



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESSES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tasracing Pty Ltd

Friday 6 December 2024

MEMBERS

Mr Street MP (Chair);
Mr Behrakis MP (Deputy Chair);
Mr O'Byrne MP;
Mr Willie MP;
Mr Winter MP; and
Dr Woodruff MP

OTHER PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

Mr Ferguson MP; and
Ms Johnston MP

WITNESSES IN ATTENDANCE

Hon. Jane Howlett MP, Minister for Primary Industries and Water, Minister for Hospitality and Small Business, Minister for Racing

Andrew Jenkins, CEO

Gene Phair, Chair

David Manshande, Chief Operating Officer

Dr Martin Lenz, Chief Veterinary & Animal Welfare Officer (CVAWO)

Darren Hill, Chief Financial Officer

PUBLIC

The committee resumed at 9.45 a.m.

CHAIR - Time being a little after 9.45 a.m., scrutiny of Tasracing will now begin. I welcome the minister and staff of Tasracing along with the others at the table. The time for scrutiny is two-and-a-half hours. Any time for a break cannot be made-up, so there will not be a designated break. Again, to repeat myself, members will be familiar with the practice of seeking additional information on notice. Either the minister or the chair has to agree to take the question on notice, then it needs to be provided to the secretary at the end of the table here with me. I invite the minister to introduce any other persons at the table then to make a brief opening statement.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, chair. To my left I have Gene Phair, chair of Tasracing. To my right, I have CEO Andrew Jenkins and Dr Martin Lenz, chief veterinary officer.

The Tasmanian Liberal government continues to be a strong supporter of the Tasmanian racing industry. According to independent research, the industry generates total direct spending of \$189.6 million in Tasmania. Economic flow-on effects increase the size of the value-added economic contribution to the state to almost \$208 million per annum, and there are more than 6400 individuals involved in the industry as an employee, participant, or volunteer.

The concept of participation in racing is much broader than many other industries. Participants in a racing industry context include employees, trainers, breeders, owners, jockeys, drivers, stablehands, and volunteers who have varying levels of engagement from full time to occasional. This is data that was provided to Tasracing in 2023-24 through the independently prepared Size and Scope of the Tasmanian Racing Industry report. Stakes money paid to participants was at record levels and capital expenditure during the reporting period totalled just over \$6.4 million, with cap-ex projections for the next five years to total \$52 million to underpin the further development of the industry in Tasmania.

On track, there were a number of important achievements to celebrate. John Blacker was named the leading trainer for the fourth time, and his first since 2008. First Accused was named the Tasmanian Horse of the Year in the thoroughbred code. In harness, Magician won the Horse of the Year and Tammy Langley was named the leading female trainer. In the greyhound code, Fast Minardi won the Greyhound of the Year, while Cheeky Vixen was a leading breeding female, and Fernando Bale was the leading sire.

I want to also reference a decision by global wagering company Ladbrokes to extend its principal partnership agreement with Tasracing and the industry for a further five years. As a result, Ladbrokes will continue to be the industry venue and major race day partner for the next five years, with an option to extend for a further two. The agreement includes a base sponsorship fee, a commitment to promote Tasmanian racing on Ladbrokes, numerous social channels, general marketing and promotional support, and a capital expenditure contribution to help improve on-course facilities at both Elwick and Spreyton.

I would like to thank Tasracing chairperson Gene Phair and his board for their contribution over the reporting period. I would also like to acknowledge Tasracing CEO Andrew Jenkins and his team for their work to further strengthen Tasracing as a company and, by extension, the Tasmanian racing industry. Thank you.

PUBLIC

Mr WINTER - Minister, and Tasracing, thank you for being here with us today. Every year I come back here and it feels like nothing changes.

Ms HOWLETT -Really? That is disappointing.

Mr WINTER - Well, it does. We still have Ben Yole. It feels like the biggest protection racket in Tasmania is the one around Ben Yole Racing. As I understand it, he is still back at the track. I do not understand how this has not been properly dealt with. During Estimates, I asked you very specifically whether you had had any conversations with Ben, or Catherine or Tim Yole, and you refused to answer the question. Can you answer the question today? Have you had any conversations with Ben, Catherine, or Tim Yole since you became Racing minister again?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you Chair, and I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. What I will say is, the independent stewards panel is not a matter for this committee today. I'd like to see the panel make its final decision as soon as possible and I'm not going to jeopardise any independent stewards panel report by commenting on that.

Mr WINTER - Minister, the question was, have you had any communications with Ben, Tim, Catherine Yole?

Ms HOWLETT - Ben, Tim, or Catherine Yole. You've seen the RTI request, and the messages show that I appropriately requested Mr Yole to provide any information in relation to the allegations he has made to the relevant regulator. I also suggested my office could refer any information as appropriate. I'm advised that my office has proactively provided the alleged - the allegations made by Mr Yole to the regulator. Unfortunately, Mr Winter's trawling exercise here has failed, as it did with trainer -

Mr WINTER - I haven't actually got to that yet. You've -

Ms HOWLETT - As it did with trainer Robbie Walters, Mr Winter. Have you forgotten about that?

Mr WINTER - Minister, the question was whether you've communicated with Ben, Tim, or Catherine Yole, which is the same question you didn't answer at Estimates earlier this year. You've pre-empted questions I was going to ask about this, although you are right.

Since you refused to answer the question under RTI, so not by choice, text messages from Ben Yole and you in response have now come to light. And, they're very serious allegations made by Ben Yole. He outlines serious concerns, he talks about trainers chasing horses with guns - there are really serious allegations. That was provided to you - those text messages started on 16 April. Text messages you refused to admit to when I asked you at Estimates. Can you tell me when you or your office referred these concerns to the regulator, on what date?

Ms HOWLETT - I immediately referred those matters and strong appropriate action was taken that saw someone who wasn't a fit and proper person removed from the industry, Mr Winter.

Mr WINTER - What date was that in particular?

PUBLIC

Ms HOWLETT - The actual date? I'll seek some advice on the date that that was referred to.

Thank you, Mr Winter. That information was referred on 16 April.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, a very large number of senior vets went public this Monday laying out the massive animal welfare issues with the racing industry. They made it clear: it's simply impossible to race dogs of different sizes in packs of eight at 70 kilometres-an-hour on circular tracks and not expect horrible, painful injuries to regularly occur.

If you care for the welfare of animals, if Tasracing cares for the welfare of animals as much as it says it does, can you tell me whether you acknowledge the vets' comments, or do you dispute their professional advice?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank Dr Woodruff for her question. Look, what I will say is, in relation to the statements from the Tasmanian vets, I'm very happy to meet with any party who has a genuine interest in improving animal welfare, regardless of their current position. Those who have a genuine desire for better animal welfare outcomes in the racing industry, I'm absolutely more than happy to meet with them and listen to their concerns.

Dr WOODRUFF - Do you acknowledge the truth of the advice that they've given us?

Ms HOWLETT - Dr Woodruff, I'm very, very happy to meet with those vets. I'll see if Dr Lenz would like to make further comment to that.

Dr LENZ - Thank you very much, through you. In answer to your question, it is something that - we are looking to engage with the group of vets that you've mentioned. We are currently, actually, actively in the process of getting their names and contact details because we do want to make sure that we can engage with them on the matter of animal welfare, racing animal welfare, particularly. The issues that that they are bringing to the table, it is definitely something that we would like to ensure that the information that they have is up-to-the-minute information, because we do know that the landscape and racing animal welfare has dramatically shifted, and it's continuing to shift year by year. So, we just want to make sure that they are actually in possession of the latest information.

We do know that the number of dogs that have succumbed to serious injury and have been euthanised as a result of that injury has dramatically lowered, okay. That's not just the rate of race day mortality on the day, but also we follow those dogs up for a period of 14 days now so that any final outcome is available. We are, I think, quite rightly are proud to say that since 2019, that rate has actually decreased by a factor of seven, and over the last two successive years we have achieved halving of that number in each one of those years.

We are very keen to engage with those vets because the truth of the matter is that we, those animal welfare results are largely down to the vets that do engage and do work with us. We could not achieve those outcomes as far as treating those injuries that occur on racetracks without the vets.

CHAIR - Thank you, Ms Johnston.

Dr WOODRUFF - That was one question.

CHAIR - And then you followed it up.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well -

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff.

Dr WOODRUFF - That's really not a fair allocation, given that Mr Winter asked more than three questions.

CHAIR - Ms Johnston.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, Chair. I was at that event the 38 vets joined on Monday morning. They are vets who are currently practising, who regularly see greyhounds within their practices receive horrific injuries. At that particular event, they specified that it's inherent within racing that dogs will get injured and will die. That's a given.

They also launched a video which showed the injuries sustained on track, horrific injuries of leg fractures, necks being broken on track. That was footage taken from Tasracing's footage, which is now sanitised by Tasracing and those particular bits are edited out.

Minister, do you think it's appropriate that Tasracing sanitise footage of races to remove the horrific injuries so that members of the public can't see what actually happens on-track?

Ms HOWLETT - Chair, I thank the member for her question. Let me be very clear, and I've stated this on numerous occasions in the House: racing participants love their animals. Any fatality or any injury is absolutely distressing for trainers and owners in all three codes. not just in the greyhound code. Let me make it very, very clear. It's very upsetting for them as well.

Ms JOHNSTON - Do you think it's appropriate that Tasracing sanitise the videos and take out the horrific injuries so they can't be viewed after the event?

Ms HOWLETT - I know that the CEO would like to -

Ms JOHNSTON - I'm asking for your opinion, minister.

Ms HOWLETT - This is about scrutiny of the annual report today, Ms Johnston, so I will allow the CEO to make further comment.

Mr JENKINS - Thank you, Ms Johnston for the question. Yes, we do feel it's appropriate to make edits to our footage out of respect for our participants and the racing animals. We think that's appropriate that when an injury or a significant matter occurs on a racetrack and it's captured in the footage, that it is not maintained for public view.

Ms JOHNSTON - Because it's horrific to watch?

Mr JENKINS - I've answered the question.

Mr WINTER - I wanted to get back to the text messages, minister, just so I'm very clear. The first text message is on 16 April. One of the allegations there is that:

Someone who provided evidence to the Murrphy review had recently set fire to a family home and threatened my family -

Being the Yole family, presumably:

... alongside someone who had falsified evidence in a drug test.

On that day, as I understand the evidence you've given, you forwarded that on to, I assume, the Office of Racing Integrity. As a result of that evidence, somebody was removed from the industry. Is that correct?

Ms HOWLETT - Mr Winter, what you're doing here is just an absolute cheap political stunt. Today's scrutiny is about the annual report.

Mr WINTER - It's about Tasracing.

Ms HOWLETT - It is about the annual report and I'm not going to make any statements that might interfere with an independent steward's panel from doing their work, Mr Winter. I will not. You can jeopardise the process as much as you want, which is what you've been doing this entire year.

Mr FERGUSON - It's reckless.

CHAIR - Mr Ferguson, I don't need your commentary.

Mr FERGUSON - Sorry, Chair.

Mr WINTER - Minister, I'm actually going to your original answer so that I'm very clear of what it was. In your -

Ms HOWLETT - What page does it reference -

Mr WINTER - If you just let me ask -

Ms HOWLETT - in the annual report, Mr Winter?

CHAIR - Minister, please don't. If you expect to be heard in silence when you're answering questions, then the members deserve silence while they're asking them as well.

Mr WINTER - In my first question, you answered and referred to somebody being removed from the industry. I'm trying to clarify exactly what you meant by that.

On 16 April, you received a text message from Ben Yole who made allegations that somebody involved in providing evidence to the Murrphy review had recently set fire to a family home and threatened his family alongside someone who had also falsified evidence in a drug test. In your evidence you gave 10 minutes ago, five minutes ago, you said that as a result of that complaint - you putting a complaint, presumably, to the Office of Racing Integrity - someone in the racing industry was removed from the industry. I'm just trying to

PUBLIC

clarify whether what I have just said is correct? Or have I made a mistake there in understanding your first answer?

Ms HOWLETT - You know that I referred that straight away as soon as I had that information, Mr Winter. I don't see the relevance of your question to the annual report of Tasracing.

Mr WINTER - Minister, it's actually really relevant. In fact, in this text message, Ben Yole says:

As soon as everything is organised we would love a meeting. I think there is a lot that isn't being fully communicated, including the role Tasracing are playing in this and it is imperative you are fully aware.

So, it is relevant to Tasracing because that's what the communication with Ben actually said. Did you meet with Ben Yole following that meeting?

Ms HOWLETT - I did not. I did not meet with Ben Yole, no. I referred that information on, as I told you. I mentioned the date that I referred that information on.

Mr WINTER - Just so I'm really clear about your earlier answer, was the evidence about somebody having set fire to a family home and threatened the Yole family the evidence that was relied upon for somebody to be removed from the industry, or partly?

Ms HOWLETT - I'm not answering that question, Mr Winter. I did what I thought was best and I referred that information on straight away.

As far as your comments earlier on, stating that nothing has changed, a great deal has changed. We have brought the most significant legislative reform through the House of the parliament this year. There are major changes that have occurred in the racing industry, and that's what my focus is -

Mr WINTER - What changes? You changed Ben Yole to Wayne Yole, and that is it.

Ms HOWLETT - to rebuild trust and faith in the racing industry, Mr Winter.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, 24 vets and 14 vet nurses on Monday released and showed - some of them couldn't watch it, a 60-second film that is a compilation of recent track fatalities with greyhounds. Recent. It was brutal. It showed the cruel reality of animals writhing in pain from broken backs and broken necks, running on broken feet. This is today in the greyhound racing industry. Isn't that why those expert vets want the industry to be shut down?

Ms HOWLETT - Chair, I thank Dr Woodruff for her comments. As I've stated before, our firm focus is on integrity and animal welfare moving forward. That is why we have, as I said, put through the biggest legislative reforms in decades through parliament. We are setting up an independent integrity committee to focus on animal welfare. We have Dr Lenz here who's an expert in veterinary science. We are happy to work with those vets and meet with those vets and discuss the issues they have.

PUBLIC

Dr WOODRUFF - Have you watched or will you watch that footage, and are you comfortable that Tasracing edits the footage to sanitise it for Tasmanians so they can't see the reality of the horrific injuries happening, the deaths that occurring in greyhound racing?

Ms HOWLETT - As I mentioned, Dr Woodruff, any death, any injury, the owners and the trainers take this to heart. They are devastated when there's a fatality or an injury to their animals. Dr Lenz, I know you're wanting to -

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, will you look at the footage? Have you looked at the footage?

Ms HOWLETT - I have not looked at the footage, Dr Woodruff.

Dr WOODRUFF - Will you look at it?

Ms HOWLETT - But yes, I will look at the -

Dr WOODRUFF - And will you make sure that Dr Lenz does, and that the chair and the CEO -

Ms HOWLETT - Dr Lenz and I will look at the footage together. Yes, I'll make that commitment to you. Dr Lenz?

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, I have-

Dr LENZ - Thank you, minister. We don't have the footage that you're specifically referring to.

Dr WOODRUFF - It's available online.

Dr LENZ - What we would like to know is if it's Tasmanian footage, for one? Because the number of deaths that occur on track are at an all-time low. As I've said previously - we welcome engagement with the 14 - sorry, 24 - vets you have referenced, because we want to make sure those 24 vets are equally across the breadth of animal welfare reform we have undertaken, as are the multitude of vets actually helping us achieve those outcomes. They're the vets that are on track, providing the care to those animals while they're racing, and they're also the vets that are taking on any injured animal and providing excellent outcomes, as far as treating the treatable injuries and that's what we're all about.

Dr WOODRUFF - Excuse me. Thank you, Dr Lenz. The question really was to the minister. These are all recent Tasmanian track deaths.

Could you please ask - or through the Chair, maybe, if appropriate - for the CEO: a couple of years ago, Mr Jenkins said that 'community members who stand up for greyhound welfare are a selfish minority'. That was a quote in the *Mercury* from a couple of years ago. If it's appropriate to ask Mr Jenkins, does he still think that the members of the vet community who have come forward are a selfish minority?

Ms HOWLETT - Chair, I thank Dr Woodruff for her question. Chair, would you like to add comments to the question?

Mr JENKINS - Thanks minister, and through you chair, and thank you Dr Woodruff. The comments that you're referring to I absolutely stand by, and the context of those comments were in relation to public opposition against a charity event that was being held by the Hobart Greyhound Racing Club in support of Ronald McDonald House. There was direct contact made and lobbying efforts effectively made to Ronald McDonald House to not participate in that racing event.

I would suggest for a single interest group to undertake that type of activity because of the views that they hold, and would have had an impact of reducing or eliminating over \$30,000 donated to Ronald McDonald House - the equivalent of nearly 200 bed nights for Tasmanian families with their children in hospital - I think that's absolutely selfish and I absolutely stand by those comments.

Dr WOODRUFF - Would you call vets a selfish minority?

CHAIR - Mr Ferguson.

Mr FERGUSON - Thanks, Chair, and my preamble will be much more brief than Mr Winter's first question, but I want to begin by congratulating you, minister, on your appointment since the election, and I know from people I speak to in the racing fraternity how pleased they are Jane Howlett is their minister again, congratulations.

I'd like to mention I had some difficulty locating the annual report on the website. As members of parliament, we all receive copies through the House, but just some feedback. It's available through your news section, but not easily available under the annual report tab and might be something to check.

Minister, would you and your team outline to the committee specifically what the Tasmanian government is doing to support not just Tasracing but the broader racing community? Can you also demonstrate to the committee how it is that the Liberal government will always back our racing community?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for his very important question. The government welcomes the Tasracing Annual Report which details how the racing industry supports our rural and regional communities, families and jobs, and also highlights our steadfast commitment to lift the bar higher when it comes to animal welfare and integrity. The company remains in a strong financial position, with a total equity position of over \$53 million. Stakes money paid to racing owners, trainers and participants has grown by more than 50 per cent in the past five years. That's something I am very proud of.

The annual report highlights that animal welfare is a critical importance to Tasracing across the three codes of racing. The annual report also details joint government and company investment in fantastic community assets such as the new Devonport Racing Club amenities building. I was proud to open that in October. Of the \$2.8 million total project value, \$1.5 million was provided by the Tasmanian government with the balance funded by Tasracing and that was funded by cash reserves as well. Facilities like these are of great importance to the community space for many regions across Tasmania, particularly when we have such a high number of female jockeys as well.

PUBLIC

Mr WINTER - Minister, you got a further communication from Ben Yole on 29 June. In this communication he says:

I'm about close to opening up a can of worms in this state. Is everyone prepared to investigate the trainers that chase their horses with guns or the ones that send their horses for dog meat just because they're no good? Someone has a list ready to go with everyone who does it. I am sick and tired of everyone saying I am not doing the wrong thing -

I think he means right thing -

... or breaking rules, yet no public acknowledgement of that is ever made.

It goes on to say -

You have a government-run organisation in Tasracing that is constantly allowing current participants to have their say and input and subsequently restrict my trade.

What did you do in response to that text message from Ben Yole?

Ms HOWLETT - Just a reminder, Mr Winter - and I thank him for his question - the training licences of Ben Yole and Tim Yole are currently suspended. There is an independent review currently going on, which you are very much aware of, and I'm not going to make any statements to intervene in that independent steward's panel review.

Mr WINTER - I'm not asking about the independent review. I'm asking about the correspondence you've had with Ben Yole. I asked you about the one on the 16th and you gave an answer and said you referred that on that day, so I'm asking what you did with the text message you received on 29 June. Did you refer that to relevant authorities and what was the outcome of that?

Ms HOWLETT - You have the text messages there in front of you that I received from Mr Yole and you have my response there. I've stated to you that it was referred.

Mr WINTER - So, the 29 June text message was referred as well?

Ms HOWLETT - Let me just seek some clarification, Chair.

That was certainly referred to the department on that day because it was a matter for the Office of Racing Integrity and that's why it was referred to the department.

Mr WINTER - Have there been any outcomes from that text message?

Ms HOWLETT - That is a matter for the Office of Racing Integrity.

Mr WINTER - In terms of Ben's engagement with the industry, you've just said his licence to train has been suspended, but all the horses on his property have been transferred, as I understand it, to Wayne Yole as the trainer, so effectively nothing has changed. Is he still able

PUBLIC

to participate on race days? I've been told that he's been seen at racetracks continuing to participate. Is that correct?

Ms HOWLETT - I've been told he's been seen at racetracks. As to whether he's participating or not, I would like to think not, but that is a matter for the Office of Racing Integrity.

Mr WINTER - Would you be comfortable if he was continuing to participate as a trainer in terms of assisting Wayne Yole in the preparation of animals?

Ms HOWLETT - No, I wouldn't be comfortable.

Dr WOODRUFF - Can I just clarify a point I made earlier to the committee? I said that all of the all of the dogs on that 60-second video were Tasmanian from Tasmanian races. There was Black Roses from Launceston with a broken leg, William's Way from Launceston with a broken neck, Hey Thunder from Launceston with a broken leg, Shrifton from Hobart with a broken leg, but there was one from New South Wales showing what a broken back in a dog looks like.

Ms HOWLETT - Okay, so there was one from New South Wales?

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes. Those other four dogs are all Tasmanian dogs from recent races.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Dr Woodruff.

Dr WOODRUFF - My question is through the chair to the CEO, if that's appropriate. As Mr Jenkins is the CEO of a GBE, I would like to know what steps he's taken to personally meet with animal welfare advocates who have been very vocal in their concerns, including the greyhound group in Tasmania, the very wide Animal Liberation Tasmania, and the vets and vet nurses. It's now been five days since they made that announcement.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Dr Woodruff, for your question. I know that the CEO would like to make some statements.

Mr JENKINS - Thank you, minister, and thank you once again, Dr Woodruff. Typically, my engagement with stakeholders as regards these matters would be through a peak body such as the RSPCA and I'm very open to those types of discussions.

As regards the vets and vet nurses that you've referenced, and Dr Lenz has provided some earlier guidance, we would absolutely welcome the opportunity to engage with that body of professionals. We would like to share our perspective and Dr Lenz's perspective and knowledge and edify them as to the many improvements we have made and significant improvements that have been made in animal welfare.

We will also absolutely welcome their skills, knowledge and experience as we move into final preparation for the release to public consultation of what will be an enforceable under the rules greyhound code of practice, similar to the Equine Code of Practice that Dr Lenz developed and released recently. There's a very important and pointed opportunity for those professionals to engage with us.

In terms of timing, I can advise that Dr Lenz has already commenced drafting formal communication and correspondence to those bodies of professionals. I expect we will release that either to the individuals, if we're able to be provided with their contact details, or via an open letter and I expect that will occur early next week at the latest.

Dr WOODRUFF - The EMRS (Enterprise Marketing & Research Services) poll shows that 62 per cent of Tasmanians do not support the greyhound racing industry and that 79 per cent of Tasmanians - these are statistically significant samples - don't want any public subsidies going to it.

My question to the CEO is a follow-up one. The very large group of people, including Let Greyhounds Be Free, Animal Liberation Tasmania and all the work they do, are significant stakeholders in Tasmania for animal welfare. Mr Eriksson, your former CEO, used to meet with bodies like this. Why won't you meet with them? Will you change your mind and broaden, lean in, to the reality of the views in the community and meet with them and engage with them?

Ms HOWLETT - Dr Woodruff, I thank you for your question. I just want to be very clear, and I've stated this on the record multiple times before as well. As Minister for Racing I will not be banning greyhound racing or any other code in the racing industry. We have a focus on improving animal welfare and restoring trust and faith in the industry, and that is our focus. If the CEO would like to add to that, you're more than welcome to.

Dr WOODRUFF - Or to the question.

Mr JENKINS - Thank you. Potentially, there is value in meeting with other stakeholder groups. If those groups would like to make contact with myself or Dr Lenz on the basis of engaging in a meaningful way - and what I mean by that is more than just shut down greyhound racing - then I'm potentially very open to having dialogue with them.

Also, if they would like to put forward suggestions or matters of veterinary science for our consideration, absolutely. We are strongly pro- racing animal welfare, so we will absolutely give that due consideration for potential inclusion in our programs and policies and the significant body of work that Dr Lenz is leading for us. So, yes.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, thank you. Because I think, whilst they might have a view of not wanting the industry to exist, fundamentally they're coming at it from the point of view of loving gentle dogs and wanting to find ways to have less harm happen to gentle dogs and horses.

That is actually the point, we know there are many things that could change about the animal welfare regulations and laws. Minister, that's on you to take those steps, because they haven't happened so far. But, there are still things that can happen.

Ms HOWLETT - Dr Woodruff, I'm very happy to meet with any group and discuss how we can do things better. I've met with you previously and you know I'm very open to that. I guess that's why I'm very excited about the new commissioner, starting on the 15 December, and also our animal welfare integrity committee we've established.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, the group of vets that presented on Monday were very passionate about this particular issue and clearly very distressed at the time. They talked about

the fact what they see coming from the greyhound industry when they're having to mop up the carnage that's been caused, they talked about that there's a four-year attrition rate for vets because of their horror they see, and they even spoke about some suicides.

It's significant concerns that the veterinary industry does have about what's happening in the greyhound racing industry. Part of that comes from the lack of transparency about the data. It doesn't match up the data that's put out officially with what they're seeing on the ground in practice.

Could you perhaps provide us some clarity about some of that data? Can you provide numbers of dogs presented to race meets with parasites? And can you also provide the number of injuries from 2023-24 incurred in catching pens in Tasmania during trials and official races? And including in that data, what trials are at the nature of every injury, the stand down time, and the treatment that each dog received if they received any treatment?

You might need to take that on notice; I appreciate that.

Ms HOWLETT - Chair, we'll do our very best to answer that, but one thing is we've always been very transparent when it comes to data, when it comes to reporting tracks on death and also euthanized - across all codes - we've been very transparent in what we provide online, and we will continue to do so. As far as those statistics, let me just find them for you. Martin, would you like to talk to those statistics? Thank you, Dr Lenz.

Dr LENZ - Thank you for the question. I'll start at the beginning of your question. You talk about the serious issue of low numbers of vets, there are a multitude of reasons for those low numbers. It's a nationwide, actually, worldwide problem. There are very intricate reasons for those issues. To simplify that and say it's all due to them looking at greyhound racing is a grave oversimplification-

Ms JOHNSTON - I'm merely repeating what the vets told me from their personal experience. If we can get to the statistics, that would be really appreciated, Dr Lenz.

Dr LENZ - They are very detailed questions and we will take them on notice.

Ms JOHNSTON - Do you think it's acceptable that dogs are presented to races with parasites? There are hundreds of different treatments for parasites and it's easily a treatable situation. Why is it that dogs are still being presented in 2024 to race meets with parasites?

Ms HOWLETT - I would have to get those numbers if there are any dogs that have been presented with parasites from the Office of Racing Integrity, Ms Johnston. We will take that question on notice and provide you with those numbers, hopefully later on today by the end of scrutiny.

Mr FERGUSON - Minister, we've seen the biggest shake up in something like 20 years with regulation legislation on integrity and racing regulation. You took a lead role in that, congratulations. Now that you're back in this role, I hope I'm not wrong in saying this, but I believe this element of the new legislation was widely supported, if not unanimously supported in the parliament.

Mr WINTER - No, sadly not.

Ms HOWLETT - No, the third reading was voted down, I am sorry.

Mr FERGUSON - In respect of the integrity regulation is the point I was making

Dr WOODRUFF - No, actually that is not true either.

Mr FERGUSON - I hear two people didn't like it. I respect that. Minister, it's critical now as it's being implemented - would you please update the committee on the appointments process and the commencement of those key parts of legislation. Apart from everything else that it does, it's intended not just to provide stronger regulation and integrity measures, but also provide a boost in community confidence around this industry. I'd be grateful for those responses.

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for his important question. Unfortunately, the Greens voted down the bill on the third reading, that was very unfortunate. We are getting on with the job of delivering our reforms which will come into effect on the 1 February next year when our new legislation is proclaimed. The government has made significant announcements last month in the delivery of this reform.

Experienced racing and sports integrity leader Sean Carroll has been appointed as the independent Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner. Commissioner Carroll will have the comprehensive oversight of the administration and regulation of the Tasmanian industry. He was most recently the Victorian Racing Integrity Commissioner. It also gave me great pride when the national sports, racing and broader media described the appointment as 'Tasmania has poached one of Victoria's key integrity personnel'. Commissioner Carroll will have extensive powers to set integrity and animal welfare standards and comprehensive investigatory functions across the three codes of racing in Tasmania, harness, thoroughbred and greyhound.

Last month, we also announced international legal practitioner Regina Weiss as the Chair of the new Racing Integrity Committee alongside leading racing and training authority, Merve Hill. They will join Gene Phair here today and Neil Grose as the Tasracing board nominated members on that committee.

Would the CEO like to add any further comments?

Mr JENKINS - Thank you. I would like to make comment on record. We welcome to the role of Chief Racing Integrity Officer, Ms Heidi Lester, who will commence with us after the bill becomes effective in February. Ms Lester's an outstanding racing integrity and highly credentialed professional currently working in the Singapore jurisdiction. We welcome Ms Lester's appointment to that very important position under this legislation.

Mr FERGUSON - It should be something we can all agree on, thank you for the update.

Mr WINTER - Minister. I believe this is the sixth time I've asked you this question between Estimates and today. Did you have a conversation with Wayne Yole and suggest to him that if Ben Yole had any problems he should contact you?

PUBLIC

Ms HOWLETT - I did not suggest that Ben Yole contact me, Mr Winter. I go to the races lots, I couldn't tell you how many times I've been to race meetings, as do you, and I have many conversations with participants at the races. In relation to Wayne Yole, yes, as I have stated, I did see him at the races at Elwick in May and spoke to him as I did many participants, along with more than 20 or so I spoke to that night in the industry. Did I have the kind of conversation that you are alleging? No, I certainly did not. It was a brief, polite conversation between a minister and a licenced - a licenced - racing participant.

Mr WINTER - Minister, that is the sixth time. As you have stated, that is the first time you have stated it, but that is the sixth time I have asked the question.

Ms HOWLETT - I have told you many times. It just depends on what you want to listen to Mr Winter. I will correct the record before - when Mr Winter asked me the question earlier, I, as far as referred to a matter that was to appropriate authorities, that was Mr Walters as well.

Mr WINTER - Right, now I'm a little unclear. The text message from Ben Yole was referring to Mr Walters?

Ms HOWLETT - No, there were other things, other messages that were referred to as well.

Mr WINTER - What does the Mr Walters issue - What's the relationship between the text message on the 16th and Mr Walters?

Ms HOWLETT - You tell me. You seem to have a pretty good relationship with Mr Walters.

Mr WINTER - I have never met Mr Walters.

Ms HOWLETT - You have exchanged messages with him and he's -

Mr WINTER - With Mr Walters?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes.

Mr WINTER - I have never met -

Ms HOWLETT - Mr Robbie Walters, you've never had any? -

Mr WINTER - Minister, what are you alleging?

Ms HOWLETT - Mr Cooper sorry, who's unlicensed.

Mr WINTER - I am very confused now, minister. I reckon we should clear it up.

Ms HOWLETT - The independent who was actually referred to and removed from that message was Mr Walters. In reference to those messages.

CHAIR - The last one and then Dr Woodruff.

PUBLIC

Mr WINTER - I am legitimately quite confused now. So, on the 16th, the messages from Mr Yole were referring to allegations against Mr Walters, is that correct?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, that had nothing to do with the messages. When I was referring to someone that was removed, that was Mr Walters that I was referring to.

Mr WINTER - You are not saying -

CHAIR - Minister, I gave you more than -

Mr WINTER - I'm hoping to take less. If we - this could finish up and you won't have to - can we just deal with this one more and I take less in the next rotation? We could speed things up.

Dr WOODRUFF - Let's just come back to it.

CHAIR - We'll go to Dr Woodruff. Sorry, I have given you more than - I am trying to keep it fair for the rotation as well.

Dr WOODRUFF - The annual report has devastating information in it that shows the evidence that there were 70 fewer dogs who were rehomed in the previous year - 72, actually - and that is a devastating number. There are also 43 retired greyhounds who were euthanised last year, which is triple the rate of the previous year. Tasracing pays the cost to the Greyhound Assistance Program, GAP, for the dogs that are lucky enough to survive the racetrack to be rehabilitated and rehomed. We know that other organisations, especially the Dogs Home of Tasmania, Brightside, and many other good-hearted groups take in and care for greyhounds.

Can I get some numbers, and perhaps you can take this on notice, about how much funding the GAP received in the 2023-24 year for particular aspects of the work that they did? I would like information on the salaries, the maintenance, the dog care, the cost of each dog, the security, and the advertising and marketing. Could I get that breakdown? I am happy to give these on notice, these particular detailed parts of those questions.

Ms HOWLETT - Is there any data that we can give Dr Woodruff now?

Mr JENKINS - With the chair's endorsement, I might ask our chief financial officer to the table to provide some initial commentary to the member.

Ms HOWLETT - I'd like to introduce chief financial officer Darren Hill to the table.

Dr WOODRUFF - I had some specific questions through you, minister. Mr Hill, how much money was spent for the manager, how much money for the staff, and how much money for consultants? Three separate categories.

Mr HILL - I won't have the information on the manager at the moment. However, total labour costs for the GAP facility were \$499,000 for the full year. That included all costs, contract labour costs and annual leave and award superannuation entitlements, et cetera. Total cost for the GAP facility, over \$1.4 million for the full year.

PUBLIC

Dr WOODRUFF - I did want, and I'll put this on notice for later, but the specific breakdown for the difference between the grounds, the fences, and the building and kennel upkeep, because they're different categories within the maintenance, and the specific salary breakdowns of those three groups?

Mr HILL - Individuals?

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, there's just the manager, the collective staff, and then the consultants, for example, behaviourist consultants and for staff training and education.

For dog care, how much money is spent on food, enrichment, bedding, and rehabilitation? How much money is spent for vets' bills, vet visits, and other, for each dog?

Then security installation, upkeep, and then the personnel. Then there's also the advertising budget. There's, I believe, billboards, newspapers, social media and online costs. How many dogs went through? What was the cost per dog? You said \$1.4 million and \$499,000?

Mr HILL - That's correct. Yeah. Some of those others, for example, greyhound feed was \$51,000. Veterinary fees paid through the GAP facility were \$39,000 for the year.

Dr WOODRUFF - Does that include vet visits?

Mr HILL - It should do.

Dr WOODRUFF - Call-outs and everything?

Mr HILL - Yes.

Dr WOODRUFF - Grounds?

Mr HILL - Grounds and building maintenance expenditure at the site was \$33,600.

Dr WOODRUFF - Security?

Mr HILL - Security at the site was \$181,000 for the full year.

Dr WOODRUFF - That includes personnel?

Mr HILL - Yes, that's the full cost of the security. We don't have any security guards on employment, they're all via contract.

Dr WOODRUFF - Advertising and marketing?

Mr HILL - Advertising, we'll probably need to take that on notice. There's a number of sections in there such as, we've spent \$1000 on marketing and administration, however, there's another marketing and events section which is \$6600. We probably want to go through most of the costs in a lot more detail and come back to you with a final figure on those.

PUBLIC

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you. Minister, I'll put on notice those questions. I note that some of them have been answered, but there's specific other areas if Mr Hill could provide them. Is that alright?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, the ones that haven't been answered, if you could please provide them in writing to the Chair and we'll get back to you.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, on those figures, it would seem that the 83 dogs rehomed through the GAP program, that's a cost of \$17,000 almost for every individual dog. I just note that the RSPCA, Dogs Home, Small Paws, Illoura, Brightside don't receive a single cent from the industry to try and rehome the wastage from that particular industry. If the bill is correct, \$1.4 million for the GAP to run for a year.

In your annual report, you reported that 179 dogs have been rehomed. However, it's noted that this data is self-reporting. What steps does Tasracing take to ensure the data is as accurate as possible, given that so many dogs don't go through the GAP program? Many are disposed of in other ways, through Gumtree, through markets, through other welfare organisations. How does Tasracing assure itself that the data is even anywhere near the actual figure?

Ms HOWLETT - Chair, I thank the member for her question. It's a very important question. I'll ask the CEO or Dr Lenz to speak more to that question.

Dr LENZ - The first part of your question related to GAP rehoming figures. We're happy to report that there's an ongoing increase in the numbers that GAP is rehoming. For example, from the previous reporting period to the most recent one, we've gone from 72 dogs rehomed to 83 dogs rehomed. We're on track at the moment, for this current period, for us to sit on round about 100-plus dogs, so it's a great trend of improvement.

The other part of your question related to the self-reported rehoming of greyhounds. When a greyhound is set to finish its racing career, the trainer usually, or the owner, will put in the requisite retirement forms. As part of that process they actually have to stipulate where the dog has been retired to. The categories there are: retired for breeding; retired to the owner of the greyhound; retired to the trainer; retired to a third party - so that would be, usually speaking, a member of the general public, for instance; retired to Tasracing GAP, the Greyhound Adoption Program; retired to another adoption program - and you mentioned a number of them there; and surrender to other agency - and that's usually, you know, the pound or those types of agencies.

The numbers there - and as you rightly state, they are self-reported numbers, but the numbers are: retired for breeding, eight dogs went to breeding; retired to owner, so, back to the owner themselves, 18 dogs went to the owner; retired to the trainer, one of the dogs was retired; retired to a third party, so these are, usually speaking, members of the public, 59 greyhounds; retired to GAP, within that reporting period, there were 60 greyhounds listed; retired to another adoption agency - these are those groups that you've referenced, so, what we would say are the important ancillary rehoming agencies. There were 33 of the 179 total dogs went to an ancillary rehoming agency. None were surrendered to other agencies. There's another category called 'other'. There was also zero dogs.

Basically, the way we look at it is how many of the dogs were rehomed by industry - and by industry, I mean the categories would include 'retired to breed', 'retired to owner', 'retired to

trainer', and 'retired by industry people to the public', as well as to the GAP program, because GAP is run and managed by Tasracing. We had in that group - well, it basically is of that total of 179 retired, all bar 33 were retired by an industry pathway, according to the numbers. I do acknowledge that they are reported by industry participants.

The Office of Racing Integrity (ORI) are the agency that's tasked - this is coming to the third part of the question, they're the agency that are tasked with auditing the self-declaration process. It is something that Tasracing has no influence over. But it is interesting to note of that nearly 180 dogs, 33 went to ancillary rehoming organisations.

To come to the last part of your question, or the statement I think you made, was that those ancillary rehoming agencies receive no funding. I would just like the committee to be aware that since the rules have come in that all retired greyhounds need to be desexed, Tasracing has actually funded the cost of that desexing. Any time a dog is retired, other than to breed, so into that category, the dog has to be desexed. That goes for both male and female dogs. Tasracing is funding that.

More recently, we have introduced what we refer to as the Greyhound Retirement Preparation Scheme. That is, it's basically taking the desexing component and added a dental component and added a vaccination component. The cost of that can be anywhere from \$800 to \$1100 per dog. That, once again, is funded by this scheme that is administered by Tasracing.

Ms JOHNSTON - How many trainers have availed themselves of that funding?

Dr LENZ - Everybody has to have their dog desexed. Put it this way -

Ms JOHNSTON - For the dental work and vaccination work?

Dr LENZ - Correct. We've actually linked desexing now to the - sorry, we've linked dental to the desexing. So, if they want to avail themselves of that program, they not only have to have the dog desexed, which is a rule of racing, but there's also that dental component now included. It's fair to say that most people are going to take advantage of that rebate because it means, you know, they're being rebated money that they've outlaid on those procedures. So, I would be surprised if there was many that didn't go through that greyhound retirement preparation scheme.

To say that those ancillary rehomingers are not being supported, I think that the figures speak for themselves. As I said, somewhere between \$800 and \$1100 per dog. The industry is funding those ancillary rehomingers, taking that cost away from them so that those ancillary rehomingers can help us in that important work of rehoming these dogs under our funding. We, basically, for every dog that they rehome, we have funded a significant component of that cost.

One other point I'd like to make is last financial reporting period we introduced for the first time a Racing Animal Welfare Grants scheme. That scheme was specifically designed to assist groups that are having a positive impact on the welfare of racing animals, be that during their racing career or upon retirement. They are the conditions of that scheme. Last year, unfortunately, I have to say, because it was open to everybody to make application, we had no applications from any of those ancillary rehomingers. We are going to run that scheme again this next period, so we would invite those groups to apply for that scheme because it's funding that's there to help exactly the types of ancillary rehomingers and their important work.

Mr FERGUSON - Minister, I've attended the TASBRED Incentive Scheme event - I think it's more like a celebration, of the Magic Millions in my electorate of Bass. I think I've seen you there. It's been a great event. That happens every year. It's an important gathering and a celebration of those Magic Millions sales days. I don't think we hear enough about it. We hear a lot about the controversies and political opportunism around the racing industry in terms of the issues being raised here today, but there is a lot happening in our community, mostly in regional parts of Tasmania, where breeding is a wonderful industry and an important part of the sector you are responsible for. I would like to know some more information about Tasmania's breeding sector and what our government and Tasracing, as the GBE you are responsible for, are doing to support and help the breeding sector. In particular, are there any opportunities that you see going forward where that could be enhanced, leading to more jobs?

Ms HOWLETT - There is no doubt a healthy racing industry requires a vibrant and strong breeding sector. The government is providing additional funding to support the thoroughbred and harness breeding sectors with \$350,000 in this year's State Budget, which is \$300,000 to the thoroughbred incentive scheme and \$50,000 to the harness breeding incentives.

I'm proud that this money has been included in the Budget to continue to support the TASBRED Incentive Scheme and to reward those participants who invest their hard-earned money in Tasmanian bloodstock. The success of the scheme is something that I am very proud of. I know that the company, through the CEO, will have more to say about the future initiatives and expanding the number of TASBRED bonus races.

With regard to the 2025 Magic Million sales, Magic Millions bloodstock experts have described this catalogue as a top-class offering of 126 yearlings by more than 50 individual sires, with 89 of the 126 lots being TASBRED. Earlier this year I met with Magic Millions managing director Barry Bowditch, who was glowing in praise for the potential of the Tasmanian breeding sector. My strong view is that the yearlings offered each year at the sales get the best possible start with the pristine environment in which they were born and raised. Mr Jenkins, would you like to add any comments in relation to the sales and the breeding sector?

Mr FERGUSON - If I may supplement, I wonder if Mr Jenkins can add to your answer in terms of how we can enhance it in the future to grow it in our region?

Ms HOWLETT - Absolutely, and they're conversations we've been having with the Magic Millions earlier this year for future sales.

Mr JENKINS - Tasracing has a number of initiatives in place to further enhance the TASBRED scheme. At the top of that list is our recent announcement of directing an additional \$100,000 to the thoroughbred scheme for maiden race bonuses. With the chair's endorsement. I might ask our chief operating officer, Mr Manshanden, to add some further detail in response to the member's question.

Ms HOWLETT - Chair, I might ask Mr Manshanden to come to the table.

Mr FERGUSON - While Mr Manshanden is attending, just to be clear, I would love to know how government policy, not just funding, can lead to those improved outcomes, because

it is as much to do with brand as well as getting people to know about the quality of our bloodlines and our breeding expertise here.

Mr MANSHANDEN - It's really important for the breeding industry in Tasmania to be aligned with national sales companies and we're very lucky to have Magic Millions for the thoroughbred code. Last year we announced Nutrien Equine was coming back to do our harness sales. We're investing in our breeding industries by having well-renowned yearling sale companies conduct our sales. We continue to invest in our breeding schemes. There has been a six-year growth in funding from Tasracing into the TASBRED scheme. Mr Jenkins has outlined that we've currently just reduced the Hobart and Launceston cups by \$50,000 each and that will go back into the TASBRED scheme for grassroots to put on more bonus races.

Something else I'd like to outline is that this year we've also announced the appointment of external consultant Mr Anthony Williams, who is a well-renowned bloodstock expert, to help Tasracing and Tasmanian breeders lift the profile of the Tasmanian Yearling Sale. We consult with industry, both the harness and thoroughbred code, on an annual basis. We meet with the thoroughbred breeders nearly monthly, with an update on their sales on how we can continually improve those sales. It's a responsibility for Tasracing to increase the breeding scheme and we're really passionate to see that continue. We note that there's been some softening of the yearling markets around Australia and the world over the past couple of years post-COVID. They're the challenges we're working through and we're really excited that Magic Millions and Anthony Williams, our external consultant, can help us lift the profile of our sales.

Mr WINTER - Minister, to wrap up my line of questioning, in the text message from 16 April the person referred to who had recently set fire to a family home, threatened family alongside someone who'd failed evidence in a drug test was Robbie Walters. Is that correct?

Ms HOWLETT - I will correct the record. Earlier I mentioned a participant who had been removed and I was referring to trainer Robbie Walters. This was a matter that I had referred to the authorities, not related to the text messages that you have RTIed.

Mr WINTER - I'm going to move on. Thank you, minister. I want to ask about the Equine Code of Practice. It was announced three ministers ago that there would be an Equine Code of Practice for racehorse welfare and it's finally in place. You wrote to a member of the racing community on 26 November and outlined that you were advised that the *Primary Industry Activities Protection Act 1995* protects persons engaged in primary industry, including the agistment of horses, by limiting the operation of common law of nuisance in respect to certain activities that are incidental to efficient and commercially viable primary production. As I understand this letter, it's saying that if there's agistment of horses on a property, the equine code of practice does not apply. Is that correct?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair, and I thank Mr Winter for his question. I'll seek some clarification from the CEO on that.

Mr JENKINS - I'll do likewise, if I may.

Mr Winter, I understand you may be referring to a specific piece of correspondence and I'm not sure I have that available. I can certainly, if you wish, ask Dr Lenz to talk to the enforceable Code of Practice.

Mr WINTER - I'll try to be clear in my question. Somebody has written a letter about Sidmouth and raises concerns about the property in relation to the Equine Welfare Code of Practice. In that letter they've raised concerns about dust in particular, but also other issues. The response from the minister says that the minister is advised that the *Primary Industries Activities Protection Act* protects persons engaged in primary industry, including the agistment of horses, by limiting the operation of common law of nuisance in respect to certain activities that are incidental to efficient and commercially viable primary production. I feel like this is saying that the Equine Code of Practice doesn't apply because of the agistment of horses, or am I misreading this?

Mr JENKINS - Thank you, I understand. I'm not sure if it's one that even Dr Lenz can comment on. It's a specific piece of correspondence, as you've identified, Mr Winter, that we're not directly privy to. We can certainly take on notice, if you wish, that specific matter that you're querying.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, if you could put that in writing we'll take that on notice.

Mr WINTER - Minister, the letter's actually from you. I wondered if you could provide comment on it given that the letter comes from you. Is there an issue with the application of the code of practice for racehorse welfare in relation to the *Primary Industries Activities Protection Act*? Is there a limitation on the usefulness of this kind of practice?

Ms HOWLETT - I'll take advice on that, Mr Winter.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, what we established from Dr Lenz is there are at least 33 greyhounds that are retired, but we do know a large number of these are appearing on Gumtree. Last year at budget estimates - earlier this year - you acknowledged that giving away greyhounds on Gumtree and other platforms was inappropriate and committed to doing something about it. Can you tell us what's changed since then?

Ms HOWLETT - Yeah, look, I certainly did make that commitment. I'd like to see greyhounds rehomed through the proper authorities and not on Gumtree. Dr Lenz, would you like to?

Dr LENZ - Certainly.

Dr WOODRUFF - Sorry, the question is really to you. What actions have you taken to make sure - that's sort of a regulatory action?

Ms HOWLETT - We've certainly had discussions about that and are working out ways of enforcing that does not occur in the future.

Dr WOODRUFF - Has anything changed? Are greyhounds still being rehomed, traded for sale on Gumtree, without them being tracked?

Dr LENZ - Can I?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes.

PUBLIC

Dr LENZ - Thank you. It is an issue. From that list of categories for retirement, those dogs that you're referring to would most likely sit in the retired to a third-party category. We don't have - and I wonder if you have the actual figures of how many dogs went through that online auction.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, how would we know? Why would we know? This is the problem. There're no rules to follow greyhounds from-

Dr LENZ - You've referred to many, so I wondered whether you had an actual number for us to work with.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you to the greyhound advocacy organisations who are doing this work of tracking it, because obviously the government, with all of its resources, isn't doing this work. That is terrible when we see what happened to Zipping Princess and so many other dogs. This is the reality of greyhound racing in Tasmania, dogs get discarded.

And the follow up question, minister, is, when are you going to introduce tracking of dogs from birth all the way through to death? All the way through.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Dr Lenz.

Dr LENZ - The tracking of greyhounds, while they're in the breeding and racing phase, is done right now through the Rules of Racing.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yeah, we know that.

Dr LENZ - When they leave that jurisdiction, they're not lost to follow up because they fall under different legislation. For instance, under the *Animal Welfare Act* - and there are specific entities that enforce that legislation. We welcome, once again, close communication and close cooperation with those other agencies, and they would include obviously NRE - so that resources and RSPCA. But the fact remains that our jurisdiction under the rules only applies from birth until retirement - unless the dog is retired to an industry person, in which case we do have ongoing jurisdiction.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you. Yes, so -

Dr LENZ - It falls under somebody else's jurisdiction. We're open to cooperating with them to ensure that dogs are tracked from-

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes-

CHAIR - Last one, and then Ms Johnston.

Dr WOODRUFF - The issue is they're not being tracked. Minister, when are you going to include this in the local Rules of Racing? This is critical?

Ms HOWLETT - These are discussions which can occur when the integrity committee - yes, sorry, Dr Lenz?

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, I'd really just prefer keeping it with you, minister.

PUBLIC

Dr LENZ - I have a very specific answer. The Rules of Racing do not apply to members of the public. Introducing a local rule that doesn't apply to a member of the public makes no sense. What does make sense is close cooperation with the entities that have jurisdiction under that legislation.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, you can do that now, but you're not doing it. Like, dogs are being sold on Gumtree. There's no oversight.

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, I've given you a lot of flexibility to pursue a line of questioning. Stop interjecting. If the answer's finished or if it's going to keep - we'll move on to Ms Johnston.

Ms HOWLETT - I might just go to Dr Woodruff's question, Chair, if you'll allow me to indulge. I'm advised that the RSPCA and the Office of Racing Integrity will provide their recommendations for lifetime traceability options for greyhounds and adoption process to myself in the coming months.

Ms JOHNSTON - To go back to these adoption figures, reminding again that for 83 dogs it's a cost of \$17,000 for a dog going through GAP and that RSPCA, Dogs Home, Illoura Animal Refuge, Small Paws, Brightside get nothing to do this.

I think, Dr Lenz, you quoted 33 dogs went through an adoption agency, according to Tasracing's figure. A confirmation from both the RSPCA and the Dog's Home that between the two of them, they've had 47 dogs go through in that period of time. I think that highlights the issue about the lack of transparency of the particular data.

Now, when we're talking about dogs at the GAP program. I've an RTI back just this week in relation to the number of dogs that have been through the GAP program from 1 July 2023 to 6 November 2024. It indicates 115 had been claimed to be rehomed, but a number of those appear to still be on the GAP website, including pet name, Fox, race name Fox Watch Nights; Snip, race name How Far; and Dozer, race name Dig in Dozer.

Those three dogs are still up for adoption - claimed to be adopted out by GAP. Why is there a complete error in the data here?

Ms HOWLETT - I'll just clarify that there is an error in the data. Dr Lenz.

Dr LENZ - With the Chair's permission, we would need to look into the specifics of that and verify if there has been an error. Whether (a) is there an error? (b) what is what is the likely cause? Whether it's simply a website that hasn't been updated.

We stand by the figures. The 115 figure, that is something we report on a monthly basis to our board. With individual dogs, if there is a discrepancy, we would welcome details of that and take that on notice and get back to the committee.

Ms JOHNSTON - Those three dogs are still available on the website and they're available for adoption and they're clearly in this document saying having been adopted.

Can I ask also about the process you go to ensure the homes those dogs eventually do go to are suitable? Obviously, dogs exiting from the industry often have significant health issues,

PUBLIC

injury issues and significant behavioural issues because they have been through horrific time in the industry. They need some time to accommodate to house life, pet life. It takes some time, but there does seem to be a push, you said, Dr Lenz, beforehand, to increase the number of dogs going through GAP.

I point you to Oreo, whose race name was Insurance Bets. Poor Oreo has been through four homes attempted through the GAP program, where he's been adopted out four times and returned. My understanding is latest adoption was only a few days ago. I sincerely hope that this is his forever home. Why is it acceptable that it appears that GAP are doing no sort of vetting or assurances to ensure these dogs are going to appropriate homes?

Ms HOWLETT - I'll hand over to Dr Lenz to speak further about the GAP facility and the rehoming.

Dr LENZ - Thank you. First of all, the notion that GAP receives dogs that are, what was your wording there?

Ms JOHNSTON - Traumatized.

Dr LENZ - We would actually challenge that on the dogs we have seen come through in the time that I've been there. The vast majority of the dogs that come to us, yes, they're used to a different routine because they have been in, generally speaking, a kennel racing type of situation. There is obviously a period of adaptation going from that kennel environment into a domestic environment. That is exactly what GAP is there for, to help those dogs achieve that transition. The notion that we're getting the majority of dogs coming in with problems, I would refute that simply on what we receive. We do a very detailed condition report on each dog as it comes in. The dogs are sent to an external veterinary practice for a full vet check and vaccination booster, if needed. We have that oversight on the dogs. The issue with, and once again you have referenced the ancillary rehoming not receiving any funding, I think I answered that in your previous question.

Ms JOHNSTON - They still have to cover the cost of keeping those dogs, caring for those dogs, for a significant number of months, looking after them and veterinary bills that they need after that. Desexing, vaccination, and dental work is also provided initially to GAP dogs. You still charge a fee of \$17,000 per dog for GAP. The point is that RSPCA, the Dogs Homes, Small Paws, Illoura, Brightside get nothing to do that work which currently GAP gets \$17,000 for.

CHAIR - Ms Johnston, is there a question in there?

Ms JOHNSTON - I am just responding to Dr -

Ms HOWLETT - Can I please add to -

CHAIR - Then we'll go to Mr Ferguson.

Ms HOWLETT - Just to add to the work that GAP is doing. GAP is currently committed to expanding the facility and is about to shortly commence building a new kennel block and the new administration block, car park, and also signage. And the kennel block will, effectively,

PUBLIC

double the current GAP capacity and will help obviously rehome around 150 greyhounds per annum through the facility. We will have a lot more capacity there for rehoming.

Ms JOHNSTON - My original question was about the processes to go through, to check to make sure the homes are suitable. I mean Oreo has been through four homes.

Ms HOWLETT - Have you been to the GAP facility Ms Johnston and actually had a look-

Ms JOHNSTON - No, not for a long time - but the homes that they go to -

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - I have a two-part question because I am probably only able to get one question in, given my last line of questioning was like throwing a chip to the seagulls when I tried to go one extra.

The importance of stewards in the industry is vital. It is moving, under the new regulations; stewards' governance will move from NRE department to Tasracing. I would like it if you would provide an update to the committee about how the government and your Tasracing organisation is helping to support the development of those key workers. The second part of the question is, given the previous line of questioning I asked you and your team, I wonder if you would consider the benefits of an interstate trade mission on behalf of our Tasmanian breeding industry?

Ms HOWLETT - We recognise the importance of stewards' workforce training and the renewal for stewards and integrity staffing in our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future. Importantly, this supports the recommendation by Mr Murrihy in his final report that an adequately resourced and well-trained stewards panel is fundamental to the effective performance of the Integrity Unit. The Monteith review also specifically proposed better formal training for all stewards and we will continue to invest in workforce renewal, including the successful cadet stewards program with funding of \$250,000 per year. The cadet stewards program is an essential strategy for ensuring that we have skilled and capable stewards to support the racing industry in Tasmania. I am delighted that these cadet stewards, along with all the existing steward workforce, will come under the leadership of the company's newly appointed chief racing integrity officer, Ms Heidi Lester.

Ms Lester worked for a decade as a steward for Racing Victoria up until 2014, before working as chief steward in Mackay for two years. She returned to be chief steward for Greyhound Racing Victoria and then spent three-and-a-half years in Korea as a senior steward. The government and Tasracing have listened to industry feedback and we are pleased that this appointment comes with significant racing experience, which is exactly what we said we would do. I would like to invite the company to make any further comments.

Mr JENKINS - I do not have a lot to add, other than to reinforce my comments earlier that we are we are delighted to be welcoming an internationally credentialed senior integrity executive the calibre of Ms Lester. I'm very confident, Mr Ferguson, that once Ms Lester commences with the newly established Tasracing integrity unit that her significant skills and experience will demonstrate significant betterment for the racing industry in Tasmania.

PUBLIC

Ms HOWLETT - In relation to trade mission's interstate, a lot of the breeders do that already, when obviously their sales nationally and they already participate in those.

Mr FERGUSON - Can you boost it?

Ms HOWLETT - We can certainly look at ways of boosting it. I know of one international stud that went to America last month to look at stallions over there to possibly bring to Australia. So yes, it is certainly a great idea and we'll look at how we can do that. Thank you.

Mr WINTER - In relation to that same letter that I read from that you sent on 26 November, I'll read from one of the last paragraphs that says:

The old racing stables and associated registered horses at Valley Road, Sidmouth are regularly inspected given the Equine Code of Practice is new stewards undertaking property inspections will initially focus on education to encourage practice, change and compliance with the code, prior to moving to more punitive approaches.

Minister, when you were Racing minister before and the Racing ministers before that or in between, Tasracing, ORI have had complaint after complaint and I know that there've been attempts made by the old stable to put shade cloths up, which I don't believe are currently standing. There are serious animal welfare concerns that have been raised by the industry and this complaint is from the industry. Are you really prepared to allow the conditions there to continue the way they are while education is claimed to be happening? They know exactly what the conditions are. Don't they just need to be forced to improve conditions if they're going to continue to train horses there?

Ms HOWLETT - Ben Yole is not a licenced participant. As far as properties and inspections moving forward, I would expect that the standards are absolutely the best standards nationally.

Mr WINTER - Minister, in your letter you state that the compliance is going to have an education focus rather than a punitive one. At Sidmouth, you would have had the same people say the same things to you about the conditions as I have. The industry is appalled and it's continuing. We finally have the code of practice in place and the response from stewards has been to focus on education. They know exactly what they're doing. They've been told about the conditions there for years. Isn't it time we finally cracked down and sorted this out, so this stain on the industry no longer continues?

Ms HOWLETT - I believe that's exactly what we need to do.

Mr WINTER - Your letter says the opposite, it says they are going to educate.

CHAIR - Mr Winter.

Ms HOWLETT - What we're doing is, when we have the transitional - and we're going into the transitional phase now, from the Office of Racing Integrity into Tasracing. We want to have the best possible - obviously, education is part of that process, educating our stewards and making them have much better standards than currently is there. Part of that is through

PUBLIC

education, but we want to make sure that all properties have the best animal welfare standards that we can. Whether that be in relation to kennels or in relation to harness or thoroughbred properties.

Mr WINTER - Why are you standing by while the Code of Practice is not enforced by stewards?

Ms HOWLETT - Because, as I said, we will be working our way through that transition period where the Office of Racing Integrity will be abolished and, on 15 February will be the proclamation of the new legislation.

Mr WINTER - Is this just about the Office of Racing Integrity refusing to do it? Is that the point?

Dr LENZ - The development of the Code of Practice was in close cooperation with ORI and that was deliberate, obviously, because they are the people at the moment with that split, that are charged with enforcement. Education is always one of the spectra of methods that are used to get a result. There is, obviously, going to be a period now where there's possibly a little bit of uncertainty, but we are confident that when ORI is incorporated into Tasracing, we will have an instrument in the code of practice that will achieve the outcomes we're looking for.

Mr WINTER - Why do we need to wait for ORI to be incorporated in Tasracing for your own Equine Code of Practice to be adhered to and upheld?

Dr LENZ - They're the enforcement arm and they're not under our jurisdiction at the moment, but as you can -

Mr WINTER - So, ORI's just refusing to enforce the code?

CHAIR - Mr Winter, you've asked a question. The answer was two words in and you're interjecting. You ask a question, please hear the answer.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair. We don't have anyone from the Office of Racing Integrity at this hearing, Mr Winter, to come and speak more to what they're doing now. What we can talk about is what we are going to do in the future and how that is going to look. As I said, and I'll say it again, we know that we need to rebuild trust and restore faith in the industry. That is what I will do, and I'm hoping you will get on board with me and do the same.

Mr WINTER - I voted for the legislation. Not everyone here -

Ms HOWLETT - I know you did, and I thank you for that.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, Dr Lenz said GAP undertakes a very detailed condition report for every greyhound that comes into the facility. Can you please table, or can I take on notice, the condition report for every dog that's been received by the GAP facility in the last two years?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, absolutely. That's not a problem.

PUBLIC

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you. In regard to the dental rebate, the requirement for desexing, vaccination and dental, why isn't there an expectation that owners would be managing the teeth of their greyhound throughout their life? Why is the public paying a dental rebate? This is something an owner should do if they are taking care of their dog.

Ms HOWLETT - Chair, I thank Dr Woodruff for her question. I know Dr Lenz is wanting to answer that.

Dr LENZ - Thank you for the question. Absolutely, there is a responsibility on any animal owners to provide for the care. With the way the rules have evolved, the first component of that was making desexing mandatory upon retirement of an animal. There is a draft rule that I'm aware of that is also going to mandate the dental work having to be mandatorily done before retiring a dog. So, we're really providing that signal to our group of owners and trainers that, 'Hey, you know, these are normal expectations', and I'm happy to say they are normal expectations in owning an animal.

Tasracing has a role to play in the education and the transition of practices. That, I think, is that balance we're achieving now. The trainers and owners are required to pay up-front for those services, for those veterinary services. Tasracing provides a capped rebate amount for those services. So, there is that expectation that the trainer is paying up-front for the services, and we refund, rebate an amount. There is flexibility built in. We can vary the amounts that we put into rebates. As I said, it's a continuum, it's an education process, and it's changing practices. That's what we're doing with that scheme.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you. Is there pushback from the industry about these costs they're being required to meet. I think the average dog owner in the community would expect that if an owner is handing a dog over for rehoming, the requirement should be on them to pay the dental bill if the dog's teeth aren't in a good state, rather than Tasmanians having to pay for that. Has there been pushback in the industry about having to pay the real costs of caring for these gentle animals?

Ms HOWLETT - Chair, I thank Dr Woodruff for her question. I've not heard any pushback from the industry at all. Dr Lenz, can you provide any more details?

Dr LENZ - I think it's fair to say - we talked about vets earlier, that there's probably some general pushback across all of society when they are faced with veterinary medical bills because in the veterinary field we don't have a Medicare system. It is the real cost that owners of animals pay. There's no Medicare rebate. Having said that, there is obviously also a realisation across the whole of society, including the members of the Tasmanian greyhound participants that, yeah, this is a cost of looking after those animals. As I said, Tasracing's role is transitioning our industry into that change, and that's what we're doing.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, Dr Lenz. Just to clarify, is the expectation that you are going to move towards a requirement for owners to pay for these dental services - regular dental work throughout their racing life, not just at the end?

Dr LENZ - Yeah, so, two parts of that question. Number one is that the money that is paid into those rebate schemes, basically, is taken out of prize money. It's money that would otherwise be allocated to prize money. It's a different way of having the industry pay for the cost -

Dr WOODRUFF - It's a wholly subsidised industry, of course, subsidised by the taxpayers.

Dr LENZ - Well, you can argue that, obviously, the industry generates income from betting that goes to taxation, but that's probably beyond the scope of this.

Yeah, there is that flexibility that we've built into those schemes where we can set signals, do some education and then as practices adapt. And I agree with you. The journey of looking after the teeth of an animal, of a dog, doesn't just start when they're retired. There's preventative things that need to go on much sooner. We're helping the industry get onto that side of things, the preventative side. And look, a lot of them are doing it.

Dr WOODRUFF - So, to clarify, is that the expectation of where you're going? Are you moving towards the requirement that owners will look after the teeth of their animals throughout their racing life, not just at the point at which they're being rehomed?

Dr LENZ - Yeah, it's something that will be covered in the Code of Practice. Just understanding, helping participants gain that understanding that dental care starts -

Dr WOODRUFF - It's not the same thing as a requirement, it's not mandatory.

Dr LENZ - Well, we retain that flexibility. We want an outcome and we retain the flexibility of how we achieve that outcome. I think that's a fair way to look at that issue. We want people, just like yourself, to have that awareness that dental care and dental preventative care starts earlier than retirement. We're on side with that sentiment.

Ms JOHNSTON - Can I go back to my earlier question about the process of checking the homes that dogs are adopted to. I want to go back to the plight of Oreo because I think it's important to get poor Oreo's plight on the record just in case we're talking about this again in Estimates. Oreo, whose previous race name was Insurance Bet, was first adopted by the GAP program on 26 September 2023. He was returned on 21 March, so six months later. The reason for return was: 'Not suited to the home lifestyle they wanted to have with a dog'. Poor Oreo was adopted out again on 7 September, then returned on 31 October 2024, so three months afterwards. The reason given here was: 'Owner had multiple falls requiring hospital and felt unable to offer her a stable home'.

Sorry, I missed one: Oreo was adopted again on 15 May 2024 and returned on 7 June, so a month later. In that case: 'The elderly owner no longer able to keep due to having a fall'. As I said, Oreo was adopted out again on 7 September and returned on 31 October. 'Owner had multiple falls requiring hospital and felt unable to offer her a stable home.' I note that Oreo was adopted again on 1 November and, hopefully, has found his or her final home.

Why was it allowed that this poor dog went through four different homes with clearly unsuitable circumstances? What kind of checking and processes have been put in place by GAP to make sure the dogs are going to homes that are suitable for them? If you're interested in their long-term welfare, why was this not picked up?

Ms HOWLETT - Chair, I thank the member for her question. I know Dr Lenz has some information he'd like to provide.

Dr LENZ - Thank you. I didn't get a chance to answer your question earlier, so I welcome the opportunity to do so now. Oreo is the stand-out for the program this year in terms of the number of times that her placements have reverted, or she's reverted back to us. Look, it's in large part we have a very liberal policy at GAP in terms of when personal circumstances of the adopting family change, we are very, very liberal - much more so than many other rehoming agencies, in terms of we will take the dog back. You mentioned those circumstances. They're unfortunate circumstances, people falling over and getting injured. Oreo is a reasonably boisterous dog and -

Ms JOHNSTON - She's probably not suitable for an elderly person then, I would suggest.

Dr LENZ - She also is a dog that is very much a one-person dog, so an older person that relies on that companionship that the dog can provide, potentially, that is actually a very good match. But Oreo has come back to us multiple times, and she's the exception to the rule. Most of the 83 dogs that are adopted remain with that family. But we have taken dogs even after two years. That's how liberal and how generous the GAP adoption process is because, at the end of the day, we do want the best outcome, the optimum outcome, for each and every one of those dogs. If there's an unforeseen change in the familial circumstances that the dog finds itself in, of course we're going to take them back and do our level best to rehome every one of those dogs.

You'll see from the data that we've provided that every one of the dogs that has returned - and, as I said, Oreo is the stand-out of those. We have had a handful of others that have been returned once. Every one of those dogs has found a final home. And Oreo, inshallah, as they say in the Middle East, will have the same outcome.

Ms JOHNSTON - My calculation is a 15 per cent return rate, which is significantly higher under the current GAP manager than it was under the previous GAP manager, who I believe had a very low return rate.

I will go to Tasracing's entry waiting list to the GAP program. Tasracing used to include the race name of the dog, but no longer has that, so only the pet name is available. That makes it incredibly hard for welfare advocates to track where the dogs are going and where they're likely to end up. Recognising the figures we were quoted before from you, Dr Lenz, about dogs going through other agencies, third parties and things like that, doesn't match up with what certainly adoption agencies are telling us or is occurring. Why is it that Tasracing is no longer publishing the race names along with the pet names of dogs on the entry waiting list for GAP?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for her question. Dr Lenz has additional information.

Dr LENZ - Thank you, minister, and through you, chair. Thank you for that follow-up question. Once again, there are two parts. GAP is always open and transparent and if there is a case of not being able to track a particular dog we can provide that information. We have that information and we're very open with providing it.

Ms JOHNSTON - So, you can publish the race names again of those dogs on the entry waiting list?

Dr LENZ - I personally don't see any impediment to doing that. The dog is entirely identifiable, so if there are concerned parties, let us know and we can provide whatever information is required.

Ms JOHNSTON - But can you provide it publicly? The entry list is public, it's on your website, and it's got the list of the pet names, it's got the date of how long it's been waiting for and its eligibility status. Can you at least provide the race names so we can actually track which dog is which? It used to be like that but it's no longer like that. I don't know why, but can it be published again?

Ms HOWLETT - I can't see an issue with putting the race name as well as the pet name on the website.

Dr LENZ - Just as a supplementary to that, you mentioned the 47 dogs, I think -

Ms JOHNSTON - Between the Dogs Home and RSPCA.

Dr LENZ - Yes, compared to the 33 that are declared as retired to other adoption agencies. I think there's probably some overlap between retired to third party and retired to another adoption agency. We'd actually welcome getting the information on the dogs that are being rehomed by these ancillary rehoming agencies. I want to put that on record because it is something where we would be keen to work with those ancillary rehoming agencies, so if they would be happy to let us have their data and talk to us about ways that we can help them achieve responsible rehoming outcomes, we are so open to that.

The next round of the RAWG (Racing Animal Welfare Grant) program is going to happen again this year, so if they have the data, we're very keen to know what dogs are being rehomed by other rehoming agencies and also keen to explore ways that we can help that rehoming process. As I said, we're all about responsible rehoming and any agency that is a partner or is wanting to partner with us in that, we are very open to that.

Mr FERGUSON - I've been looking at the report titled Size and Scope of the Tasmanian Racing Industry, I think commissioned by Tasmania Racing and prepared by IER in June 2021. While I realise you may not have that in front of you, I did pick up, minister, in your opening statement the very positive impact of the racing industry. As a Bass MP, I note from that report on page 56 that more than 20 per cent of the total value-added positive impact of the racing industry occurs in and around Launceston in my electorate of Bass. I think that's really strong data and I think I saw 340 FTE jobs in my region -

CHAIR - We need a question. You've only got a minute for a question and you've gone it's now passed a minute

Mr FERGUSON - Of course. My question is, can you expand on it and should this report be updated to get an even more up-to-date picture of the industry contributing to our economy?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair, and I thank the member for his question and recognise his interest, particularly in his electorate of Bass. The sustainability of an industry that generates close to \$208 million per annum in economic activity for Tasmania and which involves more than 6400 people across the state, according to the research, the industry is

PUBLIC

valuable for the state, generating economic activity, importantly in our rural and regional areas. Around 40.3 per cent of the total value-added impact occurred in regional areas of Tasmania, whilst 39.6 per cent occurred in Hobart and 20.1 per cent in Launceston.

The Tasmanian racing industry was directly responsible for sustaining 993 full-time equivalent jobs across the state. When flow-on employment impacts are considered, the total FTE impact generated rose to 1735 jobs. In total, there are over 6400 individuals who participate in the racing industry and many of these people enjoy gainful employment of their specific skill set, particularly in the breeding, training and racing-related disciplines.

For many of these people, local racing clubs are an important part of their community and provide valuable opportunities to stay active and engage with people from all walks of life. More than 110,000 attendances were recorded at thoroughbred, harness and greyhound race meetings in Tasmania during the previous year, and it's clear that the industry supports urban and regional communities as well and job creation - the small businesses and the families, the workers who rely on them - and that's why our government is such a strong supporter of this industry. Chair, would you like to provide some more detail?

Mr PHAIR - I think so. The company pays for that report to be done, so there is a cost involved. We would see that as something we would do not on an annual basis, but maybe every three or four years or so. Annually, I don't think the data would change materially, so it would be prudent to conduct those types of surveys and reports every three years or so.

Mr FERGUSON - So, that's three years now? Thank you.

Mr WINTER - I wanted to ask about the north-west tracks issue - in fact, I'll go to you, chair. My recollection of this is that Tasracing exited the lease voluntarily and hadn't done the preparation around where participants would train, and that was admitted to by Mr Eriksson before he left at a forum I was at Spreyton. You committed that you build a new track quickly, but couldn't do it. The latest, as I understand it, is that you've spent \$210,000 at Palmers Road trying to get that track developed. How much was wasted trying to build a new track at Mill Road?

Ms HOWLETT - Chair, I thank the Leader of the Opposition -

Mr WINTER - My question is to the chair of Tasracing.

Ms HOWLETT - Through me.

Mr WINTER - No, to the chair.

CHAIR - He can ask questions directly of the chair, minister.

Ms HOWLETT - Can I also have the indulgence with a question that's on notice as well from Mr Winter, after the chair has answered this question specifically?

CHAIR - That's fine.

Mr PHAIR - Thank you, Mr Winter, for the question. There is a cost involved, clearly, of doing planning approvals and some consultancy reports and so on on the suitability of land

PUBLIC

to be able to build what you may want to build - in our case, a racecourse and racetrack. That cost at Palmers Road uncovered some environmental concerns that made that site not available to build a racetrack on. At Mill Road we had some planning issues there as well. The total cost is in the annual report and that's contributed to the loss the company made, and that amount is around \$600,000. We understand that there is a cost involved in doing the due diligence on all the parcels of land and so on that tracks are being built on, and that's a necessary cost to understand whether or not you can build a track there.

Mr WINTER - So you spent a bit over \$600,000 trying to build two tracks, and as I understand, at the moment you're trying to build a greyhound track inside the Spreyton track. Can you explain the process that you're in so far? I've spoken to thoroughbred trainers who haven't heard anything about it. Are you doing consultation or are you just doing design work for that already?

Mr PHAIR - The answer is both. The consultations have been occurring with all trainers on site at Spreyton, and I can defer to the CEO for the specifics around that. There are designs that have been done for options of tracks we can build and they are part of a submission that we have given to the minister.

Mr WINTER - You have previously received money from the exit of the showground site. I've asked for how much you received and I won't go through this again because you won't give it to me. Has Tasracing any money set aside to build that track and is the Tasmanian government's \$8 million commitment to the track still available to Tasracing?

Mr PHAIR - We do have money set aside for the construction.

Mr WINTER - How much?

Mr PHAIR - That amount of money I think is in our corporate plan coming out, which I can defer to the CEO for more information on that. The \$8 million that you refer to is included in our submission to the minister.

Mr WINTER - The question was is that \$8 million still available or has it been removed?

Mr PHAIR - I am not aware that it has been removed.

Ms HOWLETT - I'm certainly not aware that \$8 million has been removed.

Mr WINTER - There's still \$8 million? It is \$8 million and plus your own allocation, which I think we are about to find out what that is.

CHAIR - Just before I go to you, Dr Woodruff, the minister indicated she had an answer to a question that was taken on notice.

Mr WINTER - I might get the rest of that answer too.

Ms HOWLETT - Would you like to speak to that before I'll answer my question on notice? In relation to Mr Winter's previous question, in reference to the letter to the complaint about dust, the *Primary Industry Activity Protection Act 1995* is commonly known as Tasmania's right to farm act. That protects primary producers from court action under the

common law of nuisance. Landholders and farmers have a right to farm and to have livestock. The livestock, whether that be horses or cattle, may result in dust becoming windborne. The intention of the Equine Welfare Code of Practice is to address key aspects of the care, welfare and health of race horses. The code does not deal with dust arising from livestock. If a property is overstocked and horse welfare is at risk, then the code will apply.

Dr WOODRUFF - I have some questions on Tasracing's employment figures. How many Tasracing staff are directly employed in greyhound racing only? How many Tasracing staff are shared across greyhound racing and another code? How many stewards are assigned to each code? How many FTEs in Tasracing? What is the total number of trainers, breeders and owners in greyhound racing? Perhaps, I can take them on notice? Would you prefer or do you have the figures there?

Ms HOWLETT - Let us try and answer as many of those as we possibly can and considering they are operation matters for Tasracing, I'll pass over to the CEO.

Mr JENKINS- I think those -

Dr WOODRUFF - Do you want me to read them again?

Mr JENKINS - Would you mind? I am sorry.

Dr WOODRUFF - That is okay. How many staff are directly employed in greyhound racing only? Do you want to take these on notice? I can just put them on notice if you would prefer or do you have the figures at hand?

Mr JENKINS - I will answer those that I can.

Dr WOODRUFF - That was the first one, greyhound racing only.

Mr JENKINS - Greyhound racing only. We have one greyhound code manager and a number of race day casuals that will come in and out. I do not have an exact number on those who are casual. If I can take that on notice Dr Woodruff, that would be appreciated.

Dr WOODRUFF - One-person full time and then you'll take on notice of casuals. How many are shared across greyhound racing and another code? Is that full time equivalent person shared or just for greyhound racing?

Mr JENKINS - We had one full-time staff member who moves across the harness and greyhound codes. Similarly, there are a number of casual employees. Once again, if I could take that just to make that matter on notice -

CHAIR - To be clear, either the minister or the chair has to agree to take it on notice. Minister, if you can indicate that you are happy for these questions to be taken on notice, the CEO cannot do that.

Mr JENKINS - Sorry, Chair, point of order. Thank you.

Ms HOWLETT - I'm happy for what can't be answered to be taken on notice in writing, Dr Woodruff.

PUBLIC

Dr WOODRUFF - To be clear, there's one full time equivalent in greyhound racing? There is one full time equivalent who is shared between harness and greyhound racing.

Mr JENKINS - That's right.

Dr WOODRUFF - Then the casuals which you'll take on notice. How many stewards are assigned to each of the three codes?

Mr JENKINS - Stewards are a typically a rotating pool. We do have some stewards and I might add I'm speaking on behalf of the Office of Racing Integrity. Perhaps, if I specifically take those on notice because there are a number of stewards, Dr Woodruff, that do rotate regularly across the different codes. We will get you the data.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you. The total number of full-time equivalents employed by Tasracing as we stand today.

Mr JENKINS - I think it would be 83. I'm going from memory, but I can certainly get the most recent board paper and confirm that for you formally on notice.

Dr WOODRUFF - What is the total number of trainers, breeders and owners in greyhound racing? I would like to know the separate numbers of where an individual is a breeder and/or a trainer and/or an owner. Separate numbers for trainers, breeders and owners in greyhound racing.

Mr JENKINS - I understood, that is something that I will defer and take if I may. Yes, I certainly can provide.

Ms JOHNSTON - Last year in GBEs, we spoke at length about the management to the Greyhound Adoption Program. At that stage I think it was the Acting Greyhound Adoption Program Manager, Ms Gittus and her appointment, and Mr Jenkins expressed confidence in the then on leave Greyhound Adoption Manager Ms Salerno.

Since that time Ms Salerno's employment has been terminated and we did discuss at the last GBEs that she had raised significant concerns and Kiera Cerano had also raised significances about welfare of dogs at the GAP program.

Was Ms Salerno dismissed because she had raised concerns publicly about the welfare of greyhounds in the industry and at GAP?

Ms HOWLETT - I'm not going to comment on confidential employment matters relating to current or former employees of Tasracing. What I can say is that all employees are entitled to a safe work environment and I absolutely expect all employment matters to be dealt with fairly. The GAP program is managed under the direction of Tasracing's Chief Veterinary and Animal Welfare Officer, Dr Martin Lenz, with the support of highly qualified GAP coordinated behaviourist staff. As you know, GAP operates based on protocols which have been adopted nationally to protect greyhounds and their new owners.

Mr WINTER - My question is on workers compensation. You'll recall last year we had a very lengthy conversation about workers compensation policies. At that time, this hearing

sparked, in part - Tasracing ended up changing policy as I understand it and actually requiring that Ben Yole Racing and other participants would have adequate workers compensation. In fact, this is to the chair.

Since that time I received an RTI back that showed at the cessation of Ben Yole Racing's arrangements with a labour hire company, Mr Manshanden quite rightfully asked Robin Thompson, the director of ORI, whether or not the Yole racing stable - which was then Wayne Yole - had workers compensation insurance. You can see that the response from Wayne Yole is that he had no employees and therefore, didn't have any requirement.

As I understand, Mr Yole has upwards of 100 horses and the claim he's doing that without any employees is fanciful. What's Tasracing doing to ensure the participants, particularly the Yole stable, actually have workers compensation insurance? And what assistance have you had from the Office of Racing Integrity to ensure somebody's monitoring this really important issue?

Mr PHAIR - Thank you. From a Tasracing point of view, we are not the regulator when it comes to workers compensation. Any evidence that we receive from members of the public, whoever it may be, that certain racing participants don't have workers compensation. We encourage them to either report to the regulator or we do that, the regulator being WorkSafe Tasmania. That is their job to enforce that. Our job is, if we become aware of it, to report the fact. What we have done since our conversation this table last year is provide education sessions to industry participants around what the requirements of the law are and workers compensation would be one of those.

Mr WINTER - Do you think it's possible that Wayne Yole is looking after that many horses without any employees?

Mr PHAIR - I do not know the answer to that question.

Mr WINTER - Would the CEO have an opinion?

Mr JENKINS - I cannot comment. As my chair has indicated, Mr Winter, we are not the regulator and I am not an expert in such matters.

Mr WINTER - Last year we had this conversation and the Office of Racing Integrity believed it wasn't the regulator effectively either and was saying that they didn't have oversight of this. They have a form that required participants to say, not to actually say they had insurance, and under RTI, again it was Tasracing staff that were calling this out and saying nobody's monitoring this. How is it that 12 months down the track the Yole racing stable is still operating without workers compensation insurance in this state and it appears no one's doing anything about it?

Mr PHAIR - I don't believe that we aren't doing anything about it. We certainly are. At any stage where we are advised of any instances of where someone may not be complying with the law, it is our obligation to report that to the regulator in that instance. If it's workers compensation, it is clearly to WorkSafe Tasmania. We do do that. As far as our role goes, it is about education to the industry participants, as I said previously. That is what we have been doing since it was brought to light 12 months ago. That is our role. I cannot really do any more than that because we are not the regulator.

Mr WINTER - Has Wayne Yole - has the Yole stable being referred to WorkSafe in relation to their adequacy or otherwise of their workers compensation insurance scheme?

Ms HOWLETT - I will add a little bit to that if you allow me to. There are investigations into two employees within the racing industry for failing to hold a workers compensation policy of insurance, which were identified by WorkSafe Tasmania prior to the compliance program commencing. One prosecution has commenced and the other matter has been referred to the Director of Public Prosecution for consideration.

Mr WINTER - Just to clarify that answer, is that the worker or the employer that's been referred?

Ms HOWLETT - The employers. There are two employers within the racing industry.

Mr WINTER - I appreciate the answer very much.

Mr FERGUSON - Minister, we do share an interest in wanting to see Tasmanian small businesses grow and thrive across our state. The racing industry plays an important role. We touched on that in my earlier questions. Just picking up on that last thread, Mr Phair suggested that every three or four years it might be worth updating that report. I am not putting words in your mouth, but I think it might be worth in the next few years updating that report and I will just leave it there.

I wonder if you could comment on the upcoming summer racing festival that is going to be, a very important period for the industry. Can you update the committee on the importance of the summer racing festival that you recently launched with those thousands of jobs supported by the three codes? Do you have any opinions or ideas about how we can encourage more Tasmanians who are unfamiliar with racing maybe to come and use the festival as their opportunity to attend for the first time or the first time in a while?

Ms HOWLETT - I was really pleased to launch the festival on Tuesday along with clubs from right across the state from all three codes. The summer racing festival provides a very important social and economic boost for Tasmania. It is a much-needed boost, particularly to our hospitality venues and small businesses, and it is a boost through links to fashion and retail as well. The boost for our businesses is also really important to me as the Minister for Hospitality and Small Business, and I look forward to welcoming the many interstate guests the festival attracts. I know that we can't wait to showcase Tasmania's fantastic racing product and highlight Tasmania as a true national racing and hospitality destination across this summer. It's important for our regional economy as well, the festival, and it also features harness and thoroughbred country cups in regional parts of the state.

I know there is a significant boost to small businesses and venues across the summer carnival and we've seen that previously. We have many interstate people flying for that and I know just one local business just down the road from a millenary point of view, we have people out that arrive here, they go and purchase their millinery, they purchase their outfits, et cetera. We have the best food, wine, whiskey, and gin for our interstate guests to try, and appreciate and sample the best products in the country, I believe.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Just to clarify, Dr Woodruff, I allowed you five questions on the last rotation, all of which were partly answered.

Dr WOODRUFF - That was one question on notice, Chair.

CHAIR - It was five separate questions that you've put on notice that were partly answered. I'm going to Ms Johnston.

Ms JOHNSTON - The wagering on greyhounds is reducing considerably despite the fact that the number of meetings being held and the races held has increased significantly over the last few years. This suggests to me that people are being turned off by greyhound racing because it is cruel and they don't want to put their money and bet on cruel practices. Tasracing seems to be injecting more and more money each year into PR stunts to try to get people through the turnstiles and to engage with greyhound racing, including holding a Bluey Fun Day, which turned out to be an illegal use of the Bluey copyright. The irony was not lost on people using a dog to try to promote dog cruelty. Do you think that it's appropriate that Tasmania continue to spend so much money on PR to try to increase wagering turnover, which is betting, when so many in the community feel very strongly that greyhound racing is cruel and should not be supported through government subsidies?

Ms HOWLETT - Going to the member for Bass's point, as well, it's about getting people to the races and getting them to our summer festivals and utilising whatever marketing capabilities that we have in order to get people to the races across all three codes.

Ms JOHNSTON - Including illegal ones?

Ms HOWLETT - Look, wagering - there's no doubt that wagering has significantly decreased during the COVID years. We've seen a softening on that throughout all jurisdictions.

Ms JOHNSTON - It was highest in the COVID years.

Ms HOWLETT - I said it's had a decline since the COVID years. A degree of post-COVID normality has returned to the wagering market and the economic factors continue to impact wagering nationally, including greyhound racing in Tasmania.

National wagering on Tasmanian racing product has increased by 19 per cent since the Pre-COVID 2018-19 financial year and this figure for the greyhound code saw national wagering increased by over 67 million or 34 per cent across the same period on Tasmanian greyhound racing product.

I'm not sure, would you like to add any more on wagering?

Mr JENKINS - Thank you, minister, Chair and Ms Johnston. Just to round that out, not so much on wagering, but in terms of the aspect of the question regarding promotion and marketing of the sport. Firstly, that Bluey campaign wasn't Tasracing, just to have on record, it was a racing club. The promotion and development of the racing industry, that's my job under the law. That's made very clear under Tasracing's obligations in the act, Ms Johnston. So, the board approves on an annual basis the marketing and promotional spend, then it becomes the accountability of myself and my executive team to utilise those funds as effectively as we can

PUBLIC

for the betterment of promoting the racing industry, once again, as I'm obliged to do under the act.

Mr WINTER - I just wanted to ask in relation to the finances. You had a \$1.2 million loss last financial year and a lot of that goes to expenses increasing. The expenses for staff in particular have gone up by almost \$1 million so nearly 9 per cent. Is that a result of a particular strategic focus, and if so, can you explain the employee expenses going up so much? That's through you, chair, and probably through the CEO. I'm not allowed to ask you, Mr Jenkins, but I'll ask through the chair, if that's all right.

Mr PHAIR - Absolutely. I'll pass over to Mr Jenkins if that's okay.

Mr JENKINS - Thank you, everyone involved in that interaction in the question reaching me. There are some specific items, Mr Winter, that I would like to explain for the committee. Firstly, that increase in employee costs is in part driven by the filling of roles that were vacant in the prior financial years, so of course there's an incremental expense associated with that.

I also would point to strategic decisions that were made for the first time, bringing a chief veterinary and animal welfare officer position to the executive level within the company. Formerly it was an animal welfare lower-level type of role. That goes to our commitment of course to animal welfare and enabled us to secure the services of Dr Lenz, who is an outstanding executive and veterinary practitioner, but there's also a cost associated with that when you uplift the job.

We pretty much did the same thing with the head of HR as well, Mr Winter. When I became the acting CEO originally, I had concerns in relation to some of the cultural and performance matters that were evident with inside the organisation, and it's a matter of public record that our employee opinion survey results going back a couple of years ago were favourable to the tune of only 44 per cent, which in anyone's book isn't really healthy. So, we invested in a chief people officer position again and members of the executive appointed Ms Claire Willemse, who is outstanding. I'm very proud and pleased for everyone involved in Tasracing that we announced to our staff earlier in the week that we've now moved to the favourable percentage of employees under our most recent survey conducted in November to 77 per cent. There's a cost associated with that, but I'm really committed to providing an environment that my people want to turn up to feel purpose, feel respect, feel that they can bring their true self to work, and love walking through the door.

CHAIR - One more, Mr Winter.

Mr WINTER - I get three, don't I?

CHAIR - You don't get three on every rotation.

Mr WINTER - Oh, okay. In that case, as an intro, I want to acknowledge that result is outstanding from two years ago from where we were.

You have some very big changes coming in terms of the moving of ORI responsibilities into Tasracing. In terms of the financial sustainability of Tasracing going forward, you have not got a deed past 2029, and 12 months ago I know that Tasracing had already put together

PUBLIC

a draft deed that still hasn't been signed off. You've also got those added responsibilities. Is the government going to pump in more money next financial year to support Tasracing's ongoing activities, given the increasing size or scope of what you're doing? How are you going with the deed negotiations that are really critical, and can you forecast a sustainable budget going forward, given the additional revenue, if there is any, and also the added responsibilities that have been given to you by the new legislation?

Ms HOWLETT - Would you like me to speak to that?

Mr WINTER - I meant through the chair, if that's okay.

Mr PHAIR - Thank you, Mr Winter, for your question. As far as the budget goes for the staff we will take on from the Office of Racing Integrity through the NRE, there is an output budget for that. The amount of budget that is relevant to the people coming across to Tasracing in February will be used by Tasracing. That is critical, obviously, from our budgeting point of view, to ensure that it is sustainable. In any organisation, we will be looking for any synergies that we possibly can achieve as far as bringing two organisations together. We're not at a stage at the moment where we can recognise those synergies yet until we more or less get under the bonnet, so to speak, so we will do that as a matter of course and the expectation of any merger would have that in play as well.

As far as the funding deed goes that you refer to, I was on record two days ago saying it's the number-one priority for Tasracing. That remains today. We have been in some favourable conversations with the Premier, the Minister for Racing and the Treasurer. We don't have an agreement signed or anything like that at the moment, but I would say that the government has been very respectful in allowing us to present our case and we thank them for that. Ultimately, the decision on funding is for the government to make, not us. We make the submissions.

Clearly, I've said it's our number-one priority going forward for the sustainability of the industry, but more importantly to give confidence to those industry participants in five years' time who are investing now for an output in five years' time. An answer on the funding deed, from my point of view and Tasracing's point of view, we're being very selfish here, but it's of critical importance.

Mr WINTER - That's good, because the Premier mocked Labor for saying we needed the deed in place now and I totally agree with your comments.

CHAIR - The time being 12.15 p.m., the time for scrutiny of Tasracing has expired. I thank all of those at the table for their attendance. We've got one hour to go for Tas Irrigation, so if we could make the change over as quick as possible.

The witnesses withdrew.

The committee suspended at 12.15 p.m.