a quarter of the ill ones were treated by a vet. Let's be honest, it is considered common and a standard management practise in many intensive farming operations for working dogs to be confined in kennels or tethered on runs for a significant portion of the day, with high-drive breeds like Kelpies or Border Collies often resting for 16 to 20 hours per day. What happens when a working dog doesn't do its job? Well, often it is shot. That used to be the case in greyhound racing, but not anymore. We've regulated to make sure that doesn't happen and now we have too many to rehome. Let me be clear, I'm not taking aim at farming practices or farmers here, nor suggesting that we should shoot greyhounds when they're finished racing. I'm simply providing context. Because if the argument being put is that animal welfare concerns justify banning an entire activity, then where does that logic stop? Taken to its extreme, the logic would suggest we should definitely ban working dogs on farms, given 24 per cent get injured each year. Taken to its extreme, the logic would suggest we should ban all forms of dog ownership, maybe even all animal ownership, given the number of complaints to and charges laid by the RSPCA. Let me be clear again, this is not what I'm advocating for. Because clearly this is not a rational or a proportionate response. Nor is this response that we're debating today.

The answers to the questions I asked on notice also made it clear that the government did not seek or receive any advice from a regulator recommending the greyhound racing industry be shut down. It did not receive advice from a regulator that the industry could not be regulated to acceptable animal welfare or integrity standards. Remarkably, it did not seek advice from Treasury on the economic impact of an industry shutdown. I ask again, what problem is the government trying to solve here? Because based on the evidence before us, it is not clear there is a problem that justifies prohibition.

It is also critical to recognise that Tasmania has only just implemented the most recent significant reform to racing and integrity and animal welfare oversight in recent history. Let's remember that the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024* came into effect on 1 February 2025, not even two years ago, establishing the Tasracing Integrity Unit, the Office of the Racing Integrity Commissioner and the Racing Integrity Committee. This reform deliberately separated integrity and welfare oversight from the commercial functions of Tasracing and introduced independent scrutiny across all three racing codes. In other words, just two years ago we moved to strengthen the system substantially. Yet before that system has even had time to properly operate, let alone be evaluated, the government is now seeking to shut down one entire code. That raises a very obvious question: Why invest in the most comprehensive integrity and welfare reforms we've seen, only to abandon the industry before these reforms can be meaningfully assessed? Well, it's pretty obvious why, because what is clear is the way this decision has transpired. On 17 July 2025, during the election campaign, the Liberal government assured greyhound industry participants that it supported their industry. We heard the member for Pembroke read in the letter in his contribution earlier, but within weeks after being returned in minority and finding itself reliant on the support of the Greens and green-leaning independents, the government announced that the industry would be shut down. So, we must ask, was this decision driven by evidence or by arithmetic? By animal welfare concerns grounded in fact, or by the numbers required to remain in government. Because from where I stand, this looks less like principled, evidence-based policy and more like political expediency.

When governments make promises, they should stick to them. They owe it to Tasmanians to keep their word. That is the right thing to do. How on earth can we ever expect Tasmanians

to have faith and trust in governments and in politics if promises are continually broken? I apply this standard regarding my expectations when it comes to government promises consistently. I repeatedly said the government should honour its written commitment to limit the state's contribution to the Macquarie Point Stadium to $875 million. The Greens and some other independents have also been reminding the government that this promise should be honoured. Those who rightly insist that the government honour its stadium commitment cannot simply look the other way when a promise made to another group of Tasmanians is so quickly and comprehensively broken. A government promise cannot matter only when it is politically convenient.

For greyhound participants, this was not an abstract change in government policy. It was their livelihood, their community, their identity and their purpose. The government gave these Tasmanians its assurance before the election and then within weeks took away the future that they had built their lives around. That is a backflip of extraordinary proportions and one that has caused enormous distress and treated hardworking Tasmanians with complete disdain.

Let me now share the story of one industry participant, and I thank Darren for allowing me to share it. Darren writes:

> My life is greyhound racing. I wake up at 5 a.m. The sun barely peaks over the horizon but I'm already on my feet moving through the kennels. The dogs are awake, waiting for me, and I know each of them like they're part of me, because they are. Feeding, checking their health, grooming, training - it's all I've known since I was a child. Every day of my 55 years has been shaped by this life.
>
> By mid-morning I'm on the road to the track. The hum of the engine, the smell of the kennels, the chatter of the other trainers and handlers, it's the rhythm of my world. At the track I socialise, share meals, laugh, argue, plan, the dogs race, the crowd cheers and I feel alive. This is why I get up each day. This is my purpose. This is where I belong.
>
> Even when the day is long, when my body aches, when the hours stretch into the night, it doesn't matter. I'm needed, responsible, alive. My life has meaning because every action, every decision, every movement is tied to the care and success of these dogs. And my dogs need me every single day, and the love they give me in return I also need every single day.
>
> And then, imagine it gone. The alarm still rings at 5 a.m. but there is no reason to rise. The kennels stand empty. The dogs, my companions, sit quietly, confused, but I cannot wake them to purpose because the purpose is gone. The road to the track is empty. My friends, my colleagues, my community, all gone. Vanished. The meals we shared, the laughter, the competitions, the camaraderie of it all, gone.
>
> I sit in silence. Days stretch endlessly, unstructured, meaningless. The knowledge I spent a lifetime building, breeding, training, caring, racing - it's now all useless. There is nothing else I can do. Jobs in the outside world require skills I don't have. Courses, certifications, apprenticeships are impossible for me now. I'm trapped outside a world I've never lived in and

> I'm now an old man with nothing to give to another career. I lose my sense of identity. My purpose vanishes. Depression creeps in slowly, like a shadow. Sleep eludes me. Appetite fades. My body weakens without the rhythm of work, without the routine, without the dogs, without the track. I no longer know who I am.
>
> This is not just a job lost - this is my life erased. Greyhound racing is everything I've ever known and without it, there is nothing left. No work, no community, no reason to rise in the morning. For those of us who have lived this life since birth, the removal of the industry is existential. It is not merely economic; it is life itself disappearing. I have nothing left.

The distress and uncertainty this backflip has caused those in the greyhound industry cannot be understated. For the past 15 months they've been feeling like Darren, living in survival mode. Imagine what that does to your health. I've had a couple of men in their 60s on the phone to me in tears. Imagine, just for a moment, having what you love doing, the thing that gets you out of bed in the morning, ripped away from you. Imagine how betrayed you'd feel when you'd just weeks ago been promised that it wouldn't be. Imagine how it feels to be demonised as being morally inferior and cruel. Imagine seeing stories about what you do presented in a way that totally contradicts your lived experience. Imagine feeling like you're not being heard - worthy of being heard, even. Decision made. Move on. 'Oh, but please do tell us your thoughts on how to phase you out, or else we'll make those decisions without you too.'

Imagine being painted as villains for eating up taxpayer money when, in fact, this funding is honouring the very commitment given by this parliament when it decided to sell the TOTE in 2009 and the government sold it in 2012. When the cost to the taxpayer is just around $3 million a year after industry revenue is accounted for - less than 0.05 per cent of the state budget, around one two-thousandth of government spending. A lot less than the cost of a football team. Less than the cost of a basketball team, too. We should not leave these facts out of the story. We should be honest.

While we're on the concept of honesty, let's also be clear that the government will continue to collect point of consumption tax from greyhound wagering should this bill pass. Tasmanians will still be able to bet on it elsewhere in Australia and the government will collect revenue when it does. The Treasurer confirmed this in response to questions I asked in budget Estimates earlier in the year.

We should also consider the uncertainties that remain in relation to compensation. I note the government presented some minor amendments to us very late on Monday this week, but they certainly don't provide any certainty regarding compensation. Further to that, we received some more amendments at 9.27 this morning after receiving another version of them last night at a later hour. Very curious, when the government has had eight months since they pulled the bill from this agenda to now, just at the very last hour, present us with amendments.

I'd like to know who the government has consulted on these amendments, because Monday was the very first that I'd heard of them. Have they consulted with other members on these amendments, any other members? With the industry? With anti-greyhound racing advocates? What was the impetus for these particular amendments? Very curious.

It's been almost a year since the government told us that we needed to urgently get this bill through the parliament before the end of 2025 and almost eight months since they suddenly pulled the bill from our agenda without notice or explanation in April this year. It's a pity that after all this time the government has not been able to provide the evidence still to justify a prohibition policy. It has not been able to provide detail on the cost of a phase-out or detail how participants will be compensated. Yes, it's released a draft transition plan prepared by the Racing Integrity Commissioner for the government on 21 September and said that it was released for consultation - but the government had no consultation plan, no details about what that consultation process involved, and when I asked what the plan was - in response to receiving an email from the minister's office telling us that that plan had been released - I didn't get a response. No response. Doesn't seem like a government needing my support.

Who did they consult before they released this draft transition plan, and who have they consulted about it since? The draft transition plan provides no specific detail of how any figures were arrived at, who will and won't be compensated, what for, why and how. The amendments don't address this either. The funding mechanism that the plan nominates, savings from reduced racing, is contradicted by its own feasibility study. Savings absolutely will not be sufficient to fund this phase-out.

What a farce, Mr President - just another example of this government being dishonest with itself and with Tasmanians. Add it to the long list: TasInsure, the stadium cost cap, won't accept the pay rise. How can Tasmanians trust this government? Rather than confirming details in the draft plan, the government expects the industry to take its word for it - (1) that compensation will be provided and (2) that it will be fair. Why would the industry ever again believe this government? Why should we believe it?

While we're talking money, let's address participant earnings. The data shows that a significant number of trainers earn little or nothing from the industry. In fact, dozens earn under $10,000 a year and many earn nothing at all. These are not 'cashed-up operators', as the Premier referred to greyhound industry people - these are hobbyists; they're families and people who care deeply about their animals, and yet they've been demonised. The Premier himself suggested that the campaign to save the industry was being 'led by cashed-up thugs from the mainland'. That is an extraordinary statement. It is unsubstantiated, it is unfair and it is totally and utterly unbecoming of the office of Premier. It is also hypocritical from a Premier whose party readily accepts funding from cashed-up organisations of all sorts to fund its own campaigns. Even if there were external support for the Save Tasmanian Greyhound Racing campaign, could you blame people for accepting such help when their livelihoods, their passion and their purpose are being taken away?

The Premier then doubled down with another hypocritical statement just last week, sharing a clip of a contribution in parliament he posted last Thursday saying:

> Shutting down industries doesn't help you pay your bills. It doesn't help you put food on the table one bit. We must come together and say no to the 'no brigade'.

That is what our Premier said on the floor of parliament - we must come together and say no to the 'no brigade'. The Premier forgot to add 'except when it comes to greyhound racing'. How do you think the greyhound community felt when they read this? The hypocrisy is stark,

the disrespect is real, and the impact on people is significant and enduring. They deserve a voice.

Let me read parts of a letter honourable members received from Ben Englund, industry participant and chair of the North West Greyhound Racing Club.

> Dear Member,
>
> I'm writing to you from a deeply personal perspective, not in my capacity as club president or as a representative of Greyhounds Tasmania, but as an individual whose life, identity and community are closely tied to the Tasmanian greyhound industry. My family's been involved in greyhound racing for over 50 years with vast knowledge in breeding, whelping, rearing and racing greyhounds. We care deeply about those wonderful dogs and take pride in how we present them and our facilities.
>
> The decision to phase out greyhound racing in Tasmania has been incredibly difficult to process, not only because of what it means for our livelihoods, but because of how it has been handled. Many of us feel we have not been heard, not been respected and not been fairly represented. For years we've dedicated ourselves to the care, training and wellbeing of our dogs. These animals are not commodities to us; they are part of our families. We invest enormous time, money and emotion into giving them the best possible lives, both during and after their racing careers. To have that commitment dismissed or mischaracterised has been deeply hurtful.
>
> What has been especially difficult is the narrative driven by anti-racing extremists whose claims appear to be based largely on emotion and misinformation rather than fact. In contrast, those of us within the industry have consistently relied on evidence, data and lived experience to demonstrate the care and standards that exist within modern greyhound racing. Despite this, our voices have been overshadowed.
>
> We've also been unfairly treated by sections of the media, with coverage that often focuses on negative or outdated perceptions while ignoring the significant improvements made in welfare, regulation and rehoming. This one-sided portrayal has created a damaging stigma that affects not just our industry, but our families and our sense of place in the community. Importantly, the Joint Standing Committee report has now been completed, and it found no greyhound welfare issues whatsoever. Despite this clear outcome, it appears to have had little influence on the direction being taken, which only adds to the frustration and disbelief felt across the industry.
>
> It is also important to state that participants have complied with and followed every regulation and rule that's been introduced to continuously improve our industry. We have adapted, invested and worked hard to meet evolving standards, always with the aim of improving welfare and integrity within the sport. To now be told that the industry will be phased out regardless is deeply disheartening. What makes this even more difficult, on a personal level, is that the Premier previously wrote to me just days before the 2025 state

> election in my role as president of the North West Greyhound Racing Club, expressing full support for the greyhound racing industry. I distributed that letter to my fellow participants and colleagues in good faith, believing that support was genuine and would endure. This is something that has weighed heavily on my shoulders. I now feel in part responsible for the Liberal Party garnering support and votes from within our community under what now feels like false pretences. That is a very difficult position to carry, both personally and professionally.
>
> Equally concerning is the way this decision has been made. It feels politically expedient rather than evidence based. There appears to have been little regard for the data, the improvements made in animal welfare, or the voices of those directly involved in the industry. Instead, many of us feel we've been judged and condemned without a fair hearing. This industry supports regional communities, provides employment and gives people a sense of purpose and belonging. For many, it is not just a job or a hobby, it is a way of life passed down through generations. The sudden removal of that without genuine consultation or understanding has left people feeling abandoned and betrayed.
>
> As Tasmanians, we cannot be comfortable with how this government has undertaken this process. It sets a very dangerous precedent. At the next election, if another minority government is in power, who will lose their livelihoods? For this very reason, and to protect the future Tasmanian rights and privileges, I respectfully ask that you reject the bill to phase out greyhound racing in its entirety. Thank you for taking the time to read this, it means more than you might realise.
>
> Kind regards,
> Ben Englund, Wynyard. (TBC)

Thanks Ben, for allowing me to share that today. Ben's concerns are not isolated. They are shared by many within the industry. Many industry participants have been in touch to share stories about the dogs they have raised, raced, retired and kept as family pets, and in some cases, sadly lost. Dogs are part of their families long after their racing days are over, spending their retirement sleeping on couches, loved and cared for, and these stories are important because they tell a different story to the one that's being presented, the story that this is an industry devoid of care or compassion. That is simply not true.

Now I want to be clear, I acknowledge there have been practices in this industry that were unacceptable, but like many industries, increased scrutiny and regulation have driven improvement and the data reflects this. Euthanasia rates have declined significantly over time and the number of on-track deaths is extremely low relative to the number of starters. Yet we are seeing statistics used in a way that totally distorts reality. Many Tasmanians have written in urging us to act on headline figures drawn from advocacy campaigns - and I don't blame them. I appreciate and I share their compassion for animals.

In fact, the RSPCA almost had me sold on the claim that last year 279 greyhounds were killed or injured while racing in Tasmania. Because at face value, that does sound alarming, right? But when data is properly unpacked, a very different picture emerges: of nearly 12,000

race starts in 2025, two dogs were euthanised at race meetings and the overall injury rate sits at around 2 per cent. The vast majority of those injuries, around 80 per cent were minor - light muscle strains, sprains and bruises that either did not prevent a dog from racing after a vet assessment or required a short spell of three weeks or less.

To put that in everyday terms, 80 per cent of these cases are not unlike when a family pet overdoes it, like my own family dog, Kelsey the Kelpie, after a big run at the beach. She would keep going day after day for hours if we let her, because she loves it. But we step in and rest her because we care about her wellbeing. The difference is in the greyhound racing industry that care is not just a matter of personal judgement and choice; it is required by regulation, there is oversight and there is veterinary supervision. This context is really important to consider here.

When we talk about euthanasia, I accept that it is not helpful to compare euthanasia rates in the greyhound industry with those at animal shelters. I thank the Dogs' Home of Tasmania for their comments on this in a letter to me where they reflected on unfortunate comparisons being made between euthanasia rates of animal shelters and those in the greyhound industry. The Dogs' Home of Tasmania euthanises 18.5 per cent of dogs that come into their care and the RSPCA euthanises 17.46 per cent of dogs that come into their care nationally. The Dogs' Home said:

> Euthanasia is not a measure of organisational performance but a last resort welfare decision made in circumstances where an animal is suffering, poses an unmanageable safety risk or cannot be responsibly rehomed. (TBC)

If the Dogs' Home truly believe this is the case, why do they and other advocates for the ban use euthanasia rates to judge the performance or morality of the greyhound industry? Because I can guarantee you euthanising the dog is a last-resort welfare decision for industry participants too, just as it is for the Dogs' Home. It's absolutely devastating.

Let me share a story demonstrating just how devastating it is. I give forewarning that I'm about to share details about the death of dogs due to illness. I know this might be distressing to hear. Indeed, it may be difficult for me to deliver, so now is a good time to leave the room or switch off the broadcast for five minutes if this feels difficult for you. Sharing his experience with Shima Time, Jamie wrote to me earlier in the year:

> Dear members of the Legislative Council,
>
> I'm writing to share the circumstances surrounding the recent passing of our greyhound Shima Time, which has been referenced in current public discussion around the industry. Today, *The Mercury* posted an article titled 'It is time to end the carnage at the track, please' written by Danielle Wood. The article makes reference to deceased greyhounds and it names Shima Time.
>
> I wanted to take the time to personally reach out to you as the person responsible and the son of the owner of Shima Time, to provide the full, honest story around the unfortunate death of Shima Time.

> Shima Time did not die because of racing. He died from a twisted bowl, a medical emergency that can happen to any dog in any home at any time. It's the same condition vets see in family pets across the country. Using his death to push an agenda isn't advocacy, it's misinformation.
>
> Shima Time, affectionately known as Shimmy, was deeply loved. He wasn't just a name in a race field; he was part of our family, part of a team, a routine, a life. His loss has been felt in a real way, with real grief, real tears and a genuine sense of something missing.
>
> I was with Shimmy actively caring and fighting for his life until his final breath at 3 a.m. in the morning. A very special thank you to the staff at the after-hours vet who waited for us after my wife called and were ready to act immediately on our arrival. They did everything they could, providing urgent care, CPR and life-saving measures. Sadly, despite their efforts, it wasn't enough.
>
> If you actually care about animal welfare then facts matter. Twisted bowel (GDV) is unpredictable, fast and often fatal even with immediate intervention. It is not caused by a greyhound chasing a lure and it is not unique to racing dogs. What is true, he was monitored, he was cared for, and when things went wrong it was a medical crisis. Not neglect, not cruelty and not the result of the track. We can have real conversations about welfare; we should. But twisting a tragic, naturally occurring medical event into something it's not helps no-one, not the dogs, not the industry, and not the people actually doing the work every day. I know Shimmy isn't the only greyhound in the article that has suffered a medical emergency. Kind regards Jamie.

Thanks to Jamie for allowing me to share that story.

I totally agree with Jamie that we can have real conversations about animal welfare and we should. But if we're going to have these conversations, we should more broadly discuss how animals are treated across a range of activities and as pets, not target one specific activity. Because it's important to recognise that dogs and other animals, as we often hear, are sentient beings. But we must not forget that humans are too. There is a fair and reasonable way to go about these conversations, but what we've seen in relation to this policy position is far from it. There's been a lot of misinformation peddled from the Greens and Green-leaning independents during this debate. There's been not much information from the government, interestingly, I might add; further demonstrating, perhaps, the true genesis of this bill. The government has stayed pretty quiet, really, except for its extremely immature media releases slamming Labor, by the butcher, nonetheless.

Back to the data, the reality is that only a very small proportion of registered racing greyhounds are euthanised each year, around 2 per cent. In Tasmania 33 greyhounds were euthanised in 2025, compared to 283 in 2017 - that is an 88 per cent reduction in eight years. This explains why we now have significantly more dogs for rehoming. Of the 33 greyhounds euthanised, 21 were registered to race at the time of death. Of these 21, nine were euthanised as they were not suitable for rehoming, seven due to injury, and five due to illness or age. Just two were euthanised at the track. That is 0.02 per cent of starters. This is not evidence of

systemic failure, but it is evidence that those driving this agenda have chosen to selectively frame data to drive a particular outcome. They've also chosen to ignore the fact that when a licenced participant keeps a dog as a pet once it's retired from racing and needs to be euthanised due to old age or illness, this death gets included in the euthanasia statistics too. Activists shamelessly name and claim the death of a much-loved dog to illness or injury as another mark against the industry.

How data and stories are presented shapes how the community understands an issue, and you simply cannot deny that this context paints a very different picture to the one that's been deliberately imprinted in people's minds through sustained campaigning. Campaigning that no doubt costs a great deal of money that these animal welfare advocacy organisations could perhaps otherwise direct towards the actual care and welfare of animals, if they weren't spending it twisting facts to shame an industry. Let's be honest about what's going on here. If your goal is to shut down an industry, which message are you going to run with - 279 greyhounds killed or injured while racing in Tasmania, or 2 per cent of greyhounds injured while racing, 80 per cent of those with minor injuries and 0.02 per cent euthanised while racing in Tasmania? Headline figures that have been consistently repeated without context mislead rather than inform Tasmanians. This is not to dismiss any death or harm, of course. I imagine we'd all like to see a world where no dog, indeed no animal, is injured or harmed through racing, training, on the farm, or in the backyard. But it is to say that policy should be based on full and fair representation of the facts, not selective statistics designed to provoke outrage.

That leads me to a broader concern. What we are seeing here is not evidence-based policy, it is policy driven by activism. That should concern every member of this House because if we allow decisions of this magnitude to be made without evidence, if we allow the advocacy of activists to outweigh objective analysis, then no industry is safe. Today it is greyhound racing, tomorrow it could be something else. Working dogs on farms, flyball, agility competitions, lure coursing and sprint dog events conducted by Dogs Tasmania. These activities are subject to far less regulation, despite having inherent safety risks. So why is greyhound racing being singled out? Is it because the activism on this issue is not just about animal welfare? Perhaps is there a broader ideological opposition at play, an ideological opposition to gambling? We already heard the member for Huon mention this. If so, that debate should be had honestly, not cloaked in claims that are not supported by evidence targeting one particular activity. There are also real economic consequences to consider. The industry contributes tens of millions of dollars in economic activity and supports jobs, businesses and regional communities. The flow-on effects of shutting it down will be felt well beyond the track and yet the government did not even seek Treasury advice on those impacts. This is extraordinary. We're being asked to make a permanent decision with no economic modelling, no regulatory advice, and no clear evidence of a systemic problem. That is not good policy, it is not good governance and, put simply, it is not good enough.

I want to acknowledge the many Tasmanians who have taken the time to write to me sharing their views on this issue. I recognise the strong community sentiment and that some Tasmanians do not support greyhound racing. In response to my question as to what data the government has to demonstrate greyhound racing no longer meets community expectations, the government said around 15,000 people signed a petition to parliament calling for the ban; 15,000 people. That's about 3 per cent of Tasmanians. And since when does the government make a policy decision based on one petition? Give me another example, Mr President. One petition.

I know there will be people who I represent who feel deeply disappointed in the position that I've reached. To be frank, when the government first announced its intention to shut down the industry, my instinct was that I would likely support it. While I had not engaged closely with the greyhound racing community for some time, I was aware of the activism campaign advocating for an industry shutdown. I was taking notice of those numbers and those messages, but as I've worked through this issue, carefully reviewing the evidence, speaking with participants, doing my research and interrogating the facts, I have found that the case for prohibition simply has not been made. The government has not demonstrated that all regulatory options have been tried, tested and failed. It has not put the industry on notice and asked it to improve standards or risk shutdown. It's gone straight for the blunt tool of prohibition, without consultation, without notice, and after promising the industry support at an election.

Now, this is not to ignore that there have been confronting stories in this sport. There have been and they must continue to be addressed. We should all want to see a day where regulation and oversight ensure those stories are a thing of the past. I do, and I genuinely believe we are on that path but, while a narrative of cruelty and shame is often presented, there is also another story, and that is one that is equally real if we are prepared to open our hearts and minds to it. A story of care and compassion, of purpose and connection between people and their animals.

Talking your compassion, I also want to acknowledge those who advocate for greyhound welfare, including those who rescue and rehome dogs. I gratefully appreciate what they do. I accept their stories are true and that their beliefs are both sincerely held and grounded in their experiences, but I also accept that there are stories and beliefs held by the majority of people in the greyhound industry that are true, too. Stories of responsible ownership, of care and of improvement. And if we are to make a decision of this magnitude, we owe it to everyone, industry participants, welfare advocates and the broader community to properly examine all perspectives. That has not happened here.

The bill asks us to decide first and justify later or, perhaps, to justify the prohibition of an entire industry based on community sentiment, based on feeling. I ask my fellow honourable members, is this solid ground on which law should be made to prohibit something based on feeling? If there is a genuine problem with animal welfare, then let us properly examine it. Opposing prohibition does not mean defending the status quo. If greyhound racing continues in Tasmania, the industry must continue to improve, must meet the highest possible welfare integrity standards and continually work to earn community confidence.

South Australia has demonstrated there is another way. Following an independent inquiry, the South Australian government put its greyhound racing industry on notice and gave it two years to implement major reforms. It appointed an independent Greyhound Industry Reform Inspector to monitor progress, engage with participants and stakeholders, visit industry operations and report back to government. At the end of that reform period, Greyhound Racing South Australia had completed 73 of the 78 recommendations for which it was responsible. These reforms included a new traceability system, increased straight-track racing, double-arm lures, new track safety measures and the establishment of a race injury review panel. The independent inspector concluded that the industry had reformed sufficiently to support its continuation, while recommending stronger independent oversight of animal welfare and integrity. The South Australian Government accepted both recommendations that greyhound racing continue and that an independent oversight body be established. That is what evidence based and proportionate reform looks like. South Australia identified the problems, conducted

an independent inquiry, put the industry on notice, established measurable reforms, independently monitored their implementation and then made a decision based on the results. Tasmania is trying to do the reverse. The Tasmanian Liberal government is trying to do the reverse. It decided on prohibition first and has looked for justification afterwards and done a pretty poor job of it.

We've only just established a new independent racing integrity and animal welfare framework under the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024*. We are also in the process of finalising and implementing a new code of practice for racing greyhound welfare. Why would we abandon the industry before that framework has been given a proper opportunity to operate and be evaluated? Tasmania could seek to impose stronger breeding control so that greyhound numbers are aligned with demonstrated rehoming capacity. It could properly resource the Racing Integrity Unit, strengthen whole-of-life traceability and enforcement, complete and implement the new welfare code and invest in safer infrastructure, including the long promised straight track at Devonport. These options should be independently examined and tested before parliament reaches for the bluntest instrument available in permanent prohibition.

South Australia demanded reform and measured the results; the Tasmanian Government has decided on prohibition first and is looking for justification afterwards. The standards and regulations greyhound racing participants need to comply with a far above and beyond those expected of any others when it comes to activities involving animals. Based on the data, I'd argue that the greyhound racing industry, is far outstripping all sorts of other animal ownership when it comes to the presentation of animal welfare issues. Dare I say, I'd even bet on it. We ought to be making this decision based on fact, not fear and mistruths, on a genuine policy setting informed by advice, not one that is mired by political expediency and cooked up to help shore up a minority government. Because once this industry is shut down, there is no going back.

If this bill does not pass and the government is genuinely concerned about animal welfare, then it should respect the will of the Parliament and continue to invest in the regulatory framework that this place agreed to less than two years ago. It should recognise the real harm caused to individuals through the demonisation of this industry and the uncertainty created about its future, and not allow this policy position to linger, accompanied by defunding threats it is not even certain that it can lawfully enforce. I hope the Deputy Leader, in summing up, can explain how the government does intend to fulfil its statutory responsibilities under the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act* to regulate greyhound racing if this bill does not pass and it does intend to defund the industry, because in response to my question on notice earlier in the year asking, [TBC 3.48]

> If greyhound racing continues to be a lawful activity and government funding ceases, how does the government intend to fulfil its existing statutory obligations under the *Racing Regulation Integrity Act 2024* and any other relevant legislation, including obligations relating to integrity, regulation, licensing, animal warfare, enforcement and oversight?

The government's response was,

> The government remains committed to the passage of the Greyhound Racing Legislation Amendments (Phasing Out Reform) Bill.

And went on to talk about the bill but did not answer my question. I don't think it actually could because I don't think it actually knows, it's just a threat, is all it is, at this time, and create continuing uncertainty for people who have already suffered. Should this bill not pass, the Government should ensure that the Racing Integrity Unit is properly resourced so that any welfare breaches are identified and acted upon. That the industry is supported to continually lift standards through the implementation of the new code of practice for greyhound racing welfare. It should also turn its attention to improving safety outcomes, because if welfare truly is the objective, then investment in safer infrastructure must be part of the solution.

The funding the government may need to commit to compensation, likely in the order of $50 million if we're looking at the New Zealand example and if it really wants to do it properly, this funding could instead be directed toward a new straight track at Devonport, further reducing the already low on-track injury rate and delivering on a long standing commitment to that North West Greyhound Racing Club. With that must also come responsibility. If this industry is to continue, it must continue to seek to earn the respect of the community. That means a clear and ongoing commitment to the highest standards of animal welfare and a willingness from within the industry itself to call out and address any behaviour that falls short of those standards, because those who do the wrong thing do not just harm animals, they undermine the very future of the industry itself.

In coming to a close, we simply don't have the evidence to inform us on the fundamental aspects of this bill despite the referral of this bill to the Joint Standing Committee on Greyhound Racing Transition. The committee unashamedly decided not to inquire into the prohibition clauses of the bill. I outlined my concerns about the committee's inquiry during my contribution to the motion noting the committee's interim report on 14 April this year, so I won't repeat those concerns here. But most critically, I will say the committee chose to assume the government's policy position was not a matter for inquiry, not a matter for a debate or decision by this place, despite the obvious fact that a decision to prohibit an activity can only be realised through legislation; legislation made by the parliament. This is a decision for the parliament, not for the government alone and not for political convenience, certainly not for the Racing Integrity Commissioner, as I've put on the record before. That's perhaps a subject for another day.

I note in trying to do as much research as possible on this topic, I did put in a couple of right to information requests, seeking, first and foremost, the industry health check report that the Racing Integrity Commissioner commissioned Align Sport & Media to complete when he came into the role in February 2024. Unfortunately, he refused to provide that and it is still with the ombudsman trying to get a copy. I don't know what he's trying to hide, but it makes it hard to do your research properly when an independent commissioner will not release information.

This is a matter for this House to determine on the evidence and in the interests of the people of Tasmania. Based on the evidence before me, the case has not been made. I urge my fellow honourable members to reflect carefully on whether the due diligence has been done to justify a prohibition bill. The academic and legal consensus is clear: prohibitions are the bluntest instrument available to parliament and should only be used as a last resort. Decisions to prohibit something must be grounded in evidence, tested against proportionality and subject to proper scrutiny. Prohibition decisions must be subject to at least the level of scrutiny that some members in this place supporting this bill demand on any other issue. Without that rigour, we risk legislating not in the public interest but in the interests of political power. So, I cannot support this prohibition bill.

Earlier, I shared Darren's story of a life built around purpose, community and of the care of his dogs. That story is not unique. It is being lived by hundreds of Tasmanians right now and this parliament is being asked to take that away permanently. Not because the evidence demands it, but because political power demands it. Prohibition is the most serious step we can take as legislators. It demands absolute certainty that no lesser option will suffice. That threshold has not been met.

To honourable members still feeling unsure about this difficult decision, I say if in doubt, don't support this bill. In this case, we have no process, no proof and no plan; simply a political power play. This is not a decision we should make for power. It is a decision we must make for people. This parliament must choose evidence over expediency and people over power. So, I do not support this bill. Given the case for prohibition has not been made, it is my strong view it should not even progress to committee stage. Let's vote against the second reading and end the angst now and eliminate any risk that this government could pull the bill from a third reading when once again it is concerned it may not have the numbers, because that would be an absolutely terrible outcome.

[3.53 p.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Mr President, I rise to speak on the Greyhound Racing Legislation Amendments (Phasing Out Reform) Bill 2025, and I'm pleased to do so. Firstly, I certainly want to thank other members for their contributions on the bill. I know that this is one everyone has given a lot of careful consideration to, and we've certainly had time now to do that. It's just entirely correct that we should be here, certainly before the end of the year, dealing with this bill so that we have some certainty going forward for everybody involved before we rise for the year. I'd also particularly like to thank the absolute multitude of Tasmanians who have been in touch with us on this bill from all sides of the issue, sharing a great deal of insight, expertise, personal experience and information, data and evidence, all sorts of things. We've received so much assistance with thinking about this issue and giving consideration to it in a careful and respectful way. I don't know if other members have experienced this, but I've certainly found it difficult, potentially, to get back to everyone. My intention is, at the close of this matter, when we've dealt with the bill one way or the other, to get back to everybody who's been in touch with me to at least bring them up to date with where I landed on it and share with them my contribution from today and thoughts about the bill, wherever it lands. So, thank you to those community members who have done that. It's been particularly difficult, I think, for a lot of community members from all sides of the issue to share some of the personal information they've shared. I respect that people will be willing to do that because of their strong feelings and strong advocacy on the issue. It's much appreciated.

With that I'll move to my contribution. Certainly, this is a bill that I strongly support and I fervently hope that it will be passed by this Chamber this week. Having said that, I recognise that this bill has been a matter of some controversy and one that has significant consequences for many Tasmanians on both sides of the question the bill presents us with. That question is: is greyhound racing an activity that as a community we find acceptable and believe should continue? That's at the core of the premise here. Will we ban greyhound racing with this bill? I believe the answer to that, from the strong majority of Tasmanians, is no. Greyhound racing is no longer compatible with our contemporary understanding of animal welfare and animal safety standards, so no, it's not an activity that we as a community continue to find acceptable and believe should continue.

There's a lot of contention that relates to the way in which the government policy to end greyhound racing in Tasmania came about, and I understand that. We've discussed that situation earlier in the year when we noted the report of the Joint Standing Committee on Greyhound Racing Transition, the inquiry it had into the bill. There was much discussion about the circumstances around this government policy coming into play. I acknowledge that the policy was an abrupt turnaround from the Premier post-election in 2025, announced as part of efforts to secure government, and it was a reversal of the assurances that the Premier had given to greyhound racing participants immediately prior to the election. That is an incredibly problematic set of circumstances to be progressing a policy. I absolutely accept that and really understand and can relate to the distress that has caused and continues to cause people in the industry. It wasn't a fair way to go about that.

I regard that as being something that the government and particularly the Premier is responsible for explaining, reconciling and justifying. I don't intend to do that on his behalf, and I can't do that on his behalf. Personally, I have had a longstanding position supporting the end of greyhound racing in Tasmania and regardless of how the Premier and the government arrived at their policy, I know it to be an evidence-based proposition. It's aligned with community sentiment and I believe it's the right way forward for Tasmania.

The committee's inquiry on the bill across last summer published a report that made recommendations for amendments to the bill, which the government has been receptive to including and progressing as we consider the bill here. If we get to committee stage, consider those amendments and adopt them into the bill, I believe it will make it a better bill. I'm pleased that the committee work that was done in its inquiry on the bill, and the government's receptivity to progressing recommendations made there, ultimately have delivered, I think, a better legislative outcome for us to be considering.

The committee's done further work, of course, during the year and has published another report on that further work plan that it had mapped out, including some consideration of the draft transition plan that was produced by the Racing Integrity Commissioner and released publicly just a few months ago. Now we see the bill come back to this Chamber for debate.

Sitting suspended from 4.00 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.

GREYHOUND RACING LEGISLATION AMENDMENTS (PHASING OUT REFORM) BILL 2025 (No. 66)

Second Reading

Resumed from above (page xx).

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Before the break, I was just reflecting on the fact of the committee's work during the year on the bill and on matters relating to the bill, and the fact that the bill now comes back to this Chamber and we have a great deal more information available to inform members' consideration of it. People have been able to put forward a great deal more information from whatever side of this issue they sit on. I might take a moment here to make some comments about the Joint Standing Committee on Greyhound Racing Transition, mainly to respond to what I believe are unwarranted criticisms of that committee.

The JSC has been referred to as 'stacked' in both Houses, a particularly unfortunate way for it to be described. It's an affront to the processes of this Chamber, certainly, which is the only one I can comment on in establishing membership of committees. We have a fairly straightforward process here that I don't believe anyone can accuse of risking things being stacked. Certainly, it's a practice of our Chamber to call for nominations for committee positions and, if required, we have a secret ballot to determine and select membership. My recollection is that a ballot wasn't required for positions on the JSC for the greyhound racing transition. In fact, I only put my hand up for it so that numbers could be made up, in fact. I was essentially press-ganged into it, is my recollection. That's hardly stacking a committee. Just to be really clear, I'm not reflecting on the other place and the way they do things, but that was an unfair criticism and really an affront to this place to describe us in that way.

Beyond refuting any suggestion of stacking the committee in this Chamber, I want to state clearly I stand by the work of the committee as a member of that committee. The committee purposefully ensured that balanced evidence was sought and collected at each of its inquiry processes. I very much appreciate the evidence provided by greyhound industry participants and representatives. I believe that evidence was given fair consideration and prominence in reports of the committee. In particular the committee's report on the bill published earlier this year took great pains to recommend a raft of amendments to the bill that would better address concerns that were raised, particularly by industry participants, in the evidence we took. Those recommended amendments were largely accepted by the government and are going to be presented to us for consideration during the committee stage, I believe, should the bill move through to that stage. I would assert that that was good work by the committee and has delivered better outcomes for all sides of this matter.

I similarly stand by the work done and the report published on the further work plan that the committee undertook during the year. Again, I believe that evidence was taken and considered by the committee and reported on in a fair, balanced way and it delivered good recommendations. Importantly in fact, the overarching recommendation of the committee from that work plan report just recently was that debate on the Greyhound Racing Legislation Amendments (Phasing Out Reform) Bill 2025 be resumed at the earliest opportunity to end the uncertainty for industry participants and Tasmanians who support a well-planned transition to end greyhound racing. In fact, I believe that categorical message from the committee in that recommendation was instrumental in prompting the government to bring the bill back on for debate this week here now. That is certainly what I regard as positive and constructive work from the committee and I stand by it.

For me, a key consideration underpinning the policy to end greyhound racing in Tasmania is that of a social licence and it's one that gets much discussed. Broadly, we know factually that Australia is an outlier globally on this matter. There are very few jurisdictions anywhere in the world that allow greyhound racing. We also know, factually, that when Tasmanians have been asked about this issue, a vast majority, 74 per cent thereabouts, have clearly stated that they also want to see an end to greyhound racing.

To be clear, yes, a social licence is an intangible thing to some extent, but it is commonly regarded to be the ongoing informal acceptance and trust that a community and affected stakeholders grant to an organisation, project or industry. It's not like a legal permit or a government licence. It's not something we sign up to as a community, it's unwritten, but it must be earned and it must be maintained over time. You can have a social licence and then lose it down the track when circumstances change or evolve, or community sentiment changes and

evolves. To maintain a social licence, an industry or an activity must have legitimacy, credibility and trust in the eyes of the community. What we know is that, as far as three in four Tasmanians are concerned, greyhound racing no longer has those.

Certainly, the immense animal welfare issues associated with greyhound racing over time, dodgy operators that in many instances in every jurisdiction over time have come to light. Certainly, here in around 2016-17 there was a real spotlight on that and that was deeply damaging to the public perception of this industry. While some improvements have subsequently been made to the regulation and oversight of the industry, this has not been enough to restore legitimacy, credibility and trust in the eyes of the Tasmanian community. Especially when we see animal welfare issues reported, still, poor data collection in this industry - and I'll speak about that perhaps more later - and transparency issues, which, quite frankly, some of those involved in this activity still appear to be dodgy operators, certainly not all of them, certainly not, nobody is asserting such a thing, but some.

And I feel for the participants in this industry who are good faith and well-intentioned, and for whom greyhound racing is a key social personal activity and a source of support and engagement. Unfortunately for those participants, not only have the efforts to lift standards been, I think, too little too late in the eyes of the community, there is nothing that can be done to remove the fundamental and irrevocable harm present in greyhound racing. And, quite frankly, community expectations and ethical standards have moved on. Persistent high risk of harm to racing dogs for the purpose of entertainment and the facilitation of gambling simply no longer has a social licence in this state. The rest of the world knows that. Every year fewer and fewer countries and regions permit greyhound racing. Only a small handful remain. This is a dying sport, because we no longer regard dogs dying to be sport. We recognise it as animal cruelty.

The inherent risk of serious injury and death in greyhound racing is inescapable. There is an inherent and high risk of serious injury and death for racing dogs. Running at high speed in a pack, especially around an oval track, makes it inevitable that some dogs will incur catastrophic injuries and some dogs will die as a result. In the racing life of a dog, the risk of serious injury and death is significant. There is no denying this, and there is no way to mitigate it successfully.

I'm not going to delve into data at this point. Data around this is highly problematic, highly problematic. There are all sorts of ways that data can be manipulated, and I think it is manipulated by both sides of this equation. I think animal welfare advocates can manipulate data to cast certain injuries as looking more serious than they are, potentially, or to inflate numbers of injuries. But we also know the industry misuses data in a way that is misleading. It's really immaterial to talk about injuries as a proportion of starts because what we really want to know - and this is something I interrogated in the committee process with the chief vet for the racing industry in this state - what I want to know, and there's no data on this really, is, when a dog goes into the racing industry, what are the proportionate likelihoods that, by the time it reaches the end of its racing life, it is dead, successfully rehomed, or floating in a questionable space because it's unable to be rehomed and is waiting for a period of time? We can't answer that question. Data isn't available or isn't collected in the right way to give me an answer to that question. I think that that would be a meaningful way for us to understand what this risk is.

Regardless of data, it's inescapable that when dogs race in this way they are at risk of serious injury and they are at risk of death because those things occur and I ask proponents of greyhound racing, what is the acceptable level of risk for serious injury and death to racing dogs? Where do we peg that? If you're supportive of current greyhound racing in Tasmania, then clearly, you regard the current level of risk of serious injury and death to dogs as acceptable because you're participating in it. If the current level of risk of serious injury and death to dogs is not acceptable, that is, it's too high, then you should specify what you regard as an acceptable level of risk and how that level of risk could be achieved. That is, what measures could be required to reliably reduce the risk to your specified level that's acceptable? Quite frankly, it's simply not good enough for greyhound racing industry participants to say that, 'Of course, we should keep doing all we can to reduce the risk of serious injury and death to dogs,' yet articulate no specific level of acceptable risk, nor any evidence-based guaranteed ways to achieve such a level.

A red herring that regularly comes up in this discussion is the assertion that if we want to ban greyhound racing based on the risk of harm to dogs, then we will inevitably want to ban other racing codes such as harness or thoroughbred racing. The high risk of serious injury and death in greyhound racing is distinct from other racing codes. The fundamental difference is the absence of any human control during the course of the race to direct and control the pace and the placement of the dogs on the track and in relation to each other. In harness racing you have a driver. In thoroughbred racing you have a jockey. In both those circumstances it is the human in control and directing the way the animal is racing, specific to the conditions of each individual race. There is a distinct difference, and it is instrumental in why a call for a ban on greyhound racing does not equate to a call to end those other codes.

Another red herring that crops up, often in an effort to downplay the inherent risk in greyhound racing, is the assertion from some people that greyhounds in the community as pets, running on the beach or in parks, are also at risk of and sustain injuries. I find this disingenuous, if not mischievous. Of course, it is correct to say that pet dogs, including pet greyhounds, may incur injuries at home and in community and social settings. However, these injuries will in almost no circumstances be comparable to the catastrophic injuries that occur with regularity on a racing track. In fact, the only catastrophic high impact kinetic injury comparable to those seen on a racetrack - and I'm not talking about the broken toenails on a racetrack, I'm talking about the catastrophic injuries - the only comparable to that that may be incurred by a dog in a non-racing setting out in the community would be one where the dog is hit by a car and seriously injured or killed. Yes, some racing injuries are broken toenails or pulled muscles, but regularly, too regularly in my view, they are also racing injuries which are extreme, devastating and life ending. That is why the large majority of Tasmanians want to see greyhound racing end, I believe. That is why this industry has lost its social licence.

It's interesting - the animal welfare question is a complex one, and I will just make a couple of other points about animal welfare before I move on to other matters. Animal welfare isn't just the absence of abuse or the absence of overt harm. Animal welfare is well understood in a complex scientific framework, and it's evaluated across five domains. It's evaluated across nutrition, physical environment, health, behavioural interactions and mental state. Across those five domains, it's regularly found that the greyhound racing industry cannot and does not meet the standards that would be assessed to be adequate and acceptable. When we're talking about animal welfare, it's not just a matter of was somebody reported for something overt and abusive or incredibly neglectful; it's are they delivering animal welfare outcomes for their animals across those five domains?

The other thing about some matters to do with animal welfare in the greyhound racing industry is people talk about things that occur to greyhounds as being things that occur to just normal dogs out there in the community as well. To some extent, sometimes that's true, but there's also some things that are particularly prone to occur to greyhounds and particularly to racing greyhounds. For example, twisted bowels is one of those things. GDV, which is the twisted stomach, is more likely to occur to a greyhound because of their build, their deep, narrow chests, the way that their bowel sits within their body; but also apart from that physical propensity, there are also known risk factors for twisted bowel. Those known risk factors include intense physical exertion, stress, feeding and hydration routines that can exacerbate it, and they are all risk factors that can lead to twisted bowel. I would say that when we say perhaps a greyhound has died or had to be euthanised because of twisted bowel, for example, and that shouldn't be attributed to greyhound racing, we can't say that it wasn't attributable to greyhound racing because what we know about greyhounds and their propensity for that, and the risk factors that are inherent then in that activity, it may well have been attributable to greyhound racing.

Euthanasia I know is a sensitive topic and it's distressing for a lot of people within the industry and within the community. I have no doubt that for industry participants who find themselves in a position of having to euthanise a dog, whether that's directly because of a track accident or whether it's because of other circumstances in their care for their animal at home, it's awful. It must be awful. I think all of our hearts go out to people who are experiencing that. But I don't believe we can accept that euthanasia for, for example, dogs who are catastrophically injured on the track is comparable to euthanasia generally in the community or say by the RSPCA when they're putting down dogs that they have under their care. I think the member for Elwick listed out in her contribution the factors that are considered in relation to euthanasia by the RSPCA for dogs in their care and to some extent made a comparison of euthanasia of dogs in the greyhound racing industry that somehow they're equally justified. Yes, if my dog was catastrophically injured from racing around a track, of course the compassionate thing is that they would be euthanised. But they were putting that position because I chose to put them in that position as a trainer or owner or both and race them in that way to put them in direct risk of that harm. That's not the situation for the dogs necessarily at the RSPCA and it becomes difficult if we try to make too many of these cross comparisons, I think.

My preference and what I have done is tried to not go down too many rabbit holes with these considerations and try to stay firmly focused on the core question and the core activity here. I'm familiar from other policy areas when people want to argue against a policy position, they'll point to other things that are similar but not the same and say, 'Well, why aren't we doing something about that instead of this thing?' Or, 'If we're going to do something about this thing, we'd have to do something about these two other things over here that are similar.' That may well be true, but it shouldn't be a reason not to do the thing you have in front of you that the policy relates to; that we have a clear path forward on.

Typically, if you tackle the matter that's in front of you in a way that's evidence-based and clear, that has a good policy foundation to it, and move forward with that, that will likely open up further opportunities down the track to address some of those similar but not entirely the same matters and improve things on other fronts. Certainly, for me, in other areas that I'm quite passionate about, that's something I believe is also true. When people say we can't do poker machine reform, for example, because why wouldn't we be doing something about online

gambling? Well, it's not an either/or. If you have a proposition in front of you, you pursue that one, then when opportunities arise, you pursue the other.

Back to this bill. There's a myriad of issues and points that get raised in connection to this policy to end greyhound racing in Tasmania in 2029 and in this in this bill. They've come up all the way through, in correspondence with us, during the committee process, all sorts of matters. In this contribution today and in the interests of time, I certainly don't intend to forensically examine all of them. I don't believe that's necessary or appropriate here. However, I want to briefly comment on a couple of matters: firstly, the linking of the ban on greyhound racing to the future viability of the other two Tasmanian racing codes.

I don't believe there is a valid argument to keep greyhound racing operating in order to subsidise the other two racing codes. While greyhound racing appears to be the more financially viable of the three codes in Tasmania, it still relies heavily on government subsidies and can't stand on its own financial merits. Beyond that, it's not my view that the significant harm caused to racing greyhounds and the serious animal welfare concerns connected to greyhound racing should be outweighed by any potential negative impact on the other two codes. The viability or otherwise of harness racing and thoroughbred racing are a separate matter to be addressed. The government, I believe, is currently working on a new funding deed for those two codes, and I have no doubt that stakeholders and advocates are working hard to achieve a good outcome in negotiations around that new deed/s. Again, I would encourage people to focus on the matter at hand and address those other concerns as standalone issues in their own right. Why should the harm to dogs cross-subsidise other industries, or be regarded as appropriately cross-subsidising other industries?

I've also heard industry stakeholders assert that they are continuing to tighten regulations and standards and oversight, and that that will deliver acceptable welfare and safety outcomes for racing dogs, so we keep moving down that track. That's not a proposition I regard as sound. There is no regulatory and oversight regime in any jurisdiction that is, or could be regarded as, sufficient to deliver acceptable welfare and safety outcomes for racing dogs. Every single time there's been an independent review or investigation of the greyhound racing industry in any Australian jurisdiction, there is a raft of recommendations made for improvements to regulation, to standards and to oversight and to further work that should be done. Nobody is given an absolutely glowing bill of health to say, 'Yep, that's entirely acceptable as is.' Those recommendations from those reviews are often, in other jurisdictions, not implemented in full; in some cases not at all. So, we see a continual process over and over again of having to go back with more reviews and more investigations. All the while, dogs continue to be seriously injured and to die.

In cases where recommendations are implemented, there are often improvements made, but not to a degree that adequately removes welfare and safety issues. These issues continue to be raised as unacceptable and often become the subject of further review, an investigation perhaps down the track. As others have commented, and is as plain as day, the fundamental viability of the greyhound racing industry, if it were claiming such viability, is only delivered through the inextricable relationship it has with gambling. Gambling, straight up, is a harmful activity and it is my view that any industry that is reliant on gambling for its viability is not overall a positive presence in our community. The greyhound racing industry will never be in a position to extricate itself from this absolute entanglement with gambling as its foundation. On that basis alone, I would argue for an end to this industry.

The bill mandates a transition plan or, I think in the bill it's called a closure plan. We've seen a draft version of a transition plan be prepared as part of informing people of how things would be undertaken as the transition went forward, if and when the bill was passed. The Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner's working group provided input into the draft transition plan that had representation on that group from Tasracing, from the animal welfare sector and from the general community. There were no industry representatives on that working group because they chose not to be part of it until after the bill passes, if it passes. I understand that; that makes sense. I do believe, though, that there were very active efforts made to still interact with industry representatives to feed into the considerations being made by the working group. That certainly wasn't a shut door. There's also been a period of time provided for public consultation on that draft plan that was facilitated through the minister.

My understanding is the purpose of the transition plan, quite plainly, actually, is to ensure a high level of support for participants and for animal welfare throughout the transition process.

The plan has what I think are five fairly clear and worthwhile objectives. They are to:

(1) Safeguard greyhound welfare, including through implementing updates to applicable greyhound rules and policies and other welfare standards, including alignment with this bill

(2) Establish a model for greyhound racing in Tasmania to be reduced and phased out over the transition period in line with the expiry of the Tasracing funding deed, the government policy and this bill, and it maps out how such a reduction and phase-out would or could occur

(3) Support participants through the transition period and beyond, including through a framework of wellbeing support, financial assistance and workforce transition programs

There's good detail on those matters in the draft transition plan.

(4) Ensure the retirement and rehoming of all greyhounds in the Tasmanian racing industry, including through the support of the rehoming programs and other programs and services

This is a really essential one and it's a major challenge that's part of any transition proposition, so it's well laid out in the draft transition plan.

(5) The strong and effective communication with stakeholders, in particular participants, Tasracing, animal welfare groups and the broader community, and the establishment of an appropriate legacy initiative that recognises the contributions and history of the greyhound racing industry in Tasmania.

Those are the five objectives of the transition plan which, to my mind, should provide a really decent level of detail at this point in time on those areas of how we would move forward, if and when the bill is passed.

The plan also sets up regulation financial assistance models and models for how financial assistance could be undertaken, funding requirements that will be there - and I won't go into the granular detail on each of those, other than to observe that I believe the draft transition plan provides clarity on how the transition arrangements will be dealt with in a framework sense, and importantly, provides some clear indications of how compensation or financial assistance will be managed.

We also know that amendments the government intends to bring to the bill, if we take it through to Committee stage, will legislate in quite a lot of detail requirements of what will be in a closure plan. That will include not just the financial assistance models and mechanisms, but the amounts and things will be in there as well for both industry and for funding the care and rehoming of greyhounds. Legislating the detail that's in those amendments I think is really positive. I'm really pleased to see those amendments brought to us and we'll discuss them, no doubt, in detail if we get to the committee stage. I know that there's also now an amendment to make the ultimate closure plan a disallowable instrument to be laid before both Chambers of parliament and that, I think, is an important accountability that provides a great deal of oversight of what is ultimately in that plan and then any further amendments that become made to it, potentially.

For those participants who do not want greyhound racing to come to an end, I'm sure they will still take issue with the draft transition plan and with any future closure plan, should the bill pass. The key measure in assessing these plans is not whether those industry participants are entirely happy with it because, respectfully, that would be impossible because, understandably, many of those participants don't want this outcome, don't want their industry to end. So, I believe the key measures for assessing these plans should be the following questions. Does the transition plan or the closure plan provide clarity and confidence in what is going to occur and how it's going to occur? Does the transition process laid out in the plan treat industry participants fairly and appropriately? And does it address animal welfare concerns adequately? And of course, the success of the transition plan will also rest on adequate funding from the government. It is on the government to commit to that and to deliver on its commitment. All of us, no doubt, feel similar levels of concern about relying on any commitment from this government. Of course we do. Yes, that's really understandable.

I note a couple of things on that front. We don't just have to rely on the commitments made verbally by the government. We know that in the amendments being proposed to this bill, there is going to be a higher level of accountability about funding amounts and about bringing those to this parliament. I also note in evidence provided to the Joint Standing Committee, the minister said this just recently in a hearing. I'm going to quote from the minister on this matter of allocation of funding for transition. He said,

> The $4.8 million is the existing budget allocation which is a provision to get the transition process developed and underway. With the transition plan now in hand, we've been able to do some more work on what it will likely cost and what the budget will need to be for that.
>
> Now, that won't be something that we can finalise fully until the bill is passe and we know what the timing is of the commencement of the transition and we know of any changes that might happen to the bill through its final stages through the parliament.

> Just like the transition plan itself, it is proposed a draft and we're looking at the cost in question in the same context. That work is underway and we are looking at an additional funding ask that will be put through the normal budget process. That might be something which commences with the upcoming budget and is then added to over successive budgets as we understand the way that people are moving through the transition.

Just for reference, that quote from the hearing is also in the work plan report of the committee on page 28, if people want to see the context it is discussed in by the committee.

Of course, it's also on this parliament and this Chamber, as well as the other place, to hold the government to account on those commitments and we will be able to do so very actively through a disallowable instrument in the closure plan, not to mention in state budget scrutiny.

I know we have amendments to be proposed to the bill which even further tighten up a mandate legislatively, matters relating to the plan, and I'm very pleased to see that. I'm not going to go through each element of the bill in detail. I don't intend to speak about that in a granular way. We will have the committee stage to be examining and asking questions and discussing that further, especially in relation to amendments. I just note the range of matters that are covered by the bill, which I think helps illustrate why its passage is essential for there to be a careful and supported transition to the end of greyhound racing in Tasmania.

So, noting that the bill covers a ban on the activity of greyhound racing and clarity has been provided on the fact, I think, that this will not capture some other activities that were discussed earlier on and we've moved further down the road with clarity around that. There's a ban on keeping a dog for use in greyhound races or commercial dog races. There's a ban on selling or supplying a dog to another person if that person intends to have the dog participate in greyhound racing or dog racing. It's a ban on breeding greyhounds except for the purpose of being a domestic pet. The bill provides powers for the oversight and regulation during the transition period through to the end of greyhound racing. It mandates a closure plan to be prepared by the commissioner and approved by the minister. There's a requirement to obtain Tasracing consent for the transfer of greyhounds to other jurisdictions during the transition period. Rules relating to the retirement of greyhounds and the destruction of greyhounds during the transition period are in the bill, or the need for rules, and a ban on breeding greyhounds during the transition period is there in the bill. Consequential amendments are made by the bill to a variety of other pieces of legislation to reflect the end of greyhound racing and make adjustments needed, where relevant, in other pieces of legislation.

In that sense, I believe the bill covers a comprehensive array of areas to ensure that this is a careful and planned process. It's essential for the bill to be passed for it to be a careful and planned process. If the policy persists in the absence of this bill passing, it won't be a careful and planned process. It will be a very messy process and a dangerous one, and I think that would be a very regrettable situation. There's a much harder path forward, I think, including for industry participants, if the bill doesn't pass and we see a persistence of the policy and have to bring it to an end through other means that haven't been carefully legislated and supported. I believe that if we're able to make further amendments today to strengthen the bill even further, I will regard this as a very sound piece of legislation. Not only that, it's a necessary piece of legislation to deliver that safe and supportive transition for people and for dogs involved in greyhound racing in our state.

To conclude, I want to acknowledge the very human aspects of this issue. If this bill passes, I acknowledge its effect will be felt very deeply by Tasmanians currently involved in the greyhound racing industry. I know that many of those participants are decent and genuine people who love and care for their greyhounds. For those Tasmanians, the passage of this bill would have a very large impact on their lives. There are also human aspects to the other side of this issue. I acknowledge those Tasmanians who are involved in animal welfare organisations and community members who provide care and support to dogs retired from greyhound racing. The passage of this bill would have a significant impact on these people and would require the involvement and support of many more Tasmanian community members to meet the rehoming task ahead.

And, of course, alongside the human aspects to this issue, for me, the core aspect of this issue is that of animal welfare and safety. With that consideration at the heart of it, as far as I am concerned, there is simply no other option than to support this bill so that it may assist in delivering a humane and careful transition to the end of greyhound racing in this state in 2029. On that basis, I hope we'll be able to pass this bill this week in this place, and I certainly put my support firmly behind this bill.

[5.09 p.m.]

Mr GAFFNEY (Mersey) - Mr President, I rise to speak on the Greyhound Racing Legislation Amendments (Phasing Out Reform) Bill of 2025. I've heard much in his space from the government, the opposition, Greens and Independents, as well as many members of our community. I thank all of those who have written to me and met with me, sharing their thoughts and experiences of greyhounds and greyhound racing, both for and against the intent of this legislation. I also acknowledge the contributions of other members in this place, an opportunity to listen, to learn and to reflect. This is not an easy task, but it demonstrates that members in this place do the work and are mindful of different views and generally respectful in their deliberations.

This is one of those pieces of legislation where there is no doubt there will be varying degrees of satisfaction, disgruntlement and disappointment on all sides, regardless of the outcomes. I've tried to respond to all those who have contacted me in, and in a timely manner. No matter your perspective on the subject, it is a less than ideal situation to impulsively put a historic activity such as greyhound racing and the various community organisations that go with it out of operation. The bill goes even further and prohibits what the bill defines as a commercial dog race with other breeds, a footnote with major consequences for recreational dog sports. The supreme irony in the introduction of the bill is the government's [inaudible 5.10.33] face in what was its declared support for greyhound racing.

I've always been keen to make certain that the language and phrasing I use in my work is clear and unambiguous - and I'll try to slow down, I know that's one of my issues - as there is nothing worse than having to follow up a comment that's been taken out of context or misconstrued. However, the Premier's response to a question in the other place on 5 March 2026 left no doubt to his opinion of greyhound owners and the greyhound fraternity. I quote the Premier directly from the *Hansard* of that day:

> You are being played by cashed-up mainland greyhound thugs. Mainland greyhound thugs [that] want to stop the ban on greyhounds. They are playing with him and you are dancing to Mr Winter's tune. That's what it is all about:

it is about trying to stop the ban on greyhounds in Tasmania. That's where it is at; I will have nothing of it and I will support my minister to the hilt.

As politicians, we are keenly aware of the proper use of language. Words are our currency, our stock in trade. They are tools of rational debate as essential elements in making a point. If we use them well, we can persuade others to consider our position, to pierce the hyperbole and encourage them to support an argument they might not have considered.

However, the Premier's choice of words and phrasing has a degree of violence about them that's taken many of us by surprise as an unexpected and unwelcome outburst. If we look to the dictionary definition of a 'thug', it is 'a violent, aggressive person, especially one who is criminal'. The Premier's use of such a term is anything but persuasive rhetoric in what is a highly-sensitive and polarising debate. It was definitely out of character, perhaps bad advice, or is it what the Premier really thinks of the greyhound community?

There are experts in what words mean, where they come from and how they are used. There are lexicographers and etymologists who have a keen interest in the definitions, history and origin of words and how these have changed over time. When we talk about greyhounds and dogs, how they are defined matters. Modern-day interpretations and inferences can muddle the reality of what we are discussing, sometimes with deliberate intent. The RSPCA is keenly aware of the power of words and how best to use them, especially so in its advocacy, and it's no accident that it has focused on defining greyhounds as dogs. So far, so good.

It is an indisputable fact that 'dog' is the common name for *Canis lupus familiaris*. However, whilst a hound is a dog, a dog is not always a hound. The difference comes in its purpose, its character and capabilities. Hounds are a distinct group within the wide spectrum of canine breeds we call dogs. Hounds uniquely have exceptional abilities to track and chase live prey with two core subgroups: scent hounds and sighthounds. A beagle is your classic scent hound, bred to blindly follow the scent of her hare as part of a pack of fellow beagles. They are noisy, long-distance, high-stamina pacers of the hound world. I got second prize in the Sprent show with my hound, my beagle, when I was about six. Nowadays, their scenting ability is most often used as our points of entry to make sure people don't bring in prohibited items from the mainland or beyond.

Greyhounds and whippets are the sighthound specialists. They spot movement from a considerable distance and instinctively give chase in high-speed pursuit. They are the sprinters of the hound world, with deep chests, narrow waists and lots of muscle. When not fired up in a sprinting mode, and as acknowledged by their owners, greyhounds happily spend most of their time snoozing in their beds.

There are other breeds of dogs that hunt but are not hounds. Think of spaniels, labradors and terriers. Then we get dogs that work with livestock, such as collies and kelpies. Each has a unique role to play in our world.

What unites them all is that these are working dogs that have been bred since time immemorial to have certain characteristics and abilities unique to that breed. The owners and breeders of these animals are specialists in each breed. They know and love them. They understand how a breed dog ticks, what they love doing and how to get the best out of them.

Anyone that has owned a working breed of dog has experienced the raw excitement of anticipation, the quivering excitement when a terrier sees a rat, or the stillness of a collie that intuitively herds groups of anything, be it sheep, ducks or even people. Greyhounds are the same. When they get to a race day, they know exactly what is happening. There is a visible excitement in anticipation of chasing the lure as a pack alongside other greyhounds. It is what they love to do and it's pure adrenaline in anticipation of the chase. I've heard this from many people, those who are breeders and owners of greyhounds, and those who are their carers from GAP situations. A retired lecturer in animal behaviour neatly summarised the quandary:

> Unfortunately, there are misguided and ignorant people who have no scientific background or first-hand experience of dog training and who imagine that dogs have the same priorities as their own. They do not acknowledge that a sporting breed of dog, which has a highly heritable trait - that is to chase moving objects - should be allowed to exercise that trait. The safest venues for greyhounds to exhibit their instincts is on a racetrack. [TBC]

I'd also like to quote this excerpt from an email that I think sums up some of the differences in animal racing:

> Yet racing is to be illegal for them in Tasmania, while dachshund - a digging breed - racing is celebrated. At shows there are ducks racing - running is not a duck's best ability. Horses run for safety and need a rider to encourage and guide them. The greyhound is the one animal whose physique is all about racing but is now not allowed to unless it is in another state. How is that fair? [TBC]

Perhaps we need to separate the pleasure that greyhounds get in racing from the commercial side. Greyhounds love to race and the people that own and breed them love seeing them at their best. At its core, greyhound racing allows them to enjoy their instinctive behaviours in a controlled environment. The question then becomes how it can be managed in such a way that the industry is both ethical and sustainable, and in such a way that even the RSPCA could endorse it. As one greyhound enthusiast stated:

> I, like everyone else in the greyhound community, was shocked and despairing when the Premier made this announcement in August following the election. We obviously recognise it was a politically expedient move for him to obtain power. However, the total injustice of his deal to destroy so many people's lives and create havoc, and perhaps the worst effect was to condemn those beautiful animals to a decidedly uncertain and unsafe future, was just incomprehensible. It seemed that the extremists continually campaigning and using the lies and hyperbole of the animal liberation movement had somehow become fact, when a simple checking of the kennels, of recent rule changes, and speaking to the actual greyhound participants of clubs, was never even considered.
>
> The objection to greyhounds racing is founded on ignorance and political agendas. The welfare of greyhounds is paramount in this whole debacle and has not been considered or handled in any practical way at all. [TBC]

As all members have said, we must always ensure the welfare of greyhounds involved in racing. However, the regulatory oversight must be based on objective, evidence-based information and not rely on conjecture, anecdote and subjective opinion. Sadly, the kneejerk proposal for an absolute ban has overlooked the vulnerable communities. It has overreacted and failed to implement a responsible and realistic scheme of transition. Even now we've had to rely on last-minute intervention from this place, at the end of last year, to force an urgent inquiry into the transitional arrangements of the bill and the latest exit EOI process is a farce.

When people make arguments about the greyhound fraternity and the community support for greyhounds, there is an interesting tendency to leave contextually relevant information out. As an example, the constituent raised the point that while many Tasmanians support a phase-out, there is also evidence to indicate that the primary reason is to ensure the welfare of the animals and not necessarily to prohibit the activity. Despite the emphasis proponents of the ban have on welfare, there is no clear plan for what will happen to greyhounds, despite a supposed focus on their welfare.

How is the government enacting what people want if they aren't giving mind to the priorities in the very polling which they and their proponents rely upon? Like all poll results as mentioned by the member for Nelson, it is always interesting to look beyond the media release and examine the methodology, especially when the August 2025 EMRS poll, taken just a few days after the Premier's fateful announcement, produced an outcome that stated 74 per cent of respondents were more than likely to phase out of greyhound racing, is a statistic so widely cited that's clearly become well accepted justification of that position. So far so good, one might think. Yet the greyhound question was just one in a mash up of many others to a pre-parliament poll. A poll taken in the middle of the Premier's wheeling and dealing as he tried to glue together the pieces of his shattered government.

Back to the methodology, the EMRS poll used a purely online sign-up based survey with 503 participants, fewer than the standard representative sample of 1100. The poll's research sample profile is instructive, with an education section that saw 44 per cent of the 503 respondents with a undergraduate or postgraduate university degree. According to the 2021 census, for regional Tasmania the number is less than a third of that, 16.2 per cent with an undergraduate or postgraduate university degree. The other end of the educational spectrum is also concerning. The EMRS sample had seven out of 503 with no formal qualifications, just 1 per cent, whereas it is 43 per cent in regional Tasmania relying on their initiative with their own work and life experience. The EMRS poll says these figures are weighted and that 'quotas and weighting were used in order for the sample to be representative by age group, gender, region, electorate and education'. What intrigues me is how this sample came to be so different to regional Tasmania, where most of the greyhound community is based. Has EMRS found itself a unique cohort of Tasmanians where 44 per cent have a university degree and with just 1 per cent with nothing? I wonder what industries or government departments would match that breakdown. Are we talking UTAS, DPAC or even DECYP? If only the poll had better reflected Tasmanian's regional reality, we might be more trusting of its results.

Ms Webb - That's what weighting is.

Mr GAFFNEY - Sadly, we're left with the opinions of academics who enjoy responding to online surveys and redeeming their EMRS rewards for doing so. Nonetheless, I acknowledge and recognise that there are many Tasmanians who, for different reasons, support shutting down of the greyhound racing.

With all talk of welfare, there is little to no information from the government on monitoring the welfare of greyhounds after a ban is enacted. How will removing the current healthcare and reporting schemes protect greyhound welfare? It has been suggested that once greyhounds are banned from racing, they'll be able to run in parks, open dog exercise areas and with other dogs. This will not result in fewer injuries, but likely more as they sprint in uncontrolled environments. Following any such injuries, there's little legal requirement for amateur owners to take them to the vet or any indication they will have the necessary skills and experience to manage them. I must ask if the government's considering a licencing system for the owners of retired greyhounds, complete with statutory expectations to ensure their proper welfare and husbandry.

Mr President, these concerns are examined in public submissions from veterinary surgeons to the Joint Standing Committee on Greyhound Racing Transition. I note those from Dr Kim Barrett, Dr Hannah O'Brien, and Dr Claire Sheppard. Their submissions reflected a combined 65 years of professional practice including extensive clinical experience with greyhounds. All three raised deep concerns about the unintended consequences and knock on effects of greyhound welfare if the bill, as currently drafted, is enacted. Dr Hannah O'Brien's conclusion neatly summarises the issue.

> The Greyhound Racing Legislation Amendments (Phasing Out Reform) Bill 2025 will see significant impacts extending beyond the racing industry itself. From a veterinary perspective, my primary concern is the welfare of these racing greyhounds. The proposed bill risks undermining the welfare of greyhounds by dismantling the regulated systems without guaranteeing alternatives. Evidence-based reform guided by animal ethics offers a more reliable pathway to improve the lives of greyhounds over an industry-based phase-out.

I can fully understand the desire for opponents to focus on greyhound welfare, and we should listen to those who have a wholly objective and clinical understanding of greyhound welfare, rather than those with an entirely subjective pseudo-ethical bent. Moving briefly to the Premier's characterisation of those with concerns about the ban as cashed up thugs, equating communities to thugs is truly offensive. How can anyone trust a government which one day publicises its supposed undying support for a community, and then the next day undercuts them, insults them to their face and degrades those concerned about these actions? I would like to share the thoughts of a Tasmanian couple with 43 years of involvement in the lives of greyhounds who wrote to me regarding the reality of having vindictive language used against them.

> The lines that have been put forward and then the insults that have been spread from Mr Rockliff and the Greens have been very distressing. So, I would like to state that I hold a diploma in early education and childcare. My husband is a four-year trained gardener and all of our children completed year 12 and have good jobs, not on knuckle-dragging thug amongst us.

Another Tasmanian wrote a pertinent list of ways in which greyhound racing regulation currently supports the welfare of the hounds; this will not be the case once they are banned. A few quotes from that list,

> In the context of greyhound racing in Tasmania, welfare is promoted through the practice itself and upheld through strict regulation, which is underpinned by effective policing mechanisms. Welfare for greyhounds during racing life in Tasmania is unrivalled in comparison to domestic pets, it is something truly to be proud of. Animal welfare laws in Tasmania are substandard to the rules of racing codes and policies that exist for registered greyhounds. The industry has made significant strides in animal welfare, particularly in the past decade. This includes the implementation of the Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner.

They continue with,

> The proactive disclosure and transparency relate to greyhound breeding injuries, death - including euthanasia - and rehoming is something I truly wished existed for all dogs in Tasmania. These figures reflect the strong commitment to welfare and the improved outcomes that have been delivered in the racing industry, however, are instead weaponised for political power. Based on conversations with two Tasmanian vets, one at Brighton, the other at Battery Point, statistics from Dogs Home of Tasmania, RSPCA and reports on social media, if these figures were made available for domestic pets in Tasmania, the statistics would be truly horrific.

I was involved in the 2016 Joint Select Committee on greyhound racing in Tasmania, which looked to the future of greyhound racing and considering mainland controversies. The report noted lack of evidence for a ban in Tasmania, citing anecdotal hearsay. The report made recommendations on other welfare priorities many have now been implemented. Last year we did have a chance to briefly pause the process and cause the bill to be referred to the Joint Standing Committee on greyhound racing transition for consideration and report. It was unfortunate that the inquiry was only able to consider the transitional arrangements within the bill and nothing beyond that. It did however allow an open submission process, which saw 148, I think, considered submissions.

For me, it was the submission and emails from Mary Bent that caught my particular attention. I felt her correspondence detailing her lived experience were balanced and reflected many of my concerns with the bill. I'd like to share some excerpts of her contributions.

> I'm a person without ties to the racing industry, but one who has had the privilege of owning retired greyhounds for the last 8 years. I made it my responsibility to understand the conditions from which they came. I found that the care they received from the breeders and trainers was exemplary. I've seen the safeguards that exist at greyhound racing events. I'm outraged at the gross injustice that is being perpetrated through the current bill to ban greyhound racing.

Mary put in a detailed and well-considered submission to the inquiry. She read the hearing's transcripts and followed up with a detailed letter to us all that complemented her submission. She said:

> I submitted as a long-term greyhound owner with no involvement in racing, but with first-hand knowledge of how responsibly many Tasmanian

> greyhounds are bred, raised and retired. This experience led me to challenge the assumptions underpinning the bill and to express serious concerns about its lack of clarity, evidence and planning. As I've stated before to you, most of the greyhound community are good, solid and honest people who love their dogs and provide more than satisfactory care of them. It is ridiculous to suggest that someone who's breeding and training an elite athlete so that they perform at their very best should also provide them with poor food, inadequate veterinary care, no stimulation and cramped accommodation. I ask you to arrange to inspect greyhound racing premises and witness a greyhound race, if you have not already done so.
>
> This community does not deserve to be treated as it is. They and their greyhounds are not expendable.
>
> In conclusion, I care for the welfare of greyhounds. I believe that the welfare regime could be strengthened and surveillance improved. I think the number of injuries could be reduced by alternative track design. These are things the greyhound community would welcome, and they are viable alternatives to banning a viable industry that brings income to the state, provides much joy and interest to its community. [TBC]

I encourage us all to revisit her contribution with her inside knowledge of the greyhound community, her love of retired greyhounds and her thoughts on what should be essential components in the bill of this kind. Her point on improving track design is a pertinent one, as I am sure we can all recall the government's decision less than two years ago to abandon plans for a new north-west trotting and greyhound racing venue.

While I can appreciate that others may have different views, the bill has no overall benefit to members of my electorate - the opposite, in fact. Rather, it will have both tangible and intangible costs. It will be challenging for the cashflow of small suppliers, putting vulnerable Tasmanians out of work and damaging the social fabric of regional communities that centre their lives around the love of their greyhounds. There is little to no evidence in modern-day Tasmania to suggest animals are being mistreated. Meanwhile, there is ample evidence that the greyhound community has been scapegoated and vilified so the Premier can assemble a tenuous coalition of conditional support for his government. It's a coalition brought by both the Liberal and Labor Party's abject electoral failures to gain a majority, now twice over, and largely due to the eroding trust of voters in either of them. We now have voters increasingly looking for an independent alternative, one that does not wear party colours.

In fact, another concerned individual wrote to me the following pertinent observation:

> If this industry can be closed despite meeting welfare standards, it sends a clear and concerning signal to all animal-based industries across Australia. Participants will reasonably question whether their own livelihoods could be similarly traded away in the future. Trust between government and industry is critical, and once lost, it is extremely difficult to rebuild. [TBC]

A novel outcome of the bill is that we now have an opposition that is actively opposing the government's actions. Now, that is a fascinating surprise. It's a complete contrast to its stadium policy, in which it simply toes the government line for fear of destabilising it. I must

ask who in the Liberal party holds the view that backstabbing a staunch community partner will bolster their image? How will this place them in the next election? Certainly not as a reliable and trustworthy party, nor one which can be relied upon in regional Tasmania. The new election promise-breaking mantra means the government has a precedent to betray any stakeholder to the altar of their ego and ambition.

As a concerned Pontville resident put in an email to me:

> This policy-by-surprise undermines the trust between the government and regional industries. Tasmanian industries and livelihoods should not become collateral damage of deals made between political parties to retain power.

It is not right that an unviable government chooses to betray and turn on a small community to appease naysaying kingmakers, especially after openly promising only weeks before that it had their back. If the government wanted to do something about the supposedly irredeemable issues that come with a relatively small greyhound racing community, it would also examine the multimillion-dollar horseracing and gaming industries as well. In fact, the government simply turned its back on proposed gaming reforms. These are reforms that would have protected vulnerable Tasmanians from having their money funnelled into multinational companies. Meanwhile, they take great pains to ensure another vulnerable community, the greyhound fraternity, is demolished and ostracised overnight.

Again, if the government want to do something about gambling and racing, the Liberal Party would have tackled the much larger horseracing industry, and dare we even begin to infringe on the sacrosanct AFL industry, complete with its golden halo. As we all know, it is one that has seduced and mesmerised both the government and the opposition with its 'Trust in Me' hypnotic mantra in the *Jungle Book* of political machinations.

Horseracing has always been known as a sport of kings, due to having to bear the expected losses that come from owning and training a horse. These days it's a very different proposition. Gambling industry profits are fed back as fulsome prize money to fuel ever more races, which means ever more betting opportunities and ever more profit. The trend is now even more horses, with more syndicated owners, and so the wheel turns. As it has been suggested to me, the problem challenging the equine enthusiasts is it may directly impact on some members of parliament's personal interests in horseracing and the gambling industry's bottom line, both of which run with this expectation of making money.

Gambling has been the inevitable 'deal with the devil' as far as bringing income into greyhound racing goes. It brings prizemoney and sponsorship. If you love greyhounds and want to make a living racing greyhounds, industry funding keeps food on the table and your greyhounds well looked after. There is an argument that it's an industry to which the gambling side very much is, whereas greyhound racing is very much true vocation, with many family-run operations. So where is the middle ground?

It's an interesting conundrum, as I've never heard of AFL described as an industry - another peculiar use of wording to shape dialogue. This is despite the billions of dollars of taxpayers' money spent on it, including our about-to-be-built bells-and-whistles AFL stadium in Hobart. Then there are the huge amounts of money on sports betting. The AFL individuals can even bet on which player kicks the first goal. On top of this, outlay on the stadium build continues to increase, no end in sight. Of course, the government will continue

to ignore that, and Tuesday's announcement does little to help. Perhaps some sports are more equal than others, especially when we're looking at the top end of town, where money, influence and undiluted power controls the narrative.

Why is it that the wealthy big money interests are exempt from government reform? If we look to greyhound racing, it has always been the sport for working people that can't afford to have a racehorse in training, own a posh sports car or a racing yacht. Is that the real problem? Those families that love greyhounds don't have the financial clout or political power to stand up to governments or to lobby them with grand final tickets or be photographed popping champagne corks on the deck of the winning boat at the end of the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race.

Once it is all said and done, it is unlikely there will be another opportunity to advocate for these local Tasmanian communities. Once those who are agitating for a ban at all costs get what they want, there will be no further incentive for the government to offer any grassroots support. The government will have won its victory and one which will come back to bite them at the next election, as who will be naive enough to ever believe the Premier's promises again?

Those unaffected by the ban will move on, but those who've had their lives, generations of community networks and livelihoods ruined will be forced to deal with the consequences alone, to be shunned by the single-issue victors. One may disagree with the premise of greyhound racing, one may wish it banned, but in its current form, the proposed ban has so much left undecided, and why should they trust the Premier's word?

I cannot, and we should not, allow bad practice, poor faith, unacceptable process and badly thought-out legislation that seeks to pillory hardworking Tasmanians. If this bill goes through as drafted, there'll be no second chances to protect these Tasmanians and the harm done to them. We must remember, the nicely worded transitional 'Phasing Out Reform' bill is actually the 'shutting down of the greyhound community' bill.

I attended a greyhound race day in Hobart early this year in February. The owners and the greyhounds had travelled down from the north-west due to the closure of the Devonport facilities. It was the Devonport race cup day. I did not make a big deal of it, as I wanted to meet greyhound people to see the dogs racing and observe their transport and temporary living conditions. It's my first time attending a race day since I was a child. It was a pleasure to see the Hobart greyhound community stepping up to support the Devonport group. I do not feel the animals were mistreated, rather there were volunteer support staff everywhere, qualified vets in attendance on standby if needed, and the owners were caring and highly respectful of their animals. These are not thugs. Anybody who visits any race kennel event will see this. They are decent, honourable Tasmanians who invested their lives, livelihoods and hearts and souls into their greyhounds. Now they will have this ripped from them, replaced with rhetoric and minimal support.

The anti-greyhound lobby talks of seeking a phased transition away from commercial greyhound racing by 2029. This is doublespeak, as the bill does far more than that. The bill will criminalise any form of competitive dog sport from 2029, be it with greyhounds or any other breed. It goes further and bans the breeding of greyhounds that could possibly race another greyhound, even if it's as a non-commercial and purely recreational activity.

Dogs Tasmania has expressed its concern with the bill as currently written. Its main concerns relate to the increasingly popular amateur dog sports of lure coursing and sprint dog races. Its first official sprint dog trial was held in Brighton on 4-5 April this year. There were so many entries that there had to be a ballot with no certainty of getting a place. Under the provisions of the bill, as drafted, lure coursing as a longer distance competitive race for all breeds and over a marked course in a paddock could also be prohibited.

This problem in the bill is in clause 4 with the insertion of 11C in the principal act and the definition of a 'commercial dog race' and the other subclauses in that clause of the bill that compound the offences. Heaven forbid you want your pet greyhound to participate. We could even be in the absurd situation where local shows and dog owners could be prosecuted for holding fun competitions such as dachshund and terrier races as they would technically fall under the definition of a 'commercial dog race,' as drafted in the bill.

Paraphrasing section 11C, 'commercial dog race' is defined as:

> ... a race between two or more dogs in pursuit of a mechanical or electronic lure, where any one or more of the following occurs:
>
> (a) persons who do not ordinarily reside at the premises are allowed to attend.
> (b) images are displayed outside the premises of the race.
> (c) commentary is broadcast, and
> (d) payment is made for a dog to participate in the race.

In an everyday case we could see someone prosecuted for merely throwing a ball in a dog park that was chased by more than one dog as it would fail the commercial dog race definition of two or more dogs as part (a) [INAUDIBLE 5.42.07] resides in a dog park. If they happen to share a photograph on social media of the ball they chase, they would also fail part (b) about transmitting images electronically; and if they added a caption to the social media post, they would fail part (c) as well. To be fair to the committee of inquiry, it did acknowledge in its fourth recommendation that the clause did need further clarification to be inserted into the bill regarding lure coursing.

I'm not sure the minister's letter to Mr Griff Parry of Lure Coursing Tasmania that was tabled with the committee helped much. Its equivocal nature gave no guarantees that lure coursing and sprint dog racing would not be impacted by the bill. The minister also appeared to conflagrate the definition of a 'commercial dog race' to include certain other actions such as gambling or betting, none of which form any part of the bill or are referenced it in any of its clauses. If the government's beef is really with betting and gambling, then why not include it? Would that open a whole new can of worms?

A constituent wrote to me, and I quote:

> The report notes a letter sent by the Minister of Racing to Lure Coursing Tasmania contended that, based on the advice from NRE Tas, I am pleased to confirm that lure coursing and sprint dog racing not involving greyhounds are not expected to be impacted by the bill. And further states that the *Animal Welfare Act 1993* enables regulations to be made that would exempt lure

> coursing and other dog sports from post-2029 prohibitions on dog racing, point 3.48.
>
> The report does not appear to provide any information that indicated that a greyhound registered with Dogs Australia would be allowed to compete in lure coursing or a sprint dog trial in Tasmania. This is of a concern to me as I've competed with my retired race-bred greyhounds, who are registered with Dogs Australia, in lure coursing trials since 2016 in Victoria and New South Wales. It's quite unfair that my dogs will not be permitted to compete in trials in Tasmania. [TBC]

Given our recent experience of past government promises in letter form, recreational dog sports have every reason to question government hints that everything will be okay and that they can always chat about new rules once the bill is passed. That is a concern for me. The minister goes on to say that recreational dog activities could be regulated to ensure they are undertaken only by approved entities. With that sort of nonsense, we will soon need a licence to let more than one dog chase a ball in a park. The government in its past briefings on the bill did say it would draft suitable regulations to allow recreational dog sports to continue. I would like a guarantee of its exact intent, as the phrasing and communications to date suggest a degree of prescription that will be written into law, rather than the free and open right to organise and take part in recreational dog sports.

If the government's issue is betting on dog races, then simply have section 11C state that rather than relying on the minister's hearsay. If the problem is with gambling, then why ban greyhounds owned as pets from taking part in legal recreational dog sports? Next, it would ban collies from rounding up sheep or a spaniel for flushing a rabbit.

The inquiry did note in its findings that lure coursing involving greyhounds would be banned under clause 4, and, as a concerned Tasmanian wrote,

> Does that mean my retired greyhounds may not compete in lure coursing? My older dogs who have retired, very reluctantly, do on occasion get to chase a lure with other dogs at lure coursing. Will they no longer be allowed to do this? While the changes are advocating that the greyhound has the right to run free on a beach, to the risk of other dogs and beachgoers and the danger of it injuring itself, or developing acidosis, it will not be able to compete at sprint dog trials or lure coursing. This seems a little strange and another example where the bill has not been thought about particularly well.

The restriction is unfair for responsible greyhound owners that simply want to enjoy their hounds in recreational settings. Adding to the quandary were comments in the inquiry report stating that clause 4 did not go far enough and that all races, with or without lures, should be banned. Does this mean that two or more dogs of any breed, naturally racing each other along the beach will mean the arrest and prosecution of their owners? While we're at it, why restrict ourselves to just dogs, as the bill as drafted will prohibit any form of competitive dog sport. Why not pigeon racing, where up to 90 per cent of young racing pigeons can go missing in a single race, never to be seen again. Horse racing of every kind can result in serious injuries. Then we have dressage, show jumping and eventing over extreme obstacles, endurance racing and even ferret racing. They're all competitive activities involving animals, some of which also

include gambling, so why not go for the lot in one, rather than a grinding war of attrition to cut off the most vulnerable before moving on to a fresh target?

What we do have are Tasmanians who love dogs of every breed, each with its own traits and temperaments, both dogs and their owners. What I'm conscious of is the bill as currently drafted, risks criminalising those owners who love to see dogs happily displaying their natural behaviours in an organised, regulated setting. If the government wants to reform what it calls 'the industry,' the professional betting business side of racing, then bring on the bill that will fairly manage that. If the government's beef is what it calls the industry and is determined to shut down the professional side of racing, then bring a bill that addresses that fairly. There is scope to regulate dog sports in such a way that ethical and welfare concerns can be managed in a way that allows animals and their owners to enjoy their instinctive behaviours in a safe environment.

The gambling side of sport is a separate issue for the government to consider and one that perhaps mirrors the dilemma it faces over tobacco taxes. It would be a simple and prudent measure to regulate and restrict access to both tobacco and gambling, but the government cannot resist the income that comes from both, especially with exploding levels of state debt. There are examples where the opponents of the industry recognise the pernicious influence of gambling and suggest alternatives, an email from a dog lover highlights her concerns,

> I believe many greyhound racers love their dogs, but there is no getting away from the fact that racing them is undertaken for the purpose of winning money. With this unquestioned monetary motivation at the heart of the pursuit, the welfare of the animals takes second place and hence they are vulnerable to maltreatment of various kinds. No-one is asking for the banning of greyhounds, just the inhumane and seriously flawed practice of racing them for the purpose of earning money from their valiant efforts.

To my mind, there are two key issues raised with the Tasmanian greyhound industry: the gambling issue and the question of welfare. If the gambling is such a problem, what is stopping the government from going after other Tasmanian gaming products and practices? It leaves horse racing, keno and pokies, which alone generate well over $100 million in gambling tax income to the government, yet the comparatively tiny part of tax revenue that comes from betting on greyhounds apparently deserves the axe, based on what many described as spurious welfare concerns. Perhaps the government has no concerns with the loss of gambling revenue by banning Tasmanian greyhound racing, as it will be recovered by punters simply transferring their betting activity to other sports. The irony is that the newly ethical government will still receive gambling tax income from greyhound racing in other jurisdictions. I wonder if it intends to use those funds for the benefit of those trainers and owners or instead retain them for their own benefit.

The 2009 Tasracing Funding Deed that's to expire in 2029, with just under 20 per cent of that allocated to greyhound racing, is seen as an opportunity to cut costs by the government by phasing out greyhounds. I'm concerned that this funding will simply be absorbed into the equine parts of Tasracing and the lobbying has already started on that very point.

Mr President, this decision, of course, comes on the back of what is now a decade old Joint Select Committee on Greyhound Racing in Tasmania. It is a 2016 report focusing on examining animal welfare issues and practices in greyhound racing. It was an extensive process

with roughly 18 months of deliberations, 40 meetings of the committee and a range of public hearings. The final report of over 300 pages was testament to the wide range of information and detail that went into the inquiry's deliberations, including considerations on the future of greyhound racing. One of its key findings was the committee has not received enough evidence to warrant banning of the greyhound racing industry in Tasmania.

If the government was looking to break an election promise, it would have been a far more prudent move to consider the whole future of greyhound racing in a joint parliamentary committee of inquiry, one that could have built on the 2016 report, complete with the dissenting statements from both our previous and current members for Hobart. A new Committee of Inquiry on greyhound racing would have allowed a well-regulated and transparent structure in which to take and consider evidence, not just anecdotal and unsubstantiated claims. However, the supporters of a ban have taken full advantage of a weakened Premier to bring on the bill, so here we are.

The introduction of the bill has highlighted the public interest in the welfare of dogs and how it can and must be improved. If we wanted to touch on a single issue that would attract the interest of the RSPCA and other dog charities, it's the welfare of our canine companions. It's the reason they exist and a key element of their campaigning and fundraising. However, there is a certain irony in the fact that the dog rehoming charities are responsible for euthanising a significant number of dogs that come to them. That's not a criticism of those actions, as the decision to euthanise a dog as we know is the hardest one to take, would only be done in the best welfare interests of the dog. What it does highlight is the complexity of taking raw numbers at face value, and that include those for the highly regulated racing greyhounds. For a greyhound, even a minor scratch is recorded. If only the same level of veterinary tension and data collection was true for every dog in Tasmania. But that might be political suicide for a party that proposed it.

I will also draw your attention to the recent review of the Code of Practice for Racehorse Welfare. The review found the code needs significant improvement and made seven recommendations that include compulsory training, increased sanctions, and the ability to revoke a training licence for welfare failings. Notably, recommendation 6 stated a similar greyhound report is being prepared which is now part of the Greyhound Racing Transition Working Groups term of reference, and I assume it's recommendations will be in place long before 2029. To quote Sean Carroll, Tasmania's Racing Integrity Commissioner:

> Ensuring that our industry maintains animal welfare standards that continue to evolve in line with changing community expectations is essential to maintaining public confidence.

As a House of review, it's our role to consider any unintended consequences that may arise from legislation that comes to us from another place. I've already spoken to the chilling effect the bill will have on amateur dog sports and fun activities. There is another, if it's going to be illegal for greyhounds to race in any circumstance or to be bred for racing purposes, then we risk the loss of a sustainable population of the breed. We have all received numerous contributions from Tasmanians who describe the extensive process of raising greyhound pups into adults alongside their siblings as part of a family group. This is in a much longer period than a few weeks given to the average pet dog breed before giving a puppy to a new owner. For a greyhound breeder, like any breeder of pedigree, stock lineage is everything and bloodlines go back over countless generations to ensure a healthy population, unlike some other

pet breeds. A classic case is a dachshund bred with ever longer and shallower bodies as a desirable tract. The UKs proposing legislation that would see 67 popular dog breeds subject to a ten-point checklist before being allowed to breed, to ensure any resulting puppies will not suffer from congenital poor health or illness due to certain preferred physical characteristics that are now inherent in many breeds. Greyhounds are not on that list, which suggests greyhound breeding is well managed with a wide gene pool to draw from and no line or inbreeding, as you would rightly expect from responsible breeders that love greyhounds.

Coming back to the initial point, the risk of the bill of an unsustainable greyhound population: if we were to look to the decades of history containing the greyhound pedigree, are we almost at the stage of losing a living history with the bill? It goes back even further, as greyhounds are the oldest pure breed of canines on the planet, with a history that reportedly goes back over 8000 years. In the UK, greyhounds are now one of the 39 vulnerable showing breeds that are in danger of not having a viable population. That's to ensure there's a large enough population to ensure sufficient genetic diversity. A ban on the import and export of greyhound genetics means a death sentence for the breed, and within 15 years the sight of the living pedigree background greyhound in Tasmania will be a fading memory. As one breeder observed,

> The only place we will see a greyhound is alongside a thylacine in the museum display case, and it won't be at the TMAG -

Ms O'Connor - Rubbish. What a load of rubbish.

Mr PRESIDENT - Order.

Mr GAFFNEY - Okay, I really don't like the way you interject. It's quite rude and I don't like it.

Mr PRESIDENT - I will just ask all members, as I said before -

Ms O'Connor - That's the only one - I've sat here the whole time quietly.

Mr PRESIDENT - Order.

Mr GAFFNEY - Dogs Tasmania has expressed its concern - I'd like to place on the record, I take offence to the member for Hobart's contribution when I'm speaking. We only have a certain time limit. I'm getting close to that and she's interrupted me. I would appreciate if it doesn't happen again.

Ms Forrest - You don't have a time limit.

Mr GAFFNEY - Dogs Tasmania has expressed its concern with the clause and with the desexing requirements for retired greyhounds. In a submission to the inquiry, the suggestion was made to allow greyhounds to be bred for the purpose of participating in canine exhibitions or dog shows to the average person.

It's an entirely reasonable request and I'd like to know the government's response to that, as it was studiously ignored in the inquiry report. Dogs Tasmania has an additional requirement that all dogs registered for exhibition are entire - that is, not desexed - and yet there is a

mandatory requirement that ex-racing greyhounds with a full pedigree must be desexed. It is almost as if the bill has a vendetta against greyhounds as a viable breed because they then wouldn't be eligible to be part of Dogs Tasmania. When a breeding of a litter of puppies, Dogs Tasmania ensures that its members, who are registered breeders, must comply with its stringent rules and regulations, and no more than two litters can be bred in a female dog's lifetime. Its members are passionate advocates for the breeds they love, and they're terribly worried by the impact of unregulated backyard breeders and puppy farms.

So, what can the government do to ensure the registered pedigree breeders and Dogs Tasmania can guarantee the survival of a viable and diverse greyhound population both here in Tasmania, and as a part of a wider Australian population? We have all received communication highlighting the history in greyhound breeding and this excerpt perhaps neatly explains what we risk losing.

> Perhaps most heartbreaking of all is what a ban would mean for the future of the greyhound breed in Tasmania. The bloodlines involved in racing are not recent developments, they represent centuries of careful breeding and stewardship. Many of these pedigrees can be traced back hundreds of years, in some cases to the 1700s. These bloodlines are living history, preserved through generations of dedicated breeders who have worked tirelessly to maintain the health, the athleticism and character of the breed. If greyhound racing is banned, the reality is that the breeding population will disappear. Without the racing industry to sustain them, these historic bloodlines will vanish. Generations of genetic heritage will be lost forever, erased not because of neglect or cruelty, but to appease activist movements that fundamentally oppose any form of human interaction with animals.

A Tasmanian with intimate knowledge of the industry wrote to me on breeding in the proposed bill.

> The mention of keeping breeding pups as pets in the bill does not consider the welfare of the breed at all. To breed a greyhound is not simply a matter of putting two hounds together and hoping for pretty pups. In order to breed, a bitch must be DNA tested and obtain approval from Greyhounds Australia. Bitches are vet checked and fed special diets before they whelp, including high calcium supplements and all the necessary nutrition required to develop healthy puppies. There is also the issue of researching bloodlines and determining which particular sire will best suit the bitch ensuring that the breeding is neither too closely related nor randomly matched. With greyhounds there are volumes of information regarding soundness, confirmation, temperament and performance that must be considered.

For a state which prides itself on our history and heritage, does it only count it's made of brick, stone and wood and can be put on the heritage register as a lifeless structure? Do we need to look at our living heritage with equal vigour? Greyhound families and lineage is exactly that, and once lost there'll be no trace, just paper records of what was. A concerned constituent commented to me that:

> If Parliament passes this legislation, the ramifications of this decision would be on members' conscience for the rest of their life. Not only that, but the

> Liberals will have lost any moral prerogative they may have had and will also go the way they did in the South Australian election and will lose. [TBC]

I would like to take this opportunity to record a greyhound enthusiast's thoughts she recently shared with us all, as her concerns speak to the heart of the matter and the ethos of people who know and love greyhounds:

> When you have multi generations of greyhounds, when you have bred a litter, when you have lived with them 24/7 for years, you have such a respect and love for these animals, it really would be hard for anyone who has not had that experience to understand it.
>
> Now, while I understand that people who adopt a pet dog love their dog and they've got that adopted dog at three or five years old and they love it, they have never seen that dog like we have seen that dog. They've never seen that dog from the beginning as a playful, active, energetic little ratbag. So they stand up there and they call us names and they hurl abuse, they call us bogans and thugs, without understanding us at all, without understanding what we have done, without understanding how we keep and cherish these greyhounds, and just how much we respect them.
>
> The extremists parrot off an ideology that's been imported from overseas. They rant, they rave. And it's when watching their parliamentary committee meetings that we realise they have no understanding of the greyhound at all. [TBC]

As it currently stands, the legislation as drafted would overnight turn the perfectly legal and well-regulated sport of greyhound racing and other amateur dog sports and showday fun dog races into prohibited activities that will be subject to prosecution. The government has obviously made a complete U-turn just so it can cling on to power.

Adding insult to injury, the Joint Standing Committee on Greyhound Racing Transition has not considered or supported the service for community distress. It's the only imposed referral for an inquiry that's given any chance of a hearing to greyhound enthusiasts.

As one constituent wrote:

> The industry provides employment for hundreds of Tasmanians and contributes significantly to regional economies. However, I recognise improvements are needed to address legitimate welfare concerns. Rather than pursuing a complete ban, I urge you to support comprehensive reform measures. [TBC]

The Premier might at least consider those affected by the bill. However, instead of following a proper process, consulting widely and listening to community input from all sides and reaching a considered outcome, we're now subject to stop-go legislation that is again being pushed on the back of an interim report, an incomplete EOI process for its voluntary exit scheme.

I cannot help but reflect on the government's contemptuous dismissal of greyhound breeders, owners and trainers and all those who work with them. We are talking about hundreds of people spread across Tasmania who are greyhound racing specialists. They may not have academic degrees or be media trained, but they know and they love their greyhounds.

I struggle to support this legislation. Simply put, I do not feel that is measured lawmaking, as it has consequences far beyond its suggested purpose. The greyhound fraternity has been badly let down by the Premier and this government, which only just last year vowed its support in a pre-election commitment.

I assume every other organisation with a similar endorsement must be questioning its value and I'm astonished that as a respectable member of the farming community, the Premier's gone back on his word. He, above all, should know that when you give your word as an honourable person and especially as a farmer, you keep it. Your word is your bond.

For me, the most striking summary of the failings in the bill came in the inquiry report with the dissenting statement of Mr Dean Winter MP, Labor member for Franklin. In eight pages of considered reflection he tore apart the intent of the bill, its rationale, it's functionality and the consequences of its rushed introduction. He had another six pages of dissent in the last report and is now in a stoush with the Racing Integrity Commissioner over a range of disputed statements and allegations. I must ask what the government's response is to his dissenting statements. Is it going to respond or is it simply going to ignore his valid concerns in the rush to push through a bill that has so many holes and unresolved policy issues?

The tragedy is with its individuals and vulnerable communities who will suffer as so much collateral damage. Maybe it's a new Tasmanian way - to divide and rule, to insult and deride those who have different views from the Premier.

The divide-and-rule nature of the Premier's actions have had ramifications in this place. I speak to the honourable Leader of the Government's involvement in the committee of inquiry in her primary role as an independent member for McIntyre. It's her dissenting statements that neatly summarise various weaknesses in the bill and how it came into being. Most notable for me is the rushed nature, the lack of consultation, only hints of compensation and yet-to-be-determined amendments that would be needed to address these shortcomings.

A person from Launceston wrote to me with a series of hard-hitting questions. To my mind, they summed up some of the concerns with the bill. They first asked:

> How will a Tasmanian be able to obtain a greyhound as a pet in six or more years from now?

The answer is the average Tasmanian will not be able to. Exercising them will not be legal, the racing hounds will be desexed, lineages lost.

Then they ask:

> Why are other racing codes not a focus for a phase-out?

The answer: the government wants the political capital that comes from bludgeoning the vulnerable greyhound community with none of the political backlash that will come from banning the wealthy and well-connected equine codes.

The next question was:

> How has the racing suddenly lost its social licence in such a short time that justifies this push?

The answer is that it has not. Nothing has changed. In fact, things have gotten better than they've ever been, and it's already eyeing up how to use the greyhound grant.

This leads me to the final, most pertinent question asked:

> Why is this legislation being pushed?

It's certainly not out of a sense of goodwill. Of course, we cannot forget the government only broke its word to save itself. Is it from a sense of morality? Again, probably not, or else they would've properly supported those affected by it, not in a lacklustre, forced manner.

I will digress here slightly to discuss something that was written to me by a constituent in favour of a ban. She wrote:

> Please think hard before you vote on ending greyhound racing in Tasmania. Elections are soon and so I will be watching how you vote. [TBC]

Since when do we vote on anything but the legislation in front of us? Since when has it become the role of parliament to approach legislation in such a transactional manner, when pre-election commitments can be cast aside instead of voting in the beliefs that we were sworn in to represent. I'm not saying that parliamentarians should vote against the will of the electorate - in fact, I'm saying the exact opposite. If you are elected and sworn into parliament based on your beliefs, principles and ethical morality or the values that you represent, you owe it to your electorate to vote in the same way, not transactionally or for political deal-making. For that matter, you owe it to the electorates not to introduce ill-considered legislation on a 'she'll be right' basis. It was the same with the Macquarie Point stadium - the threats and electoral wheeling and dealing are not becoming of parliament, and this is part of the reason for decaying trust in our institutions. Both projects have still to be determined and almost dire consequences for our state finances.

Another concerned individual stated to me:

> Equally troubling is the message it sends to future generations. It suggests that honesty, transparency, and due process can be sidelined when it's politically convenient. Our children deserve to see leadership grounded in fairness and accountability, not decisions that appear to reward expediency over integrity. [TBC]

Bringing us back to what we're asked: why is this legislation being pushed? I put to you that it is being pushed for all the wrong reasons and will have all the wrong outcomes. Each of these questions underpins a substantial, fundamental problem with the making of this

legislation. These were just a select few of these questions. Each had equal weight. Each of these questions need a good, strong answer before parliament should allow this legislation.

Of course, there have been suggestions for compensation and suggestions of greater support for the greyhound community. Of course, I would naturally support holistic reform, but as many have put it, we cannot replace what will have been lost in heritage, government reputation and community capital. Despite mutterings of compensation, no amount can compensate. As a constituent wrote to me:

> Greyhound racing is much more than hours spent daily - 365 days a year caring for our dogs is about purpose, connection, community, and more importantly, physical and mental wellbeing. [TBC]

While there has been talk of compensation, should the legislation pass, no amount of compensation will ever compensate for the loss of what is, for many, a way of life and their reason to get out of bed each day.

Besides the betrayal, the bill has obvious failings. It was rushed, it's too simplistic, has too many unanswered questions and it's poorly thought-out. It will have devastating effects on both targeted and untargeted communities and is yet another example of the Premier's game-playing at the expense of others. We can, and we must, do better.

Society's moral arc is expanding, it is becoming more inclusive, while at the same time questioning past and present practices. Not all community members are at the same point in that journey, nor with the same understanding, and that is to be entirely expected. That is not a negative, but more of a reality. The additional problem we all face is the immediacy of communication in a modern world. Email, social media, phone calls and messaging all allow instant engagement from our constituents, and with the expectation of an instant response. The two together can create conflict between factions, each setting out in their advocacy to take on and outdo each other. What we are missing is a broader consideration that allows a dampening period where spikes of social media can be tempered, and issues can be properly considered. It's one where there's time to reflect and develop a deeper understanding of the likely consequences of imposing a directive or not.

Campaigning on a single issue is easy. It's a black-and-white decision, a right or wrong outcome. If you're an advocacy body it is perfect, a simple target and no grey areas at all, a 'we are right and you are wrong' shouting match. If only life was so simple, the government's bill to phase out greyhound racing comes from that premise. It fails to recognise the complexities involved where there are no absolutes. There is no absolute right or wrong in this. However, there is a better or worse. Greyhound racing has recognised the need to change and that is for the better. The move to shut it down completely, as expressed by some Tasmanians, is a far worse outcome for the greyhounds themselves, far worse for many of the communities that love them, and potentially far worse for state finances as it must compensate what was a viable model.

We have had a forced inquiry to further consider these consequences, that included dissenting the statements, so no consensus there either. The government itself pulled the bill for fear of losing the debate and claiming the need to give time for more information to be presented to help its lacklustre process, and yet we received amendments yesterday and this morning. What we have been left with is a war of attrition on greyhound communities as the

government throws around ideas like mud of the wall and watches as it slides down as its unfinished mess for someone else to deal with. Frankly, I struggle in good conscience to support ill-considered legislation of any kind, especially in this case when a ban will have a harmful effect on constituents in my community. Greyhound racing is a complex issue, and communities must be included and feel that they are part of the journey and that their thoughts are valued. We must respect those who are going to be affected by decision makers with authentic, respectful and fully inclusive processes. That's where genuine and respectful leadership is so important.

I've spoken before in this place about the importance of building community. To build community, we need four building blocks: communication, cooperation, affirmation and planning of events and communities. Each of these need to be addressed and be sustainable. That does not mean supporting it one day and dismissing it the next. It does not mean the Premier's new ethos of wiping out a way of life virtually overnight because of a top-down opportunity to do so. In sporting terms, we call that moving the goal posts to suit your team. In business terms, that's breaking your word, a mortal sin in business where no one can gain, believe or have confidence in what you say. As Tasmanians, it's not a place where we want our Premier and our government to be. The risk is that we may be a line in the sand for the government's use-by date and pass its fully expired trust date.

I also would like to acknowledge the efforts of the Joint Standing Committee on greyhounds and the transition bill. I find it interesting that the Joint Select Committee was formed to support a policy position of closing down one industry and without that policy position being tested and then asking the committee to work to that end. If the government had been upfront with its expiring 2029 of the Racing Codes Funding Deed, that there will be a Joint Inquiry Committee of inquiry process to investigate each of the three codes involved to determine the next deed and how they will operate, well, so be it. It could consider the impact of any changes in future expectations, could plan for the new future of each and every code, and it would be in a very different place compared to where we are today. To delete a section of our society by unilaterally destroying their way of life, their communities and their livelihood, for some it's their whole world, with minimal consultation, that's simply a shameful abuse of power.

In closing, I would, however, like to acknowledge the efforts of the current minister to engage and respond to my concerns, and his dialogue has always been recognised, respectful and welcome. While this bill is well-intentioned, it's for many reasons I've discussed and its many failings I cannot support the bill that's here today. Unfortunately, I'm certain that this will not be the end of this debate and I will not be supporting the bill.

[6.14 p.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Mr President, without question, this is one of the most difficult pieces of legislation I've been asked to consider during my time in this chamber. It not only effects animal welfare, but it affects people and their welfare.

The Greyhound Racing Legislation Amendments (Phasing Out Reform) Bill 2025 is not a routine policy change. It asks parliament to take an irreversible step with profound implications for animal welfare, livelihoods and public trust. It has provoked intense debate. Much of it has been sincere. Unfortunately, some of it has been compressed into slogans, derogatory personal remarks and data, and headline claims shaped by selective narratives. The responsibility of those in this House is simply not to mirror the emotion but to apply scrutiny

without fear or favour. Like other members, I've received a great deal of correspondence, emails, calls and meetings that I've had. While the vast majority of emails have been proforma, it was pleasing when you receive original words from people and I've had many of those. Many people speak from genuine concern for animal welfare. Many speak from lived experience with people whose routines, work, wellbeing and community ties are bound up in racing. I respect all those views, and I take the animal welfare question seriously. I'm not conflicted about my guiding principle. Passion matters, but logic must lead.

I'll state from the outset that I have no involvement in racing of any code. When a member of the Launceston City Council on occasion I attended the Launceston City Council greyhound stakes at Mowbray. I've also visited Elwick twice in the past weeks and met with participants and dogs, checked out the race boxes, spoken with the vet on duty and generally watched enthusiastic dogs' race. I didn't witness any accidents. While there the vet mentioned that one of the dogs had a small scratch on a pad that prohibited it from competing. Interestingly, I was advised even though the dog had not raced, it would be listed as a track injury as it was identified at the track. I've also attended the Launceston Cup on a number of occasions. Not this year as I had an injury myself that made walking too difficult, but sadly in 2025 I was present at the Launceston Cup carnival when popular racehorse *The Inevitable* was humanely euthanized after suffering a catastrophic injury.

This bill does not merely tighten regulation or adjust compliance settings; it seeks to outlaw an entire activity to make greyhound racing and associated breeding illegal in Tasmania. Once taken, it's not a decision that can be casually revisited, so the threshold must be high. Because this is the irreversible decision, the evidentiary bar must be higher than usual. Where the facts are disputed on welfare outcomes, on funding structures and on the cost of transition this House should not choose a side in a contest of claims. There's not been a recent independent inquiry to reconcile the evidence and report back with findings parliament can rely on. The scope of the Joint Standing Committee on greyhound racing transition, which in my opinion is less than objective, was confined to the matter of the bill rather than a broader inquiry into the industry or animal welfare. For prohibition to be justified, the evidence must show that the existing regulatory pathway cannot deliver acceptable welfare and integrity outcomes. To meet the standard required for an outright ban, there must be a high threshold.

A single point in time compliance statistic is not the strongest way to judge whether an entire system is beyond reform. A better test is whether the industry is shrinking in scale and whether welfare outcomes are being tracked and managed through transparent reporting. If we look at rehoming outputs, it has raised and reported 259 greyhound adoptions through its program in 2020-2021, compared to 275 in 2025-2026, while also reporting a total of $184,395 being invested in the Greyhound Retirement Preparation Scheme, ensuring 224 greyhounds were appropriately prepared for their retirement through subsidising the cost of their desexing, dental treatment and vaccination, according to the 2026 Tasracing Annual Report. These figures do not prove the system is perfect, but they do demonstrate the system is measurable, the system is being reported and scrutinised, and the scale of breeding is demonstrably constrained.

That's precisely why, in my view, the correct approach is an independent inquiry to verify trends over time, test the data and determine what reform is proportionate, rather than legislating an irreversible ban on the basis of rhetoric and partial snapshots. It's worth noting the 3/3/3 rule for greyhounds as a guideline for adopting, outlining that in the first three days they're overwhelmed, decompressing, three weeks to learn your routine and by three months to

feel fully at home. Animal welfare law is meant to protect animals in every setting, not just within one regulated activity. In the broader community context, RSPCA Tasmania reports receiving more than 1900 cruelty reports through its cruelty hotline in 2024-25. Those figures are a reminder that many welfare failures occur outside regulated environments, often in less visible settings. So, if the policy logic becomes harm exists therefore ban the activity, where does that logic stop? Proportionate lawmaking requires evidence of systemic failure and evidence that regulation cannot deliver acceptable outcomes.

I've not grown up or lived within the greyhound or horse racing codes, so I've deliberately tried to remove myself from ideology and assess this legislation without being swept up in emotion. I've met with many participants with an open mind and what I've observed did not match the simplified picture so often presented. I'm not presenting my interactions as a substitute for data, but firsthand understanding reminds us that there is lived reality here and that we should be wary of making permanent law on the basis of slogans, campaigns or selectively framed claims.

It leads to a practical proposition: the safest place for animals is not always outside a regulated system. Often it's within a regulated system where there is identification, oversight, enforceable standards, veterinary supervision and accountability. It's my understanding that the greyhounds cannot be euthanised without proper authorisation or, in some cases, written consent from industry regulators. Every dog must be accounted for. No system is perfect, but dismantling a regulated system does not automatically improve welfare. Sometimes it removes the very structure that enforces it. Real understanding takes time.

Another key weakness in how this bill has been advanced is that it isolates greyhound racing as though it exists apart from the wider Tasmanian racing ecosystem. It does not. Tasmania's racing system is integrated through Tasracing, through governance, shared integrity functions, shared overheads, shared infrastructure and a common wagering and commercial environment. In briefings, Tasracing stated that they could not operate the two remaining codes successfully without the full funding they currently receive. So, I ask: why are we only interrogating one third of the system? I'm told that the industry is like a three-legged stool; they each need the other to survive. If the debate includes claims about viability, funding, public investment and social licence, then the responsible course is to examine greyhounds, harness, thoroughbreds and Tasmania's whole-of-system structure.

This is not simply an opinion. Tasracing's published funding information makes clear it is funded by government appropriations under a long-term deed arrangement as well as commercial incomes such as race field fees, and it emphasises a strategic focus on growing commercial revenue for long-term sustainability. The government itself has confirmed it's already assessing options for funding the racing industry beyond 2029 through a steering committee involving Treasury and the relevant department, specifically to determine what the funding model looks like for thoroughbred and harness beyond the deed's expiry.

If one code is removed or financially constrained, the consequences do not stop at that code. They flow to the remaining codes through overhead allocation, integrity resourcing, meeting structures and the stability of the governing body. We should not pretend there's a clean firewall where one code can be abolished without system-wide implications.

This House is being asked to make a permanent decision. From my understanding, the material before me states that the government did not obtain advice from a regulator

recommending the industry be shut down, did not obtain advice that it cannot be regulated to acceptable welfare or integrity standards and did not seek Treasury advice on the economic impacts of closure. A prohibition bill requires more, not less, due diligence. It requires independent analysis, economic modelling and clear transition planning. Otherwise, parliament is being asked to legislate first and justify later. In other words, 'Pass the bill and we'll work it out'.

I want to make a simple but important point about timing and evidence. The government itself spent years designing a new integrity model for Tasmanian racing. The commissioner's own office describes the reformed pathway. A review process began in 2021. The Monteith Review was published in 2022. The government supported the recommendations in 2022 and the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024* was enacted in October 2024 and commenced on 1 February 2025, establishing Tasmania's inaugural Racing Integrity Commissioner and new integrity architecture. The point is not to re-litigate history; the point is this: when the government builds a new integrity framework and gives it a start date of February 2025, it's logically inconsistent to claim, barely a year later, that the system cannot be regulated or that reform is futile without first evaluating whether the new framework is working as intended. We have the commissioner's own words describing the purpose of the model in his ABC interview early on after his appointment. He said the new legislation and restructure would give his office 'teeth' and would make it independent from both government and Tasracing so it could represent the public as well as the industry.

That is not an argument for complacency. It's an argument for proper sequencing, reform implementation, measuring outcomes, testing whether enforcement capacity and standards are effective, and then deciding whether further reform is required or more drastic steps are justified. That's exactly why I believe a proper, independent parliamentary inquiry is responsible governance. It gives parliament a disciplined, apolitical evaluation of the integrity regime the government itself created before we take an irreversible step.

We also need to be frank about how this unfolded. Public Reporting has reproduced a letter dated 17 July 2025, written on behalf of all Tasmanian Liberal candidates, stating the government was committed to supporting the longevity and sustainability of the racing industry across all three codes, including greyhound racing. Subsequent reporting indicates participants felt blindsided and alleged there was no consultation before the phase-out decision was announced. When the stakes are permanent, the process must be unimpeachable.

If the community is to trust the decision of this scale, it must be demonstrably grounded in evidence, not perceived convenience. It's interesting that the banner located around Parliament House states, and I'm sure many of us have seen these banners, I see them all the time:

- Respect. We treat others with dignity and courtesy while valuing their contribution.
- Integrity. We value honesty and transparency and act ethically and impartially.
- Trust. We build trust and feel confident in each other to behave in a professional manner.
- Inclusivity. We embrace and value difference and diversity.
- Empowerment. We enable our people to take ownership of their work by recognising and celebrating achievement.

- Collaboration. We value each other's skills and experience, creating excellence by actively working together across the organisation.

An interesting banner that I'm sure we all aspire to uphold. A phrase by Mahatma Gandhi that we often hear is, 'A community is judged by how it treats its most vulnerable members.' Gandhi is emphasising that a society's moral progress and true character are measured by its compassion, empathy and support for those with the least power, rather than its treatment of the powerful or the wealthy. Without being demeaning, I've heard that greyhound racing is the poor man's sport or working man's sport, allowing for broader participation from lower income individuals than the cost of thoroughbred horse racing. I've also been told from some in the racing industry, generally, that there are many people working in the racing field who could struggle to find employment elsewhere, with often accommodation provided. I ask where is the compassion, the empathy and the support for these people, some of whom could otherwise be unemployed and homeless?

A major source of heat in this debate is confusion about funding. What is Deed Funding? What is internal allocation by Tasracing? What is commercial revenue? What is the true net cost once offsets are included? On one view, an *Economist* analysis published in May 2025 concludes:

> Greyhound racing in Tasmania is almost entirely dependent on government funding, largely because of a generous 20-year funding deed established in 2009 and reports Tasmania's funding at $12.70 per head in 2023-24, more than double the national average of $5.27 per head.

It should be noted, while the TOTE was sold for $103 million to Tatts Group in 2011. The deed was established earlier to guarantee that industry funding would continue replacing the revenue the industry previously received directly from TOTE profits.

On another view, Tasracing's public response disputes the framing and states that:

> The vast majority of funding it provides to the Greyhound Code is funded by commercial revenue the code generates, and that greyhound wagering was up by 6 per cent year to date in 2024-25, compared to the previous year.

In May 2025, when responding to economist Saul Eslake's report on the financing of Tasmanian greyhound racing, Tasracing said the annual fundraising translates to $54 million in economic benefit a year, more than half of which is in regional areas. I believe this is based on independent research by IER. These are not minor disagreements. They go to the heart of whether the financial case for prohibition is sound. That's why parliament should not legislate a ban amid unresolved disputes about basic financial facts.

Members will be aware that if parliament is going to legislate closure, it must legislate responsibly on transition. Compensation cannot be a headline number. It must be a transparent framework that answers who is eligible, including whether small participants and hobbyists are covered; what is compensated; how rehoming capacity will be funded and scaled; how welfare will be safeguarded during the wind down; and what the total cost and funding source will be.

The media has reported that the industry has rejected the government's proposed $4.8 million compensation package over four years as inadequate ahead of the Legislative

Council vote. The reports make plain that beyond the headline figure there's very little detail publicly available about the package and that the detail is expected to be contained in amendments to the bill when it's debated - and of course, we have received some amendments.

The same reporting notes the Premier has said that the Racing Integrity Commissioner would consult with the industry in a methodical way, taking into account individual circumstances and investments. Interestingly, one greyhound owner and trainer told me that he sold a greyhound last year for six figures. Plus, of course, many owners have straws that are worth a considerable amount of money.

It should be further noted the Integrity Commissioner has said it would take time to determine how the compensation package would work. In other words, the government itself is acknowledging the design work is not complete. That reality matters. A ban bill is not just a moral statement; it's a legal and financial event. If we pass prohibition first and design compensation later, we put parliament in the position of signing off on the destination without a clear map, costings, eligibility rules, rehoming capacity modelling or safeguards to prevent perverse outcomes. Interestingly, in discussion with the minister, I was advised that many participants would likely sell their dogs for much more than they would be compensated under the bill, which leads me to question whether this bill is actually about welfare if the government is happy for dogs to be sold to continue racing on the mainland.

Every industry, no matter how respected or essential, carries within it a small number of individuals who fall short of the standards the rest work hard to uphold. These few can distort public perception, damage trust and overshadow the dedication of the majority. It's easy to let frustration grow when we see examples of negligence, exploitation, dishonesty or cruelty. A handful of people doing the wrong thing can create the impression that an entire industry is flawed, but that conclusion misses something important: they are the exception, not the rule. In reality, most people in any profession show up each day with integrity, skill and a genuine commitment to do well. They follow ethical standards, support their fellow workers and contribute positively to the communities they serve. All too often, their efforts go unnoticed, especially when negative stories dominate attention. Negative stories make much better news.

Progress depends on that balance. Calling out wrongdoing when it occurs while still believing in the value of the profession as a whole allows industries to grow stronger, more transparent and more trustworthy over time. So, yes, there may be a few less than good people in any field, but they don't define it. What defines an industry is the collective effort of those who strive every day to do a good job to the best of their ability.

Members have also heard competing assertions about what can and cannot occur if this bill fails about directions, regulations and operational constraints. Parliament should not proceed through contested legal assertions. The legal framework is complex and should be treated with care. For example, under the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024*, Tasracing must make rules of racing for the good management of the codes. The act also establishes a detailed framework for the regulation of racing, including clubs and race meeting controls rather than a simplistic switch-off mechanism, and the act provides for regulation-making power under section 192.

Leader, did you want me to adjourn at the moment and come back? You asked me to adjourn at 6.30, that was all.

Ms Rattray - How much longer does the honourable member have?

Ms ARMITAGE - I might have another 10 minutes or so - 10 or 15.

Ms Rattray - I would keep going and then we'll adjourn when you finish your contribution.

Ms ARMITAGE - Okay. This bill also raises risks beyond the greyhound code. Concerns have been raised that broad definitions, particularly around concepts like race, event or commercial activity, especially where entry fees apply, could inadvertently capture legitimate amateur dog sports and community events that are volunteer run, scoring based, and not wagering events. If the government's intent is to address one industry, then the drafting must be precise.

There are also concerns about avoidable secondary harms, such as longer-term movements, breeding and genetic diversity impacts where restrictions are broader than necessary. Even if members disagree about magnitude, the principle should unite us; a prohibition bill should not create avoidable secondary harms. Those risks should be examined through proper inquiry, not discovered later as collateral damage.

The material before me also highlights how headline statistics can distort understanding when they lack context. I note claims such as 279 greyhounds were killed or injured, an argument that, when unpacked, the data suggested only two euthanasias occurred at race meetings out of nearly 12,000 starters, with an injury rate around 2 per cent, with most injuries minor. It also notes a significant reduction in euthanasia numbers over time, including 33 euthanised in 2025 compared with 283 in 2017, with only two euthanised at the track. None of this is to diminish any injury or death, but it does underscore that law should be grounded in full, fair representation of facts and not selective framing designed to provoke outrage.

If animal welfare is at the centre of this debate, then the evidence about welfare systems and rehoming capacity must be presented with precision. Tasracing's 2024-25 annual report states its Greyhounds as Pets program found homes for 101 greyhounds during the reporting period and that six greyhounds were euthanised, one medical, five behavioural. It also reports investing $154,332 in its Greyhound Retirement Preparation Scheme, preparing 205 greyhounds for retirement through subsidised desexing, dental treatment and vaccination. And it reports $130,724 in treatment support for 61 greyhounds under an injury recovery rebate scheme, which it describes as contributing to a low euthanasia rate due to track related injuries. These figures do not resolve the moral debate, but they do demonstrate that welfare and rehoming are being managed within an accountable system, exactly the kind of evidence an independent inquiry should verify and build upon.

Members will be aware that other jurisdictions have moved recently. New Zealand has passed legislation to end commercial greyhound racing, taking effect from 1 August 2026. However, it was reported in early May 2026 that a leaked report completed for the TAB NZ by racing insiders says the horse racing industry is unsustainable without further tax breaks. Wales's Senedd voted on 17 March 2026 to prohibit greyhound racing, with implementation staged between 1 April 2027 and 1 April 2030. Scotland voted on 18 March 2026 to outlaw greyhound racing through legislation. I do not cite these examples to dictate Tasmania's choice. I cite them to highlight the lesson. When jurisdictions take decisions this consequential, they

do so with structured transition planning and clear legislative architecture, not rushed and ad hoc process.

Let's look at other states. Greyhound racing in Western Australia is under scrutiny through a parliamentary inquiry and a state racing review, while some rule changes have taken effect. Unlike Tasmania, which has moved towards a proposed ban, a proposed phased end to greyhound racing, the Western Australian government has not announced a ban. South Australia's greyhound industry had a two-year probation period ending mid-2026 to implement 57 urgent reforms following a 2023 inquiry. If standards regarding animal welfare, traceability, and euthanasia rates, did not improve significantly, the industry faced a potential ban with an independent inspector monitoring progress. The independent Greyhound Industry Reform Inspector, appointed to oversee the two-year major reform period for the South Australian greyhound racing industry, has handed his final report to the state government. The report, written by inspector Sal Perna AM, says it is satisfied with the greyhound racing industry's overall progress implementing the reforms of the independent inquiry into the governance of the greyhound racing industry in South Australia. Mr Perna's report makes two key recommendations: that greyhound racing continues to operate in South Australia and that greyhound oversight of animal welfare and integrity issues is required.

The government accepted both of these recommendations and will begin work to establish an appropriate, fit-for-purpose integrity body for the greyhound industry. Victoria has no plans to ban the sport, opting instead to enforce reforms and improve integrity measures. New South Wales was set for a ban in July 2017 following a 2016 special commission of inquiry, however, the ban was reversed in October 2016 by premier Mike Baird and replaced by stricter regulation, a new integrity commission and funding for welfare. In July 2026, the New South Wales Auditor-General tabled a performance audit on the regulation of greyhound racing, prompting renewed calls from the Greens New South Wales to ban the industry.

In Queensland, the government has not implemented a ban but has previously described the industry as being on its last chance. I know the new Chief Integrity Officer inside Racing Queensland will hold standing equal to the CEO and report to the racing minister, the Racing Queensland board and a board subcommittee. However, there is also a $200 million infrastructure plan. Announced in December 2025, the government's roadmap includes a racing future fund and $200 million across racing codes, featuring a new track for Bundaberg Greyhounds and a new Racing HQ at Albion Park.

Tasmania is not without options. The deed runs to 2029. Tasracing's annual report states the industry is partly funded under a 20-year deed and that the deed is set to expire in 2029. That provides a practical window for due diligence, as there's no reason the government has to sign up to a further 20-year deed. It could be a further five or 10 years. A stabilising interim arrangement could allow Tasmania to either commission an independent inquiry or undertake an actual independent parliamentary inquiry and return to parliament with a full evidence base, as other states have, without forcing people into chaos or rushed decision-making. I accept the argument that an inquiry leaves people in limbo, but the alternative - an irreversible ban, without clear modelling, without a tested compensation plan, without clarity for other codes and without protection for community dog sports - creates far worse uncertainty.

This House is being asked to make an irreversible decision amid contested funding narratives, with unclear implications for harness and thoroughbreds, with risks to lawful hobbyists and community activities, without a detailed evidence-based compensation plan and

with significant due diligence gaps. A delay is not indecision when the decision is permanent. Delay is responsible governance when the evidence base is incomplete. It creates the conditions for parliament to make the right decision on the facts, whether that is improved regulation, structural reform or, if the evidence genuinely compels it, an orderly and properly funded phase-out. Parliament should choose understanding and legislate on evidence. This course does not predetermine the outcome. It creates the conditions for parliament to make the right decisions on the facts. Narratives are easy. Real understanding takes time.

I believe I have done due diligence. I've attended greyhound race meetings at Elwick to speak with participants and I've actually gone down to the track and met the dogs as well as the vet on duty. I've been to horseracing in Launceston and spoken to other code participants. I've visited kennels where I felt there were probably too many dogs. Although those dogs were clean, they were inside, they were dry, they had what looked like decent beds, they were well fed and cared for, I did feel there were probably too many. But to my mind, the government could legislate to limit the number of dogs held or trained on site by any person to a number considered best for animal welfare. I have also visited smaller kennels where the dogs were treated like family, with food any person would be happy to eat, though I have to admit, I would want it cooked. The food looked good, but it was raw.

I've spoken with a variety of people, including Ricky Ponting and David Foster last Friday, and I also messaged Dr Harry Cooper in the past, who has both bred and raised greyhounds.

I thank those who are genuinely concerned for the welfare of greyhounds, such as Rosalie Saville, and it was lovely to meet her greyhound Jimmy when Rosalie visited my office; as well as Andrea Dawkins, Jan Davis and the numerous emails and submissions we've received on both sides of the argument. I know all their comments are heartfelt and sincere. I have been asked to read a letter. This letter is from a member of a racing code - not greyhounds. I think we've all received it. It was yesterday, and it said:

> Ahead of tomorrow's debate on the proposed closure of greyhound racing in Tasmania, I feel compelled to write to you once more. Has the case for permanently closing an entire industry actually been established?
>
> On 17 July 2025, just two days before the state election, Premier Jeremy Rockliff provided written assurances regarding the longevity and sustainability of all three racing codes. Just 24 days later, his government announced its intention to phase out greyhound racing. What changed? What evidence informed that decision?
>
> More recently, the Premier stated on his official Facebook page, 'Shutting down industries doesn't help you pay your bills. It doesn't help you put food on the table one bit'. How does the government reconcile those words with its proposed closure of Tasmania's greyhound racing industry?
>
> There's also the matter of long-standing government commitments. When Tote Tasmania was sold, parliament was expressly assured that the sale would not disadvantage the racing industry. With the future funding of Tasmanian racing still unresolved, how will those commitments be honoured?

Today, 14 Tasmanian racing clubs and industry associations representing all three codes issued a united statement calling for the rejection of the bill and certainty over future funding. Their concerns extend to employment, breeding, infrastructure investment and the sustainability of the wider racing industry. These are decisions being made today, not in 2029.

The recently tabled parliamentary committee report, together with Dean Winter's dissenting statement, raises further questions about economic modelling, transition costs and the ongoing responsibilities associated with animal welfare. Providing financial assistance to people forced to leave an industry is not the same as supporting their ability to continue their livelihoods.

As I outlined in my previous correspondence, my own experiences attending greyhound racing, observing the dogs and witnessing their relationships with their trainers reinforced the importance of firsthand understanding. Animal welfare must remain paramount. Where shortcomings exist, they demand effective regulation, independent oversight, accountability and measurable improvement.

The experience of South Australia also warrants consideration, particularly its approach to independently monitored reform as an alternative to closure.

Before determining this legislation, I respectfully ask members to consider: has the government established that greyhound racing cannot be effectively regulated? Have the full economic consequences of closure across all three racing codes been independently assessed? What evidence demonstrates that closure will deliver better animal welfare outcomes than continued regulation and reform? How will the traceability, welfare and ongoing care of greyhounds be maintained throughout and beyond the proposed closure? Are the transition arrangements and associated costs fully established and adequately funded? What precedent does permanently closing a lawful, regulated industry established for other Tasmanian industries? These are questions of evidence, consistency, accountability and responsible governance.

The people affected by this legislation are Tasmanians who have families, mortgages, businesses, employees and communities depending on them. Their animals, their livelihoods and futures deserve careful consideration. Closing an industry is irreversible in ways that reform is not. I believe animal welfare, effective regulation and the preservation of responsible industry participants' livelihoods can coexist.

It is for these reasons that I respectfully urge members of the Legislative Council to reject the bill.

I won't actually name the person. I said I wouldn't but I said I would read their letter in.

I admit I have vacillated between supporting the bill and not supporting the bill. However, I felt my decision needed to be grounded in fact and not emotion, which is where I've now landed after much research and discussion. I do appreciate the many phone calls that I have had with the minister; he has been extremely good and I've had many chats as well as with the Premier.

Therefore, if the government is genuine about animal welfare as well as the welfare of the participants, I don't believe this bill is the correct path forward. There's a lot more to be considered as an industry closure would affect owners, trainers, breeders, families, kennel staff, veterinarians, track workers, betting-related businesses, food suppliers, petrol stations, various outlets and others, particularly with participants when they travel to meets, all the people that they actually interact with along the way. There would need to be retraining grants, business transition payments, exit grants for licence holders, regional employment programs, as well as a reasonable amount for those who derive substantial income from the industry. To my mind, it's not good enough to say that people are likely to get more money for selling their dogs on the mainland than compensation.

As I mentioned earlier, how does that translate to animal welfare if we're happy for them to simply be sent somewhere else to race? Sounds a bit like New Zealand.

Obviously, we must consider the welfare of the animals, but we should never forget the welfare of the people involved either. I know there will be people who'll be very angry and disappointed, and I've no doubt many will make their feelings known to me. I found this to be genuinely one of the hardest decisions I've had to make in this place. I care for the animals, just like others do, and I don't want to see them abused. I also care for people, and I've seen the anguish and the fear that many have at the thought of losing what they love to do as well as the animals that they love. I've been told that people can keep their dogs. Well, that might be a bit hard if you have 20. I'm not sure how the local council would see that. Some families are third generation, and it's not just a job or a hobby; it's an actual lifestyle that would devastate them if it was gone.

I cannot support this bill into the committee stage, as I believe to do so would be disingenuous, as I don't believe the bill before us is the correct course of action given the information I've gleaned over virtually the past 12 months. To my mind, we can learn much more from what has happened in other states.

If we are honest with ourselves, to virtually shut down an industry that had previously been told was supported by the government only weeks prior to the state election, and then several weeks after the election to be told the industry would cease to exist, I don't believe that would pass the pub test, irrespective of people's views on greyhound racing.

I move -

That the debate stand adjourned.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

[6.51 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, upon your indulgence, I'd like to briefly foreshadow to honourable members that obviously there's still some way to go with this bill and there was an intention by the honourable minister responsible for Homes and Housing to deal with that tonight. Obviously, that won't be possible, so there possibly needs to be a conversation about how we might move forward with that tomorrow. I'm flagging that with honourable members before you head for a dinner break. Mr President, thank you for your indulgence, and I move -

That the sitting be suspended until the ringing of the division bills.

Sitting suspended from 6.52 p.m. to 8.04 p.m.

GREYHOUND RACING LEGISLATION AMENDMENTS (PHASING OUT REFORM) BILL 2025 (No. 66)

Resumption of Debate on Second Reading

Resumed from above (page xxx).

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Thank you, Mr President. I have finished my contribution.

Ms O'CONNOR (Hobart) - Mr President, I rise to speak in strong support of the Greyhound Racing Legislation Amendments (Phasing Out Reform) Bill 2025.

I support this bill, the Greens support this bill, simply because we are certain it is the right thing to do.

Like New Zealand's very conservative Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters, when he announced an end to greyhound racing across the ditch a little over 18 months ago, the level of injury and death to these racing dogs is unacceptably and unavoidably high.

Mr President, we accept the overwhelming body of evidence that greyhound racing is not safe for dogs and that was confirmed to us through the evidence that we took in the Joint Standing Committee by the Racing Minister, the Honourable Roger Jaensch; by the Racing Integrity Commissioner; by the evidence we received from the former chief vet, the Greyhound Racing New South Wales Dr Alex Brittan; and in evidence that is on the record, some of which we have gathered ourselves.

Mr President, these are not, as has been suggested by the honourable member for Mersey, 'spurious ethical concerns', and I want to challenge that upfront. That is insulting. It is insulting to the many, many people who have advocated for an end to greyhound racing for more than a decade now. It's insulting to the RSPCA and the Dogs Home of Tasmania. It's insulting to the North East Animal Sanctuary. It's insulting to all those wonderful people who I've had the honour and the pleasure of getting to know over the past 11 or 12 years as we've worked so hard together to put an end to this industry.

We heard this morning in briefings from former *ABC News* presenter, the beloved Peter Gee; Dr Megan Alessandrini from the Dogs Home of Tasmania. We heard about that sincere commitment to these beautiful dogs.

We heard about the trauma that people who work to rescue, repair, foster and rehome these dogs experience, so to denigrate that group of people, not to reference them in your contribution is insulting, and on their behalf, I reject it.

More recently, we accept the findings of the Joint Standing Committee Work Plan Report and I do wonder, having listened to contributions, how many people actually read it.

We accept the findings that despite some animal welfare and integrity improvements in the industry over the past year the Joint Standing Committee's report established that the rate of injury has in fact increased, that serious and catastrophic injuries remain persistently high and, according to the Racing Integrity Commissioner Sean Carroll, euthanasia rates remain pretty static in recent years, although the Joint Standing Committee, which has been denigrated in a number of contributions in here today, has established through the taking of evidence that the breeding of dogs to make money from gambling has increased since the government announced an end to greyhound racing.

Mr President, the Greens, along with so many Tasmanians who've been working to save these dogs from that industry, we've been following the evidence very closely since the *Four Corners* program 'Making a killing' went to air in February of 2015. It was a deeply shocking story put together by excellent journalist Caro Meldrum-Hanna. It woke Australians up to the reality of this industry and it began the slow but certain erosion of any social licence this industry ever had.

So it is not about 'the feels,' as it was put to this council by the member for Elwick Racecourse. It's wrong and insulting to suggest that, that it's just about 'the feels.' And anyway, isn't it important in this place that we don't denigrate the feelings of anyone involved in this debate, participants, and animal welfare advocates alike? This is an issue that evokes, and quite reasonably, very strong feelings.

Ultimately, it's about the evidence and there's so much of it. It's deeply frustrating to sit there and listen to people say the evidence doesn't stack up. Do you know what that means? They didn't look for it. And if it was put in front of them, they didn't read it. That's what that means, you refused to look at, read, and accept the evidence. This is not, as has been suggested by the honourable member for Mersey, a subjective and pseudo-ethical bent, this is a deeply held conviction and an understanding of what happens to those beautiful dogs as a result of an industry that over breeds them for profit for the purposes of gambling, at significant expense to the public purse. We follow the evidence and where necessary, we'll go looking for it through right to information, questions on notice, in parliament, in Estimates and the like. Unlike some honourable members, we can't pretend the evidence doesn't exist, and we won't.

We won't pretend jurisdictions like Wales, Scotland, New Zealand and the Australian Capital Territory, and all but a very small handful of jurisdictions globally have banned greyhound racing on a whim, or for political purpose - we've heard that a fair bit in this debate. Those jurisdictions ended greyhound racing because it was maiming and killing dogs and the community wasn't prepared to accept that anymore.

Again, I want to reference something that was raised by the honourable member for Mersey: for decades, greyhounds have been othered as dogs. They are dogs, Mr President. They're a part of the dog family, Canis familiaris. And yes, there're hound member of that dog family. But they're dogs, they are dogs at the end of the day. Hounds, retrievers, dachshunds, whatever, they're all dogs, Mr President.

So here in Tasmania, the recent EMRS poll, which again, dismissed and denigrated in some contributions, has demonstrated that community support for this industry sits at about 11 per cent. And I think all honourable members, if they just remember the emails that were coming in, and instead of dismissing them as pro formas and thinking about the emails, the passionate emails we got from people who want to see an end to greyhound racing, I think all honourable members in this place know in their heart that the EMRS poll was pretty close to right.

One of the other things that the Tasmanian community, suffering as it is from cuts to public services, very strongly objects to is the level of public funding for this industry. According to economist Saul Eslake - and again we've heard contributions denigrating Saul Eslake from people who are so keen to prop up their position - more than $75 million went to the greyhound code between 2009 and late 2024, when he brought his report down. So, we refuse to pretend there's no evidence of significant animal welfare risks with the greyhound racing industry in Tasmania. We haven't got the blinkers on, that's why. We also stand with a clear majority of Tasmanians, a clear majority in the other place who want an end to greyhound racing, the taxpayer funds that prop it up and the gambling that drives it.

At the heart of this issue are people on both sides of the debate. We've had heartfelt pleas from decent people who rescue, repair and care for ex-racing greyhounds. Just on that - I have here the dog tag of a girl called Izzy. Izzy was the first doggy love of someone I work with and care about very, very much. She's the first greyhound I personally knew, the first greyhound I'd call a friend, the first greyhound I had stay in our home, for a little time. Izzy was the most beautiful dog, and she died early. She died early almost certainly as a result of her treatment in the industry. Vale, Izzy. We do this for you, and we won't forget you.

We've heard from traumatised vets who've had to put these beautiful dogs down, most of them too young, and we've heard from people who are part of this industry. We've heard from many industry participants throughout this debate. It is impossible not to be moved by the passion of plenty of participants for the industry and their dogs. Greyhound racing, and we know this, has been a part of the social and cultural life for many Tasmanians, for industry participants, for decades. Then again, so was whaling once upon a time, and we don't think that's okay anymore, do we?

As part of the work of the first joint sessional committee (JSC) going back to 2015–2016, I went to Mowbray track to watch the races, I met salt-of-the-earth industry participants, I watched the interactions between humans and dogs, I watched the vets' checks, the races. Socially, it was quite a pleasant evening. But it didn't shift my belief that dogs are being exploited for the purposes of gambling, and of course, back then in 2015–2016, what the JSC did establish, because of the euthanasia policy at the time, is that more than 600 dogs were being euthanised in the year that we handed down our report. Now, we know that euthanasia rates have since fallen. It is now not possible for industry players to do what they did for a very long time and that is take their dog that was slowing up, was costing more to feed than they were winning, down to the vet to be euthanised and a term called 'drained'. That is where a

beautiful, perfectly healthy four- or five-year-old dog was taken into the vet and the blood was removed from their body because they're a universal donor, and then they were killed. They were only killed because they weren't making money anymore.

This morning in the briefing we had a conversation with an obviously decent man, Greg Fahey. It's clear to me that Greg loves the dogs, is passionate about the industry, and I do want to thank Greg for his time this morning, particularly the conversation we had after the briefing, which was a very human conversation and a respectful conversation. I want to thank him for his honesty during the briefing and for the insights that he gave into our dog Maxi, an ex-racing greyhound who came from the Fahey syndicate.

But we all know they're not like Greg Fahey - they're not. You know, industry participants don't like it when people mention Anthony Bullock, but let's be really clear about Anthony Bullock - who Tasracing, by the way, has decided to make Trainer of the Year, I think some 17 times. Anthony Bullock, who at any one time has more than 80 dogs in his dingy, crappy little cells up there. Anthony Bullock, who was witnessed hurtling a dog called Tah Bernard into the back of a trailer, an injured dog called Tah Bernard, about three years ago outside the Mowbray vets, where it had been suggested to him that the dog needed treatment and he didn't want to do it, so he chucked it in the back of the trailer and inevitably, Tah Bernard was dead not long after that.

Anthony Bullock has in his custody about a third of the total racing dogs in this industry. Anthony Bullock has been suspended for doping his dogs. And I understand why supporters of this industry don't like it when we talk about Anthony Bullock. I get that, because they're not all like Anthony Bullock, but an industry that industrialises animal suffering for profit is going to produce an Anthony Bullock. Those dogs at the Bullock property spend most of their lives in these awful, dingy little kennels. We've got pictures of Anthony Bullock feeding bread to his dogs. We've got pictures of Ben Yole's horses, ex-harness racing horses, being taken out the back of Bullock's place and shot and fed to his dogs. You want to talk about a cycle of suffering? There it is, Mr President, right there. So do not pretend in this place that there isn't an evidence base on animal welfare grounds.

We undertook a Right to Information (RTI) of Tasracing, because we wanted to understand - because Tas racing's data is so unreliable - what happens to those dead ex-racing greyhounds in the past year, particularly those that were marked as 'dead of unknown causes'. In a single year, there was a month off - and this is at May of this year - so between January and May this year, with a month off due to kennel cough, which the chief vet of Tasmania, Dr Martin Lenz, confirmed was exacerbated for greyhounds. It's just like a flu for dogs, usually. It killed a number of dogs here because of the stress that those dogs are under. In those five months of the year, the RTI showed us that 18 of the dead greyhounds were under six years of age. Clearly, their lives were shortened by an industry that treats them as disposable. Nine of the 24 listed dogs died of unknown causes, with a further five of unestablished cause. So much for whole-of-life tracking.

Two of the dead dogs were trained by Anthony Bullock, and they apparently had died in two separate, amazingly coincidental snakebite incidents. Seven of the dead dogs that came through our Right to Information were in the custody of Anthony Bullock at the time of their deaths. The Tasracing right to information, of course, didn't count the tragic dog Memphis Rains, the greyhound who fractured their hock, which is a dog's ankle, at Elwick in January this year, was stood down for 90 days, sent by the humans who own them and profit from them

back to Melbourne. After languishing here for two or three days after the injury and we couldn't establish that a dog had been taken to a vet. Memphis Rains, injured ankle, sent back to Melbourne - snuffed by a vet within 24 hours. For a fractured ankle. We wouldn't treat our dogs like that, would we? We would not.

The RTI also didn't count two other registered racing greyhounds who died of unexplained causes, Lizzie Milici and Myall Clyde. They were both a little over four years old. Tasracing can't tell us how they died. The RTI also listed 42 former racing dogs listed as third party and pet. No other detail on the right to information. The fact is, Tasracing really has no idea what happened to those greyhounds. It doesn't know what happens to greyhounds that are retired or made pets other than through a rehoming organisation and some of the dogs that are listed as retired or pet will be dead, it's just a fact, on the evidence.

So, I think, the industry and those who pretend that there are no welfare issues in it need to have a look at the data. I think would refresh their thinking. It certainly paints a more complete picture of ongoing injury and death to beautiful sentient animals who are being bred - overbred - exploited for profit and then discarded to Greyhounds as Pets, the RSPCA, the Dogs Home of Tasmania, or the North East Animal Sanctuary, or in some cases they're being popped on Gumtree. But they're certainly being discarded.

No-one is suggesting, and this has been put today, I can't remember by who, that this industry is devoid of compassion. I've never said that. I don't know that any advocate for these beautiful dogs has ever made such a silly statement. I acknowledge there are plenty of smaller players in this industry who do, in fact, love their dogs and treat them well. But in the end, these dogs are bred in significant, completely unsustainable numbers to make money. They are usually disposed of through one means or another once they cost more to feed than they earn.

In evidence given to the JSC, Tasracing has confirmed their whole of life tracking is not, in fact whole of life. Dogs listed as retired on fast track, we later find out, have been deceased for some time. Dogs like Dexter turn up at the Dogs' Home of Tasmania missing an ear and with a gouge in his neck, with no records and an apparent resistance on the part of Tasracing to provide any information to the Dogs' Home about Dexter's backstory. It took an inexcusably long time for Tasracing to engage with the Dogs Home of Tasmania about Dexter, who I met and who the member for Elwick met but was apparently unmoved by.

The transition plan, prepared with such thoroughness by the Office of the Racing Integrity Commissioner, does have its foundation in evidence, compassion and ethical clarity, a respectful and well-planned phase out that provides for a progressively shortened racing calendar, the mechanics for compensation and support for industry participants, certainty for participants and critically, a pathway to rehoming the hundreds of dogs. In fact on the last audit of registered dogs, there's 1120 dogs and the numbers went up because industry participants started breeding up dogs to get ahead of any phase out, but the transition plan did provide a certainty for participants. It did provide a pathway to rehoming and in answer to a question raised by the member for Mersey about what protections racing greyhounds will have should this bill pass, I point him to the evidence given by Andrea Dawkins from the RSPCA, for example, that first of all greyhounds which are not treated equally under the *Animal Welfare Act* would actually be treated like dogs under the *Animal Welfare Act*. That's the big difference. They won't be classified as 'livestock' anymore, they'll be classified as 'dogs', and the full protections of the *Animal Welfare Act* will be applied to greyhounds as 'dogs', and it's never been applied to them before.

As Ms Dawkins from the RSPCA said:

> Well of course, the risk to the greyhounds will be lower should the industry close because they're not being put in that high risk, unsafe situation, these fine boned animals racing around a track at 70 kilometres an hour or more at extreme risk, on the evidence, of injury and death.

So, I would like to think that that would assuage any concerns anyone had about what protections will be afforded to these dogs once they're treated like other dogs.

I need to address something that's come up in a few contributions.

We didn't make a deal with the Liberals, we just didn't. There's no coalition, there's no written agreement. Every day is a new day there for the government in the House of Assembly because we didn't make a deal and to be insulted and called 'naysaying kingmakers', as we were in a recent contribution, is disrespectful, dismissive, wrong and galling.

We're in this, because we want to see those beautiful dogs just live a good life, like other dogs in loving homes.

So, back to the industry. In terms of industry participants directly affected, the answers that we obtained to Questions on Notice in Estimates - this is evidence people could rely on if they chose not to rely on other information that we've provided which is being referenced. In July this year we got back some answers to Questions on Notice and they show that there are 125 registered trainers in Tasmania. One quarter of these don't have a dog registered to them.

One trainer alone is responsible for more than 1 in 10 racing greyhounds; 40 per cent of the 765 registered racing greyhounds are registered to just 10 trainers as at July this year.

Two thirds or 512 of these greyhounds are registered to just 28 trainers, so roughly 30 individuals are responsible for two thirds of racing greyhounds in Tasmania.

In terms of a just respectful transition, we believe that is a manageable challenge for the transition plan and there is every reason to be sure that those affected participants are looked after well should this bill pass.

I say to members who've gone back into the process and the broken promise, and none of that is unreasonable. I mean you might not trust the government, and let's face it, most days I don't. But what we're talking about here, should this bill have passed and it won't - I know that and I'm not going to be called out for sort of pre-empting the result of the debate today - those amendments that have been put forward by government were the result of multiple - and I'm sure he thought they were respectful conversations - between the racing minister and members of this parliament, including some members of this place who aren't me. They are a good faith effort to give the community participants, animal welfare advocates and rehoming organisations legislative and regulatory certainty. Obviously, I can't totally pre-empt the result of this debate, but what this bill and the transition plan provided for was a respectful, well planned, appropriately funded, structured phase out of greyhound racing in Tasmania. That was the easy way. That was the easy way, because it remains the government's policy to end

greyhound racing in Tasmania, and being the government, of course, it has a number of tools available at its disposal.

Greyhounds are a unique and physically striking breed of dog, but in the end, they're just dogs. They're sentient. They have a sense of self. They feel love, loneliness, joy and pain, and any person who's had a dog in their lives knows this. You only have to look in their eyes, like I looked in my dog's eyes this morning - there's a soul in there, a personality, a desire for love and affection, a loyalty and trust for those who've had positive experiences of human, and not all dogs have had positive experiences of humans, of course. Plenty of greyhounds have not. But those of us, like Peter G, who brought a greyhound into our homes, we love our previously discarded dogs.

As honourable members will be aware, there's a relatively new man in my life. He's tall, he's very dark. In fact, he's black, and he's ever so handsome: Maximus Black AKA Maxi AKA Hercules Morse, as big as a horse, came into our lives on April 1 this year, which is my birthday. He's changed our family life so much for the better, but it was really hard for him at first. He'd been racing for about four-and-a-half years, not much of a runner. He got one first because I think he worked out the rabbit wasn't even real, so what was the point? He got five seconds and nine thirds. Towards the end of his career, he invariably came eighth, or last, his stewards' reports have three letters often attached to his race performance: SOW - slow out, runs wide. That checks. In his racing career, Maxi made over a bit over $10,500. Before being injured catastrophically and euthanised on track last year his actual littermate, Raiders Guide, made more than $660,000. Raider's guide lived a little over four years. When my beautiful little dog Rocky died in March this year, he'd reached the age of 17. Most greyhounds don't make it to 10.

When Maxi arrived in our family, he was clearly traumatised by kennel life. When my colleague Suze and I went out to Greyhounds As Pets to collect him, as soon as he saw that door open, to the outside world, an escape from the kennels, he almost levitated. He almost levitated over the steps, and his tail went up in the air. He knew was going to have a better life. Over the past seven months this dog, who was sort of uncertain and kind of stiff and a bit non-reactive, has turned into this gorgeous character. We've watched with great happiness as the tension has left his body, as he's relaxed. I've patted him at night when he's going to bed and I pat him and I pat him, and he breathes out really slowly, and you know that's all the tension leaving his body. He has a very playful personality. I think he's quite a smart dog, but he plays dumb quite a bit. He's stoic - he's never ruffled by small, insecure breeds having a snap at him when we take him for a walk. He's incredibly gentle. There's a calmness and a sweetness about him. He's an absolute sucker for a pat. He's just a dog, at the end of the day, but he doesn't have the freedoms of other domestic dogs. We go down to Kingston Beach where all the other dogs are gambolling freely on the sand, swimming in the water. Maxi stays on the leash. All he wants to do is play and run with the other dogs, but under the effective control provisions of the *Dog Control Act*, of course, because of his breed and his history, he cannot. But as I left him lazing on the couch in the sun this morning with his mate Frankie at his side and our huge backyard there behind him, I reminded myself he now has a very good life, and I reckon he knows it.

But he is one of the lucky ones. As we've heard, the most recent audit found 1120 dogs. There's a bit over 40 dogs currently housed waiting for homes at Greyhound Adoption Program (GAP). There are dozens and dozens waiting to get into GAP, where they'll wait even longer to find that loving home and couch.

If you truly love dogs of any and all shapes and sizes, then you cannot support greyhound racing. You cannot. It is, as the racing minister told the Joint Standing Committee, inherently unsafe for dogs. Of course it is - these are big but very fine-boned animals flying around tracks at 70 kilometres an hour or so. They are extremely at risk of injury, and the data supports that.

Now, honourable members will have seen - and it's pretty apparent to me they didn't open it up - maybe because I sent it, because it came from the Greens - the PDFs of the Google Docs that we've been pulling together for some time now. As I said in my email to honourable members, they come from the Stewards' Reports and from FastTrack, and then they've been cross-referenced with Right to Information material. All of this in this table is verifiable, and I'd have answered any question any honourable member had about these documents, if they'd bothered to open them and look at them.

Ms Webb - Actual evidence. Is that what you have there?

Ms O'CONNOR - I've got some evidence here, honourable member for Nelson.

Ms Webb - Is that evidence?

Ms O'CONNOR - Let me talk to you about the evidence, and thank you for the question. So, if we go to just the year 2026 so far, what we have is 204 injuries, racing injuries. We've had members in this place trivialising those injuries and saying most of them are just sort of sore toes. Well, let me take you to the actual numbers. There have been fifteen 90-day standdowns. So, 15 presumably individual dogs have been injured to the extent that the stewards said they can't race for three months. That's what Memphis Rains got. That dog got a 90-day standdown here in Tasmania and was sent by the humans who owned it back to Melbourne, where it was killed. Sixty-day standdowns, quite serious injuries - there have been four 60-day standdowns since the beginning of this year, and there have been 18 month-long standdowns, and 28 day standdowns. So much for them being safer on the track, which we have heard from the member for Elwick Racecourse.

In 2026 we've had 48 verifiable deaths so far that we know of; 204 injuries on track; and in 2025 we had 49 deaths, multiple significant injuries.

Honourable members would also have received - who knows if anyone opened it and read it - rigorous work undertaken by journalist and researcher Susan Metcalfe. I don't know how Susan lives with the trauma of the work that she undertakes, but she watches races all over the country. Susan records them and has sent this document to everyone, but I thought I'd resend it to people just in case it had slipped through our overwhelmed inboxes. Susan Metcalfe probably knows more than most of us about this industry at a national level, but she pays close attention to Tasmania. Susan says:

> Greyhound racing is not just about what happens at a track. It's not just about the horrific images of greyhounds falling and suffering contained in race replays. They quickly disappear from public view.
>
> A greyhound is bred, broken in and trained to chase at high speed.

> A greyhound is kenneled at a trainer's property with other greyhounds in separate caged areas, often in conditions many Australians would find unacceptable.
>
> Greyhounds used for racing are business products with many bought and sold and moved around to different owners, different trainers, different kennels, during their short racing lives.
>
> Tasracing appears to be trying to clean up a giant mess of poor record-keeping from past years in an industry with a dark history when it comes to disappearing greyhounds.

She says that this information that she provided to us all is sourced mostly from Tasracing responses to Right to Information applications from me and the Greens, along with other official and public sources, and she asks multiple questions about all the dead dogs from 2025-26. I'm going to read into *Hansard* a few of the dogs' names:

- Raider's Guide, who I've talked about - Maxi's brother
- In October 2026, just last month, a greyhound called Angry Mac fell at Elwick suffering an injury to the right hind leg, euthanised on track. No further details were provided in the post-race report. So much for whole-of-life tracking.
- Also in October this year, while running at a trial in Hobart, a dog called Demon Hunters suffered a compound right radius ulnar fracture and severe bleeding. He was euthanised.
- In January this year, Hellyer Dougie suffered horrendous injuries at Launceston, severe injuries at breakdown, screaming, left radius, ulna compound open fracture, right limulus fracture complete. This is the Stewards' Report. His distress would have been extreme before he was euthanised.
- Quiet Lakes was euthanised at the Hobart track in May of last year due to a fractured left femur and left elbow.
- Mustang Carly euthanised at Hobart in October last year due to spinal cord damage suffered post-race in the catching pen.
- Mr Bad Guy euthanised due to possible brain damage on the Ebony Minda Straight Track in March of last year.
- Lizzy Milici euthanised in May of this year due to injuries suffered during a trial, a complete fracture of the distal tibia hock with cranial displacement. How does a dog displace its crania on the track, running at high speed in a pack for people to gamble on and make money?
- Manila Dozer euthanised in April this year due to a complete fracture of the distal tibia right hind leg with displacement, having never run in an official race.

- Just Regal fell in Hobart on 11 November last year suffering a right hind stifle injury. Stood down for 60 days, and within less than a month, having been stood down for 60 days, he was euthanised because of his injuries.

- Perfect Shadows suffered a fractured left hock at Hobart on 23 January last year, euthanised due to a track injury two days later. Told you about Memphis Rains. Oh, just Monday night, Monday night at Mowbray, while the replay is missing for Race 9 from Tasracing's website because of their pattern and practice of hiding the injuries on track, what we do know, and it was shown live, is that a greyhound who someone thought giving the name Raving Lunatic to was a good idea, was out in front, slowed up suddenly, no report yet but showing as a major 90-day injury on his fast track record. Unfortunately, if any honourable members were looking for evidence they wouldn't find it on the Tasracing website.

So, there is no evidence if you don't look for it or choose to ignore it and that's what's happening here with some of the contributions that we've heard. To say there's been only one animal welfare breach in the past year is a complete misunderstanding of the situation and a complete dismissal of the circumstances of those dogs' lives; confined as they are usually for 23.5 hours a day at a minimum, in kennels that, under the code of practice for greyhound racing, are allowed to be 1.2 m by 1.8 m. I mean, if you want to back greyhound racing, don't pull out 'spurious animal welfare' arguments for it. Just be honest. You support greyhound racing. Just say it, straight up, no bull. Give it a try. Don't pretend you hadn't already made your mind up.

No honourable member asked how many unannounced visits, for example, Tasracing had undertaken to industry participants in the past year. How many unannounced visits in the past year, did you ask for that information?

Ms Thomas - It was in my question on notice.

Ms O'CONNOR - What was the answer?

Mr PRESIDENT - Order. We can't have debate across the Chamber. Sorry.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, thank you for your ruling, but it's not unusual to have debate across the Chamber.

So, until very recent changes to the *Dog Control Act* regulations, the RSPCA had no jurisdiction over greyhound racing owners or trainers, so they had no capacity to ensure the wellbeing of racing greyhounds. Now they do.

I was going to talk to honourable members about the contents of the animal welfare chapter of the Joint Standing Committee report but seeing as no-one who's spoken today apparently has read it, I don't really see the point. I was going to read in some of the former Chief Vet of Greyhound Racing NSW's evidence about what happens to these beautiful dogs on tracks, the cover-up, the horrific injuries - dogs being sliced in half by the lure line - there doesn't seem to be any point in doing that either.

We have had a number of honourable members pretend that Tasracing, the operations of greyhound racing have never been examined by the Department of Treasury and Finance. Well,

I'm pleased to inform the Council that in 2020, Treasury and Finance undertook a desktop review of Tasracing Pty Ltd, a desktop review of the costs and functions, and they go to a report which is cited often by industry advocates and has been cited in debate in this place, and if you want some actual evidence of how flawed the IER assessments are, I suggest honourable members go and have a look at the Treasury desktop analysis. It talks about the 2013 report on the size and scope of the Tasmanian racing industry, which was prepared by the consulting firm IER. I pause at this moment to note that IER was commissioned to undertake the most recent assessment of the industry, and it is the consultancy of choice for the industry in every mainland jurisdiction. That report claimed the industry contributed more than $103 million annually to the Tasmanian economy via employment and spending and was responsible for sustaining just under 1000 direct and indirect full-time equivalent jobs in Tasmania. So, IER used an economic multiplier to calculate those values. It is important to note, says Treasury, in the financial analysis they undertook of the three codes. It is important to note, says Treasury:

> That reports with strong reliance on economic multipliers can be inherently unreliable and problematic. Put simply, if multiplier effect was included for all existing industries in Tasmania when estimating their economic contribution to the state, the combined effect would be that Tasmania's economy would be two or three times its current size,

It says:

> While the IER report suggests the Tasmanian racing industry was directly and indirectly responsible for sustaining just under 1000 full-time equivalent jobs in Tasmania, according to the most recent ABS census data -

And that is now 2016,

> - of the total workforce in Tasmania, 181 people derived their main income from the racing industry.

Ms Webb - Was that Treasury who said that, was it?

Ms O'CONNOR - That's what Treasury said.

Ms Webb - Is that evidence from Treasury about that?

Ms O'CONNOR - That is evidence from Treasury and Finance.

Ms Webb - 181 jobs, was it?

Ms O'CONNOR - Sorry, just let me just double-check that. So, it's really clear. The IER report claimed almost 1000 full-time equivalent jobs generated by the racing industries. But what the ABS data from 2016 says is that 181 people derived their main income from the racing industries.

Now, it was interesting that the honourable member for Pembroke reflected on all MLCs making their mind up and voting with their conscience, when his party is the only one in here who cannot. And I wonder if his colleagues in the other place wish he was right. And I wonder

if they, many of them I know, wish this bill and this debate would go another way because this issue is hanging around the neck of Josh Willie like a carcass.

Mr Edmonds also waxed lyrical about the finances of greyhound racing, refused to acknowledge Saul Eslake's report, almost completely forgetting his own party's policy, which according to Josh Willie, of having the industry stand on its own two feet.

Mr President, how much time do I have left because I must get some thankyous in.

Ms Webb - No time limit.

Mr PRESIDENT - No time.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, settle in everyone.

So, Josh Willie has said, under enormous pressure that he expects greyhound racing to stand on its own two feet. An industry which, according to Saul Eslake, has received more than $75 million in state public funding, taxpayer money, since the sale of the TOTE in 2009.

I might just say I wasn't serious when I threatened to keep everyone here all night, though the way I'm feeling right now, it is tempting.

Ms Webb - Say what you need to say, though, that's fine.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. I'll say it for Izzy and Maxi. Thank you, member for Nelson. So, in defending Labor's appalling record on animal welfare, Mr Edmunds referred to their tenacious scrutiny of the harness racing industry and infamous trainer Ben Yole. And credit where it's due, I do commend Mr Winter in the other place for his commitment to that.

Ms Webb - You forget they know how to scrutinise things sometimes, you forget.

Ms O'CONNOR - He does. Just say that [inaudible 8:58:57 turn 061], I'm happy to take that interjection.

Ms Webb - It's okay, I was just being rude.

Mr PRESIDENT - We do have to be careful reflecting on debate in the other place too.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. I wasn't reflecting on the debate I was talking about Mr Winter's position, not a specific debate. It was about comments he'd made in the other place, and many people comment on comments in the other place. But what was missed was the undeniable connection between Ben Yole and his former very good friend, and they may still be very good friends, syndicate mate and horse carcass recipient Anthony Bullock, and in a cycle of absolute and abject cruelty, Mr Yole and Mr Bullock were inextricably linked, not only in infamy, but in their mass animal exploitation operations, one quite literally fed the other, because when Ben Yole's horses weren't making money anymore, they went to feed Anthony Bullock's dogs. So interestingly, when my colleagues in the other place asked Mr Edmunds' colleagues to condemn the practices of Mr Bullock, they would not. So, it's a kind of double standard here, isn't there, given Mr Bullock's known history of cruelty to animals and

his numerous suspensions, including for doping, I think that speaks for itself on the Labor Party's animal welfare advocacy.

The honourable member for Huon, Ms Glade-Wright, talked about the human side of this industry also in really evocative terms and not just participants, punters, and I think we should be clear about the reason greyhound racing persists in this country: It is to pad out racing channels. It's quick, cheap and dirty, punting between thoroughbreds and harness racing. Not only do the animals cost less to feed and house, but races are over in under a minute and stacked in race after race. No gambler gets a rest. I also want to echo Ms Glade-Wright's comments that safer is not safe. This is the very point that drove New Zealand to ending their industry, and just on something that was mentioned by the honourable member for Launceston about New Zealand, I think there may have been a misunderstanding of the way New Zealand ended greyhound racing, because there was no well-phased transition. No. Bang. Overnight. Winston Peters stood up, after receiving information, and he said we're going to end this and we're going to end it in 18 months, and here's the date. End it they did, but you would not call that the kind of well-planned and structured transition, that this House, and the industry and people who care about dogs are being presented with through this legislation and the transition plan. So, when safer is not safe was put to representatives of Greyhounds Tasmania in the JSC hearings, I think in an exchange which won't be forgotten anytime soon, my colleague, the honourable member for Nelson, asked Mr Luke Gatehouse, who is based in Queensland, but is a mouthpiece for the industry here, Ms Webb asked what Mr Gatehouse thought an acceptable risk might be, what is the acceptable level of risk? There was this long and drawn out, quite beautiful silence, because in that silence, everything was said.

So, in response to the member for Pembroke's and the member for Elwick's claims of no mandate on the part of government, I do think we owe it to our newest colleague in this place, Miss Glade-Wright, to acknowledge that this issue was put, as the honourable member for Rosevears has said in a beautiful contribution, to people at an election, both Council elections in May this year had this bill as a significant issue. It was topical. So, we have two members in here whose positions on this issue have been validated by the vote, one of whom defeated the incumbent, the former member for Huon, who I believe put his position on this bill out there just a little bit too late.

We've also seen at least three new mayors elected who've publicly backed in this bill, the structure of it, the end of greyhound racing in Tasmania. Two former Labor members, I might add: Jo Westwood in Kingborough and Abby McKibben in Huon Valley; and today, Hobart's new Lord Mayor, Charles Wooley, and his dog Rusty, have done the same.

A lot has been made of the bad process around this bill, and it's not good when a government makes a promise to a group of people and then a short time later breaks that promise. It's a bit like the $375 million capped stadium expenditure and 'not a red cent more'. I agree it hasn't been the cleanest or the best process, but in this place, I don't think we should let poor process get in the way of good policy.

It's not my job to defend the government here, but I will say they did do what members of this place asked of government in April - to go back, get more evidence on the table and to take members' feedback on board.

Tick, tick, tick. The member for Elwick asked, 'Is this about what we want as humans?' I found that a bizarre argument, given the complexity and the diversity of humanity itself but

also the varied views on this issue, all of us being of the species human; *Homo sapiens.* Who speaks for the dogs? Well, a number of honourable members who've spoken in this place and the other place certainly spoke for the dogs and for the industry participants and for dignity and respect in this process. The fact of the matter is these beautiful dogs don't have a voice, but there are plenty of people in the community who will give the dogs that voice, and if anyone here thinks that they're going to go away or give up, they are very sadly mistaken.

Animal welfare laws do not apply equally to all animals. Greyhounds have, to date, been treated under Tasmanian law as livestock. The false equivalence with other dogs was really something. Don't 'other' dogs. But if you want to talk about sighthounds, it's more than greyhounds and whippets. It's deerhounds, it's lurchers, it's salukis. There's a whole collective of dogs that fit into the sighthound category. It's not just greyhounds and whippets.

The fact is, other dogs, apart from greyhounds, are not put on unsafe tracks to race at high speed for the purposes of attracting gambling dollars and prize money. That doesn't happen to other dogs. That only happens to greyhounds, a dog that's been 'othered' for too long. They're just a dog.

The member for Elwick claimed that industry participants are not cashed-up operators. No, they're not all cashed-up operators, it's true. Many are hobbyists, and we have some statistics about the make-up of the industry that's on the Joint Standing Committee website, if anyone wants to go and look for some actual evidence.

Ms Webb - What actual evidence is available on the website?

Ms O'CONNOR - There's some actual evidence. Thank you, honourable member for Nelson. There is some actual evidence about -

Ms Webb - Available for people to look at?

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, publicly available on the website. Thanks for seeking clarity about that. Thank you very much.

Ms Webb - I'm glad to know it's there.

Ms O'CONNOR - I'm not sure if the member knows this, but it's a fact that about 50 per cent of the industry's registered dogs are owned by syndicates, and they're not the hobbyists. I have seen some information about what some trainers earn, and I can tell you, and that was information that was provided to the Joint Standing Committee. I can tell you there are some very, very cashed-up operators in the Tasmanian greyhound racing industry, earnings in the many hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. The big players earn more than any one of us in here and we are very well paid.

There are a few people that I want to thank. It's been a real privilege to get to know some of these wonderful people who give so much for these beautiful dogs tirelessly, relentlessly, fiercely, but with kind hearts. I know, because they have been watching the debate all day today, I know their hearts will be hurting, and many of them will be sitting there with their beautiful greyhounds and their other dogs, feeling sad, It's okay to feel sad. I feel sad. I feel sad for those dogs. I feel sad for the people who love them and the people who'll fight for them - but

the thing is, we've been fighting for these dogs for nearly 12 years now. We are not giving up; the fight goes on.

An easier path was presented to the industry. The corollary of that, of course, is that there's a harder path. There are rules of racing. There are racing deeds, there are regulations. It's a question of funding. I don't have the answers to those questions because I am not the government, but I do know it is the government's policy to end greyhound racing in Tasmania by 1 July 2029. I do know that in the community, there is very strong support for an end to greyhound racing on this island, and an end to the subsidies that underpin it. We will keep fighting, and we will win. We will win because we've got right on our side. This is a just fight. It is a selfless and just fight, and the people who've been part of that and this journey I must thank. I want to thank the wonderful Deb Fleming, Order of Australia.

Ms Webb - Hear, hear.

Ms O'CONNOR - Hear, hear. Who's given so much and who will keep giving so much for these dogs. Fran Chambers, champion.

Ms Webb - Hear, hear.

Ms O'CONNOR - Hear, hear - absolute champion. Kind, passionate, smart. Fran, we see you. I thank Susan Metcalfe for her meticulous work recording the evidence of what happens to these dogs, overbred as they are for profit. I'm sorry that the RSPCA and the Dogs' Home of Tasmania have been denigrated in this debate, and no-one can deny they have been, by people making false equivalence arguments, but I do want to thank Andrea Dawkins and Richard Mussell from the RSPCA; Mark Wild from the Dogs' Home of Tasmania, his big heart; the North East Animal Sanctuary Tasmania; Dr Megan Alessandrini, who members would have met this morning, who has a very deep understanding of these dogs, their nature, what happens to them. A bit of a weapon of choice, Rosie Saville, who has relentlessly, steadfastly, implacably brought the Liberal Party around to having a principled position on this industry. Year after year, Rosie would turn up at the Liberal Party state conference, chipping away for those dogs and it worked. The Liberal Party's policy is to end greyhound racing, and nothing that happens with this bill will change that. I'm sure the doctors' wives of Sandy Bay wouldn't have it anyway.

Lianne Salerno, the former manager at GAP, who's still traumatised by her experience but has a huge heart for dogs. The wonderful Jo Smith from north-west Tasmania, who loves these dogs so much that she actually set up an op shop to raise money for greyhounds. I can't remember the name off the top of my head, but there's a fantastic creator who Jo organised to have an exhibition of greyhounds and for greyhounds. I thank Annie Hendley, Kristy Alger, Mel Fraser, Dr Katrina Ward, a vet who presented to us about the nature of these dogs and what happens to them at high speed on tracks. I want to thank my colleague in the other place, Kristie Johnston MP and her beautiful dog Freddie, and to thank Kristie for her very able - I mean anyone who's watched the joint standing committee and thinks that we've been conducting ourselves in an inappropriate or an unparliamentary or a biased way had a preconceived idea of our work because Kristie's work as chair has been extremely balanced. On that, I also want to thank the other members of the joint standing committee, whatever your position is on the bill, and to everyone who presented evidence to us or made a submission. Jan Davis, who has also written to all honourable members about the industry and the huge financial drain that it ultimately is. Madeline Burton, Emma Haswell from Brightside, our wonderful greyhound

ambassadors, Peter Gee and Greg Irons. There's a couple of media and communication professionals who provided invaluable advice and guidance to us on this bill and this matter. Out of respect for them and concern for their future capacity to get work, I'm not going to name them, but if they're watching, you know who you are and many of us are very thankful.

Just in closing, I know what's happened here. I understand it's a very hard thing to end an industry, very hard. I'm sure that the government at the time that we banned whaling felt uncomfortable about it, it was lobbied about, it had numerous representations made by whaling industry representatives and, ultimately, they ended whaling because it was the right thing to do. But there was great resistance to that. Just like there was great resistance to giving women the vote, I might say. Apparently, the sky was going to fall in and yet here we are. It is very difficult for a group of people like this and in the other place to be asked to end an industry. It's very hard, particularly when you have to look people who are affected by the potential passage of this bill in the eye and you know that the future for them is full of uncertainty. I know it's hard. But parliaments have to make hard decisions. Parliaments need to respond to the shifting values and concerns of our community. And on this issue, community values have changed significantly in the past 10 years. It is no longer acceptable in the community's mind to breed dogs and put them at extreme risk of injury and death for the purposes of a gambling industry, for the profit of the few, the community doesn't support that. The more than a thousand people, including many distinguished Tasmanians, who wrote us the open letter earlier this year, they didn't support that. The 13,500 or so Tasmanians who signed onto the petition, the biggest ever e-petition in Tasmania's parliament, they don't support greyhound racing and they don't support it on ethical grounds, because they don't want to see public money peed up against a wall, for an industry that is losing social support, as well as causing harm to dogs and killing dogs.

So, we fight on. And, should this bill go down, I need to assure our members who vote against it that I'll be accessing the adjournment every time a dog is injured seriously on the track or dies. I'll be accessing my rights in this place on the adjournment and I'll be reminding honourable members about the consequences of our votes. Because every vote in this place has consequence, some have more than others, and the consequence of this bill not passing, should it not pass, will continue to be dogs snuffed before their time. It is not true to say, as the honourable member for Elwick did that only 2 per cent of greyhounds are injured. There are about 450 active dogs in the industry each year, or right now, that statistic is 2 per cent of 1000 starts. Now, if you have a look at the injury data from Fast Track and the stewards' reports, and you view it objectively, you will know that a dog's risk of injury, a racing dog in Tasmania, their risk of injury on the track is about 50 per cent. And would you believe, Mr President, that's the evidence. Now -

Ms Webb - That's the what?

Ms O'CONNOR - More evidence.

Ms Webb - Oh, the evidence.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, there's evidence; I know. It's just numbers, but I've heard that numbers don't lie. So, I would encourage honourable members to allow this bill into committee, so that at least we can have the discussion about the good faith amendments that have been put forward, in part as a response to requests by this Council and issues that were raised by this Council. It's very unusual not to allow a bill to go to committee and, as I said, this bill and the transition plan, they were the easy way - as hard as they were, they were the easy way.

Ms Webb - The respectable, careful way.

[9.23 p.m.]

Mr VINCENT (Prosser - Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, as we just take a bit of a breath for a few minutes, I couldn't help but pick up this afternoon some amazingly clever names of dogs, and you see it with the horseracing industry also, and the Leader just tapped me on the shoulder and said, 'You're Good to Go,' so I'm Good To Go, now. I have one for you, Mr President, with all respect, which is Toot Toot Prez, and I have Black Rod Maximus and Struth Ruth, then I thought I'd better give up because I was getting into areas that might get me into trouble after that. It's marvellous how the mind works when you're sitting there listening to all these amazing names come up and it brought me back to about 45 years ago: a work colleague had one called Breakaway Star and I went to the only two greyhound meetings I can remember being to and it was a breakaway in a lot of things, but not a star and I've never forgotten the name.

Before I start into the closing comments, I'd like to thank the member for Launceston, who summed up in her first couple of minutes the passion, good, bad and indifferent of the room today. You have to say that it is good to see passion from all sides of an argument and that's what this is about in this Chamber. Probably the bit I didn't enjoy, Mr President, was your blood pressure going through the roof a couple of times, so I will sincerely try not to do that during my closing remarks.

Before I respond to the members' contributions, I would like to first address the delay since this bill was last before this Chamber in April of this year. During the debate, specific issues were raised about the bill, in particular, support for participants, and the government listened. To continue the debate would not have given an opportunity for an informed debate when further information could be provided to inform your decision on the bill.

This bill is about animal welfare and orderly transition for its participants. The Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commission, in consultation with the Greyhound Racing Transition Working Group, has released the draft Greyhound Racing Transition Plan. While the draft transition plan is not being debated today, the release provides important information for the industry, dog welfare providers and the general community on the transition. The government amendments will strengthen the information to be included in the closure plan and provide a process for the scrutiny of the plan and include a role for the parliament.

I'll now address some of the specific matters raised by members. For the Member of Pembroke, with respect to the cost to the taxpayers, for greyhounds, the net cost is not the only subsidy of the industry. As noted by the member, the net cost does not cover the Greyhound as Pet program, GAP, nor the greyhound share of the unallocated $11 million that Tasracing does not breakdown between codes, or the integrity costs. The bill certainly is not economic vandalism. Treasury in its contribution to the joint standing committee said with respect to the phase-out of the greyhound racing:

> If the bill is enacted, I think it's fair to say that the impacts we're seeing will now be described as marginable for the economy.

This bill is about animal welfare and inherent risk in greyhound racing. The government is proud of the reforms made in the *Racing Regulation Integrity Act 2024*. However, you cannot

regulate to remove the inherent risk to greyhounds. As the Hanson report in New Zealand released in 2017 states,

> Greyhound racing is inherently dangerous. Greyhounds race at high speeds in conditions which make injuries almost inevitable.

And the New Zealand government, after subsequent review, have ended greyhound racing in that country.

I didn't hear the member for Pembroke mention it, but as far as I understand the Labor Party's policy is to not fund the greyhound racing beyond the current deed. The member for Pembroke will correct me if I'm wrong, but -

Mr Edmunds - Sorry, Mr President, I don't mean to interject, but I'm being verballed here. There's a clear policy in the Labor Party the last two elections to conclude the deed.

[Unknown member 9:28:54] - Isn't that what he just said?

Mr Edmunds - No, he said that we wouldn't conclude.

Mr VINCENT - No, it would -

Ms O'Connor - Sorry, can you just be clear about the policy?

Mr Edmunds - To get the deed done.

Ms O'Connor - No, he said the industry would stand on its own feet, six months ago.

Mr PRESIDENT - Order, if the Deputy Leader can finish doing his summing up.

Mr VINCENT - But this, Mr President, further enforces the need for legislation that provides for the transition.

First, with respect to the assertion that a phase-out is contrary to the animal welfare concerns behind this bill, this fails to take account of the need for an orderly transition. If there is a hard stop to racing, rehoming entities would be overwhelmed and there would be an increased risk of euthanasia of dogs.

In response to the member for Murchison, I would like to thank the member for her contribution and for expressing the various issues each member will be considering in this debate. To address some of the members questions during her contribution government support for animal welfare includes the government supports the member's view that animal welfare is an important consideration not confined to this one industry.

I note that the member for Elwick also touched on this.

The Liberal government earlier on increased the penalties in the *Animal Welfare Act 1993* and it also increased support for animal welfare compliance.

Mr President, in the 2024-25 budget, the government increased funding to the RSPCA with an additional $800,000 per year over four years, giving the RSPCA a total of $1.5 million per year. This is a significant investment which supports the RSPCA Inspectorate.

While I acknowledge the improvements made in injury and euthanasia rates, the inherent risk of greyhound racing remains and cannot be eliminated. This is supported by other countries who have banned greyhound racing in recognition of this risk.

Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of the industry, questions about its social licence remain for many in the community and for others it is the issues of the animal welfare and gambling, as the member has indicated.

In relation to economic analysis, there are competing reports on the value of the industry, as the member has indicated, with different methodologies. The Align Sport analysis (TBC inaudible 9:31:47) was released with the Commissioners Draft Greyhound Racing Transition Plan in which he refers to IER, size and scope of the Tasmanian Racing Industry 2023 to base his report regarding economic size and scope of the Tasmanian racing industry.

It is important, however, to understand what the different models do.

Treasury's evidence to the Joint Standing Committee on Greyhound Racing Transition noted that racing contributes to employment, regional participation and community activity in Tasmania. However, it draws an important distinction between the economic activity associated with racing and the additional economic benefit generated by government funding.

Treasury's assessment is that the net economic return on the government investment in racing as a whole is modest.

Mr President, with respect to the phase out of the greyhound racing and, as I indicated in my contribution to the member for Pembroke, if the bill is enacted, Treasury at the Joint Standing Committee hearing noted that I think it's fair to say the impacts we're seeing now would be described as manageable for the economy.

What the Align Sport modelling does clearly show is that a phase in approach, as provided in the bill, enables early investment and is the most responsible and cost-effective approach to transition. It estimates that a 12-month delay in the transition would increase costs by around $8 to $9 million.

While making no additional investment during the transition, this would increase cost by more than $22 million.

The member for Montgomery - Tasracing contribution to the transition.

In relation to the member of Montgomery's question on the contribution, the assessment on the future funding options of the Tasmanian racing industry have been completed and the government is now working to establish the new funding deed for Tasracing. As part of that work, the government recognises that the transition away from greyhound racing is likely to have operational and cost impacts for Tasracing. That's why it makes sense that Tasracing's ongoing funding arrangements, beyond the expiration of the main funding deed, to be informed by the proposed Greyhound Racing Transition Plan and expected impacts. Turning to

Tasracing's contribution to animal and participation welfare the transition will require a focus on rehoming. There is a long-standing arrangement for Tasracing to support through the Greyhound as Pets program rehoming support, greyhound injury rehabilitation grants, participant welfare support and the employee assistance program. These are existing investments by Tasracing, and it is reasonable to expect Tasracing to continue to provide these supports to racing participants and animals during that transition period.

In relation to a series of questions on welfare. The member for Murchison spoke of the potential impacts of the transition of the industry. Support for rural communities is important to the government. The commissioner has been proactive while the bill has been progressed, establishing the Greyhound Racing Transition Working Group and ensuring information is available on support services provided available to participants to assist them throughout this period of huge change.

With respect to the member for Elwick and her question around consultation on the draft transition plan, it has not been put out for formal consultation as the bill provides the statutory process for development of the closure plan. The amendments proposed by the government to the bill require a period of public consultation on the closure plan, enabling feedback from industry and the community to inform the closure plan. The provisions in the bill support the phased approach towards the gradual reduction in racing greyhounds in Tasmania as we move towards the closure date.

Member for Mersey raised concerns for the animal welfare of greyhounds after the phase out of greyhound racing and the greyhounds will be pets with inherent risks that arise from racing being removed. I have to say a huge thank you to all those good-hearted people that do rehome greyhounds. It is a myth that greyhounds will not be subject to animal welfare standards. The *Animal Welfare Act 1993* applies to all animals in the state. The act imposes a duty to take all reasonable measures to ensure the welfare of the animal and has offence provisions with significant penalties for breaches. The government this year updated the animal welfare regulations, the amendments to the regulations removed exemptions that have applied to greyhounds relating to facilities and the new regulations include updating requirements for breeding and breeding animal welfare, housing and shelter, exercise and social needs, transport and handling, veterinarian care and health management and responsible ownership and care of dogs.

I note that the member for Launceston indicated the greyhound industry has a higher standard with respect to euthanasia of dogs. However, the regulations apply standards that must be applied for euthanasia of all dogs. Compliance with the act and regulations can be undertaken by compliance officers in biosecurity as well as the RSPCA. With respect to commercial dog racing, the bill does not ban all racing. A commercial dog race means a race between two or more dogs in pursuit of a mechanical or electronic lure where any one or more of the following actions, as outlined in the bill, occurs. The bill does not ban dogs playing on beaches or parks.

Regarding lure coursing, the government has provided advice in response to the Joint Standing Committee. The regulations under the *Animal Welfare Act* is the appropriate mechanism to control and exempt activities in an orderly manner to avoid inherently enabling commercial dog racing. As this part commences by the 1st of July 2029, there is sufficient time to deliver more and new regulations, Mr President. Greyhounds that are retired and rehomed under the rules of racing currently must be desexed and during the transition period if a

participant wishes to retain a whole dog for showing or breeding for pet post-transition, an application can be made to the Chief Racing Integrity Officer for an exemption for the desexing requirement.

In terms of breeding, the bill introduces a prohibition on the breeding of greyhounds for the purpose of racing. Breeding of greyhounds as domestic pets will be allowed. In closing, the Tasmanian Government's decision is guided by a commitment to animal welfare and community expectations. Across Australia and indeed internationally, greyhound racing and industry faces persistent welfare challenges. By phasing out greyhound racing, Tasmania is taking a proactive and responsible approach to ensure a safe future for greyhounds.

This reflects modern community expectations for animal welfare and proposed amendments to be moved today reflect the recommendations of the majority in the Joint Standing Committee on Greyhound Racing Transition report. Those not responding to the committee have been developed following government's conversation with members of the Legislative Council and a clear legislative framework is essential for ensuring that we have a solid pathway for transition to providing a mechanism through which participants support can be provided and to safeguard animal welfare. Mr President, I commend the bill to the Council.

Mr PRESIDENT (Mr Farrell) - The question is that the bill be read the second time.

The Council divided -

AYES - 6	**NOES - 8**
Mr Duigan (Teller)	Ms Armitage
Ms Glade-Wright	Mr Edmunds
Ms O'Connor	Ms Forrest
Ms Palmer	Mr Gaffney
Mr Vincent	Mr Hiscutt
Ms Webb	Ms Lovell
	Ms Rattray
	Ms Thomas

Motion negatived.

MESSAGES FROM HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Conversion Practices Prohibition Bill 2026 (No. 45)

The House of Assembly has agreed to amendments by the Legislative Council.

Senate Vacancy - Joint Sitting

Mr PRESIDENT - A further message from the House of Assembly:

Mr President, the House of Assembly has agreed with the following resolution communicated to it by the Legislative Council on 25 November 2026 resolved that, on Thursday, 26 November 2026, at 9.30 o'clock in the forenoon, the Legislative Council meet the House of Assembly in the House of Assembly chamber for the purpose of sitting and voting together to choose a person to hold a place in the senate of the parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, rendered vacant by the resignation of Senator the Honourable Jonathon Duniam, and further agrees to the rules proposed by the Legislative Council for the conduct of the joint sitting.

Jacquie Petrusma
Speaker
25 November 2026

ADJOURNMENT

[9.46 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, before I move that the Council does adjourn, I'd just like to remind members there is a 9 a.m. briefing in the morning for the minister's Homes and Housing Bill and also the 9.30 joint sitting.

Mr President, I move -

That at its rising the Council adjourn to 11 a.m. on Thursday, 26 November 2026.

Motion agreed to.

Ms RATTRAY - Mr President, I move -

That the Council do now adjourn.

EMRS Survey - Clarifying Statement

[9.47 p.m.]

Mr GAFFNEY (Mersey) - Mr President, after commenting earlier in my speech on the EMRS research sample profile of its 503 online respondents, the EMRS director contacted me and brought to my attention my comments could be misinterpreted. I would clarify the EMRS final results were weighted to adjust for the oversampling of higher education, et cetera, in the raw sample, I thought that should be recorded.

Flinders Island Fire

[9.48 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Thanks, Mr President. I won't take up a lot of members' time. It's been a long day. I wanted to place on the record and ask members if they would put our Flinders community in their thoughts tonight as they are having some very challenging times on the island. Initially, 27 hectares of property was burned; now it's possibly up to 10,000 hectares, even more, with the loss of one home and power poles burnt everywhere.

So, Mr President, I just want to acknowledge the volunteers, the community, the TFS staff and the Parks staff that are over there and I know there's more on their way. I've seen the picture of the Bass Strait Trader heading over. My on-the-ground reporter on the island has described what he has witnessed as total devastation. So, while we are here doing what we think is very important, there's an island community that is really looking for our thoughts and prayers and support during this time and so, as they continue to bring this fire under control, rebuild infrastructure and support each other, I just wanted to reach out to members and just let them know that something bigger is happening elsewhere.

Members: Hear, hear.

The Council adjourned at 9.49 p.m.