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**THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON GREYHOUND RACING TRANSITION
MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART ON
WEDNESDAY 29 JULY 2026.**

Greyhounds Tasmania

The Committee met at 10.00 a.m.

CHAIR (Ms Johnston) - Thank you very much for appearing before today's hearing of the Joint Standing Committee on Greyhound Racing Transition. You're appearing before us online today. Could please state your name and the capacity in which you're appearing before the Committee, please?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Luke Gatehouse and I'm here representing Greyhounds Tasmania.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, Mr Gatehouse, and can I confirm that you've received and read the guide sent to you by the Committee Secretary?

Mr GATEHOUSE - That is correct.

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

Now, you have appeared before us a number of times and I'm aware you know the Committee members here, but just for those who might be watching online, I, myself, as the Chair, independent member for Clark, Kristie Johnston. We have the Liberal member for Clark, Mr Marcus Vermey, the Labor member for Franklin, Dean Winter, the honourable member for Nelson, Meg Webb, the honourable member for McIntyre, Tania Rattray; and the honourable member for Hobart, Cassy O'Connor as well, and, of course, we have our Secretary and Hansard here in the room as well.

Now, as you are joining us on Teams today, I will get you to confirm the oath and please confirm the following after I've repeated it.

Mr LUKE GATEHOUSE, GREYHOUNDS TASMANIA, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. Would you like to begin by making a short opening statement?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yes. Thanks, Chair, and thank you, members of the Committee, for having me here today. I want to begin by stating plainly what the industry has been living through: a year of political instability that has caused profound emotional, financial and mental harm to many good Tasmanians. The repeated procedural manoeuvres surrounding this bill,

including the recent attempt to send it back to the Committee - which you rejected and you've got your own work plan, which we respect - have created an environment of uncertainty that is now directly affecting the mental health of racing participants across three codes, across the state.

This instability is not accidental. It is the product of a political process that has drifted far from transparency, far from democratic norms, and far from the obligations owed to the people whose livelihoods depend on this industry.

As we know, the Government did not take a greyhound racing ban to the 2025 election. In fact, during the campaign, it explicitly reaffirmed its support for the continuation of the industry. The policy only emerged after the election as part of a political agreement with the Greens to secure government formation. That agreement is not a democratic mandate; it is a political deal, and political deals do not override the Government's obligations to act transparently, legislatively and within the bounds of democratic accountability. The reversal of the Government's position is a policy backflip, not a public endorsement, and it is critical this Committee recognises that distinction.

I also want to be absolutely clear about another matter. If the Government is contemplating non-legislative strategies to disable or remove the greyhound industry, that would represent a deeply inappropriate use of executive power. A democratic government cannot legitimately circumvent parliament to achieve an outcome it cannot secure through legislation.

The *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024* requires Tasracing to facilitate, promote and regulate greyhound racing. No executive direction can lawfully override those statutory duties. We're in possession of interim legal advice from counsel that maintains such action may well expose the Government to a range of legal remedies. Given the vagueness of the threats that have been made, it is difficult to be definitive about what remedies would apply at this time, because we don't know. We're playing in hypotheticals. As we are in conflict with the Government about how they may seek to destroy our industry without parliamentary endorsement and support, we are not in a position to publicly release our advice at this time, as it may be central to any legal action that may take place - not that we want to go down that path. We want to work with the Government for this industry to continue. However, as this approach is apparently central to the Government's strategy to implement the proposed ban, we believe that this Committee should seek both urgent advice from the Government about what they are proposing to do and to seek legal advice on the legality of such actions.

The industry is now operating under the shadow of legislative uncertainty that affects all three codes. The indefinite delay in presenting the bill to the Legislative Council has paralysed long-term planning. Tasracing cannot adequately prepare for the post-2029 funding deed. Capital works are being stalled. Breeding decisions across all codes have the potential of being distorted. The entire racing ecosystem in Tasmania is being held in a high-risk policy vacuum.

This Committee must understand that the consequences of what is being done extends far beyond greyhound racing. They threaten the future viability of Tasracing itself. We've spoken about the three-legged stool that Tasracing is. Artificially contracting the industry down to two codes fractures shared infrastructure, destroys administrative cost-sharing models and worsens the systemic vulnerabilities already identified by the Parliament. The two-code model is not cheaper. It is mathematically less efficient and patently more expensive for the taxpayer.

While there is debate from some about the value of the industry, surely the Committee can acknowledge that there is some economic value provided to the state of Tasmania by greyhound racing. The complete dismissal of the value of the greyhound industry to the economy cannot be sustained.

Finally, I want to address animal welfare. The modern Tasmanian greyhound industry operates under one of the strongest welfare frameworks in Australia: whole-of-life tracking, veterinary oversight, strengthened integrity systems, particularly since the introduction of the Act in Tasmania in 2024, an industry-funded rehoming program. A forced phase-out would potentially overwhelm rehoming networks, and I know that the Commissioner has been doing a lot of work in that space. The current system protects greyhounds. Chair, members, the path to a financially sustainable Tasmanian racing industry lies in commercial modernisation, not contraction. The tri-code model is the only viable foundation for reducing long-term reliance on public funding.

The industry stands ready to work with Government on a performance-linked, post-2029 deed. But that requires legislative clarity, democratic transparency, and an end to the uncertainty that has destabilised the sector. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, Mr Gatehouse. I appreciate that. If I may start off first, in relation to the position of both the Government and the Opposition that there will be no public funding of greyhound racing post-2029, can you explain to the Committee, part of our role over the next few months is to investigate, there are a range of ways that jurisdictions have transitioned out of greyhound racing - some have taken legislative form, some just have simply closed tracks and are no longer operating greyhound racing - we're trying to understand the impacts of different models of ending greyhound racing. If there were to be no funding and it was seen that both major parties, alternative governments in this state, will not be providing funding for greyhound racing post-2029, how does greyhound racing continue to financially sustain itself post-2029?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yes. So what we have - and if we can go through the historical context of why we're even in this discussion about public funding - to go back to the sale of TOTE in 2009, which was eventually, I think 2011 or 2012 it was finally sold, but the deed was put in place at the time so the Government could realise a greater return at that time for taking responsibility for the ongoing funding of racing, which in other jurisdictions has been the responsibility of the wagering operator that has signed a long-term deal. What we have is, and I've said before, that we need to really modernise the Tasracing model. I think that what this Committee should do is, rather than be focusing on the phase-out of greyhound racing, you should be looking at how you move racing as a whole to a system whereby there is a reducing reliance on that public funding. Because what was aimed to be done out of that 20-year period, my understanding, was that Tasracing was to increase its reliance on commercial funding not to just add to the Government funding that was coming through from the deed every year. What we've had is -

CHAIR - I was going to ask how that looks. Sorry, I was just going to ask how that looks to you, moving to 2029? So, if the position of both major parties is that from 2029, there is no more funding for greyhound racing coming from the Tasmanian Government, whichever form that might take: how do they transition? How would the industry transition to that point, from

30 June 2029? Is that a reduction of funding now? A slow weaning-off of funding from now until 2029?

Mr GATEHOUSE - The weaning-off of the funding - and I'm not sure whether Labor has actually put out a policy position that they wouldn't fund greyhound racing and that's more to the Labor -

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, their Opposition Leader has said it. Their Leader has said it, that the industry will be required to stand on its own two feet post-2029.

Mr GATEHOUSE - So, there are certain obligations that the Government and Tasracing have under the legislation, and that's in terms of the integrity systems, the promotion of the three codes of racing. Now, there's a whole heap of those legislative requirements that are there, that cannot be removed without the legislation changing, which is why the Government brought it in. What we're saying is that the commercial practice of greyhound racing can get to a point where it is fully self-sustainable. There will still be Government obligations in terms of regulation and oversight, and there needs to be models for all three codes moving forward. If you look at some of the Tasracing submissions, you will see that Tasracing have said that greyhound racing is the most commercially viable of the three codes.

Of the \$40 million - circa \$40 million; \$39 point whatever - of money that came through the deed last year, effectively, according to Tasracing's figures, only \$3 million of that was required for the greyhound racing industry because the greyhound racing industry has a very significant commercial revenue through race field fees, international wagering fees, their share the sponsorship that's in place at the moment with the wagering sponsors that you have, and the POC contribution, Point of Consumption tax. That commercial revenue comes out at about \$10 million a year.

To run the commercial side of greyhound racing at this point in time costs about seven and a half, if you look at the term code funding in the expense line of Tasracing's annual report. When you add in overheads, we're talking about \$11.5 million worth of expense.

We just need to move to a performance-based model across the three codes. It's going to be harder for the other two codes to get to that performance-based model, but it can be done. But it would mean that greyhound racing is less reliant. So, if you want to go down the path of phasing it out, it might be that the funding tapers off over a period of time, which looking back 20 years, in hindsight, I would have done that with the original deed, rather than having it linked to CPI every year for 20 years and having it just there as a fund that kept increasing. But that's a personal view in terms of how to run a profitable business. Greyhound racing can do that.

CHAIR - Thank you, Mr Winter, you had a question.

Mr WINTER - Thanks for being here, Mr Gatehouse. And you've just taken us through part of Tasracing's submission, which is on the website and outlines the net recurring effect of taking away greyhound racing is only a saving effectively of \$2.81 million, which is consistent with the evidence that Tasracing has given us on two other separate occasions. And that's what we're talking about here, which is the gap that currently exists between the revenue the greyhound racing brings in and the cost which has been given evidence several times that greyhound racing is by far the most sustainable commercial code of the three.

But I really want to talk to you about the 'defund greyhound racing policy' that the Premier announced some time ago, which he said he would do irrespective of whether the legislation passed. In your opening statement, you spoke a little bit about the legal advice that you've received, I was hoping you could go into, for the Committee, what evidence you are able to provide around this, because I'm quite concerned that, what it sounds like you're saying is that, if the Government did try and defund greyhound racing without legislative change, that they would end up in court, which sounds very expensive for the taxpayer. Can you take us through the advice as much as you're able to?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yes. Thank you, Mr Winter, I will. Obviously, given that we're dealing in hypotheticals and we don't know what the Government is planning to do, it's hard to provide specifics, but I can take you through a few items. What I do want to say is that we don't want to go down that path. We really don't want to go down that path. Our preference is for a constructive resolution with the Government. We've consistently said that all we want is a fair go and that we are willing to engage in good-faith consultation.

Now I wrote to the Premier - on I believe it was the 13th of May this year - after the Legislative Council debate was pulled, reaching out to try and seek some constructive discussions moving forward. The Premier replied to me, I believe it was early June. I'll just confirm that: the 4th of June. And he referred the letter to the Minister for Racing and asked her to respond directly. Obviously in the period 4th of June through to - I'm not sure when - the Racing Minister obviously stood down and there is a new Racing Minister. However, I am still yet to receive a reply from the new Racing Minister as to whether the Government wishes to actually partake in that discussion, which we're willing to do.

In terms of areas of the legislation that could possibly be triggered - and again, hypothetically, because we don't know what the Government's thinking or spit-balling today. So, if we look at the section 59 of the Tasracing regulation Act [Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024], it talks about Tasracing being responsible for promoting Tasmanian racing locally, nationally and internationally and that includes greyhound racing, promoting the development of an efficient and effective horse and greyhound breeding industry, and assisting racing clubs with the promotion and marketing of major race carnivals. So, there are certain things that Tasracing are responsible for.

Mr WINTER - So just to be clear, at the moment, by law Tasracing is required to promote greyhound racing and various other things in section 59, and your argument is that because there's a law requiring Tasracing to regulate and promote the industry, it is therefore potentially unlawful for Government to defund greyhound racing at the same time as a law requiring them to promote it? Is that right?

Mr GATEHOUSE - The question around whether it's - how it's funded is a commercial business decision for Tasracing, but they really can't be directed to not fulfil their legislative obligation. Now, you know, that would be a longer-term discussion in terms of the business model of Tasracing. And I believe Tasracing have had some consultants in, assisting them with the ongoing business model, and I would suggest that, you know, we talked about the work that Mr Sellenger did for the racing integrity commissioner last year. I believe he's also been engaged by Tasracing to undertake some work as well, and it probably would be very useful for this Committee to understand more closely the work that he's been undertaking, given that he's been engaged by the arm of government, which is Tasracing, to assist with their business model moving forward.

Further, Tasracing must make rules of racing for all codes of racing, so that's a regulatory requirement. So, you know, there is a range of activities that need to be performed by Tasracing. Some are regulatory, some are commercial. Our argument is, the commercial side of the business should be a commercial side. The regulation of racing itself is like the regulation of any other industry that government regulates. So, you know, we're not arguing that you completely defund greyhound racing, as the term might be, but make the codes of racing cut their own cloth. That's only fair.

CHAIR - Thank you. I'll move on to Ms Connor.

Ms O'CONNOR - Not that the codes of racing have ever been able to cut their own cloth without public subsidies, but Mr Gatehouse, you said in your opening statement that 'Tasmania has one of the strongest animal welfare frameworks for greyhounds in Australia.' You said the current system protects greyhounds. Part of our work plan is to examine in more detail the animal welfare aspects of this industry. The Greens put in a right-to-information, which we got back in May of this year, which detailed a total of 24 dead dogs in the right-to-information, and 19 of them dead since the 1st of January this year and that's given that the industry had one month off due to kennel cough. Eighteen of the dead dogs were under six years of age. Nine of the 24 listed dead dogs died of unknown causes, so we don't know what killed them - so, so much for whole-of-life tracking. But it is not true, is it, to say that the current system protects greyhounds? We've been gathering injury data since the 1st of January this year and count at least 104 injuries confirmed by stewards' reports.

Mr GATEHOUSE - Which would be consistent with the number of injuries over the course of a racing year. Should we go through all 24 of those dogs? Do you want to go through them all, Ms O'Connor, today?

Ms O'CONNOR - But that's not my question. My question is - well, I've got the list of dogs and what they died of. For example, seven of the dead dogs were in Anthony Bullock's custody when they died, and two of them apparently died from snakebite, one of them in July, when snakes are generally having a little hibernate. So, I mean, we can waste the Committee's time and go through all of the causes of deaths of those dogs, or you can answer the question, which is: you've said that the current system protects greyhounds. The data denies that, doesn't it? It doesn't protect greyhounds. There's still a very high rate of injury and death.

Mr GATEHOUSE - We disagree. We're going to disagree, Ms O'Connor. You're going to make that statement and try and put a question mark on the end of it and then say, 'You have to agree.' I disagree. There's my answer.

Ms O'CONNOR - So, you disagree that a total of 19 dead dogs this year, since 1 January this year, and at least 104 injured dogs, is not an unacceptably high rate of injury and death?

Mr GATEHOUSE - What you're doing is manipulating data. You're saying 19 dead dogs -

Ms O'CONNOR - No, I'm just giving you the data.

Mr GATEHOUSE - There have not been 19 dead -

PUBLIC

Ms O'CONNOR - I'm not manipulating anything. I beg your pardon. I've got the data in front of me. We gather it from stewards' reports.

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yes, I have the data in front of me as well, and these dogs, they're not necessarily dogs that have died as a result of racing. That's where -

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, I mean, we can accept that. I've got the spreadsheet in front of me here. Two of them, of course, as I said, allegedly died from snakebite in the custody of Anthony Bullock, notorious trainer. So, just to see if we can get an answer to the question: are you saying -

Mr GATEHOUSE - I've answered. I disagree -

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, if we just talk about injury, are you saying that 104 injured dogs since the 1st of January this year, with a month off due to kennel cough, is an industry that protects greyhounds? Do you think that's an acceptable injury rate?

Mr GATEHOUSE - The majority of injuries that occur in racing are minor injuries. Greyhounds are sent to a vet by the stewards where there's some sort of racing incident or interference in a race. The categories of injury - 80 per cent of those injuries are generally less than 21 days. If we go back to last financial year's record - which is on the record from Tasracing - 222 of the 279 injuries were less than 21 days. There were two on-track euthanasias in the whole 2024-25 racing season.

Ms WEBB - That's not the only casualties, is it?

Ms O'CONNOR - No, it's not. No.

CHAIR - And a greyhound is a racing dog whether on a track or not.

Mr GATEHOUSE - No, but -

Ms O'CONNOR - Because they're taken away to be euthanised off-track, like Memphis Reign was in Victoria. Taken away with a fractured right hock, sent to Melbourne and killed.

Mr GATEHOUSE - What you're doing again is cherry-picking one or two. Now, there were 12,000 starters in Tasmania last year, and we're persecuting, prosecuting and going over ground that we've been going over with you for the last three times I've appeared in front of this Committee, and there's a point in time -

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, you never answer the questions on animal welfare. You never really answer them

Mr GATEHOUSE - I do.

CHAIR - We might move on to Ms Rattray. I know she has a question.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you very much. Thanks, Mr Gatehouse, for being here today and presenting. I'm just interested to have some understanding of where the New Zealand transition or closure is at. It's been used quite a bit, through the work of the Committee, hearing

PUBLIC

about what they're doing. So, do you have anything that you could share with the Committee? The most recent information we received was that there were significant challenges remaining, including rehoming capacity, industry claims for compensation and the movement of greyhounds to Australia to continue racing, and that was from some research that was provided to the Committee. So just some understanding, if that's possible?

Ms O'CONNOR - Given that it ends on Friday in New Zealand.

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yes, we're aware. Thanks for the question, Ms Rattray. Yeah, Mr Stout, who I believe is appearing after me -

Ms RATTRAY - I'm happy to keep the question then, if you don't have anything and you think Mr Stout might be able to provide that.

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yeah, he's probably got more up-to-date information than I do.

Ms RATTRAY - Okay. Thank you. I'm happy to leave that to the next witness, Chair.

CHAIR - Absolutely. No worries at all. I'll remember that one. Ms Webb?

Ms WEBB - I just had a follow-up to the questions that the member for Hobart had before around rates of injury. I'm just interested to understand - because there's a lot of quibbling about data and it's difficult when the data sources are not necessarily reliable as well, so I'm interested, from the industry's point of view, about what is an acceptable rate of injury and what is an acceptable rate of death in dogs; not per starts, but per dog, racing in the industry. What do we say is an acceptable rate of serious injuries or deaths that can be attributed to being in the racing environment?

Mr GATEHOUSE -As we've discussed before, Ms Webb, and thank you for the question, we aim to minimise the risk of injury to the greyhounds. We don't deny that there is -

Ms WEBB - That's fine, but I'm asking you a specific question. What is an acceptable rate, where the industry would decide, yes, that's an acceptable rate of injury and death?

Mr GATEHOUSE - I don't think we can define an exact number of 'this is acceptable'. Like, you know, in a perfect world, it would be zero. We don't live in a perfect world.

Ms WEBB - Well, we live in a world where racing cannot be removed from the risk of serious injury and death, can it? We can agree on that, can't we, Mr Gatehouse - that greyhound racing absolutely, categorically, will involve serious injury and death.

Mr GATEHOUSE- Any athletic sport, so if I was competing in -

Ms WEBB - No, no, I'm speaking about greyhound racing here. I'm speaking about greyhound racing and I'd like you to reflect on greyhound racing. We can agree, can we not?

Mr WINTER - Chair, is he allowed to answer the question, or -

CHAIR - Clarifying the question.

Mr GATEHOUSE - I'm feeling quite badgered, but I was prepared for the badgering so that's okay.

CHAIR - It's just clarification, Mr Gatehouse, that we are talking about greyhound - we're in a greyhound racing inquiry, so if we can keep the responses to greyhound racing.

Mr GATEHOUSE - There is a risk.

Ms WEBB - It cannot be removed -

Mr GATEHOUSE - There is a risk.

Ms WEBB - It's a high risk of it, we would agree, more so than any other activity a dog is going to be involved in.

Mr GATEHOUSE - I wouldn't say (inaudible), I would disagree. Is it a question or is it a statement, Ms Webb? I'm trying to answer.

Ms WEBB - I'm asking you: it's clearly a risk that exists at a much higher level than any other activity any dog in our community is going to be involved in. We would agree on that?

Mr GATEHOUSE - No.

Ms O'CONNOR - What other dogs face a life like that?

Ms WEBB - What are the other activities that are more high risk than greyhound racing for dogs to be involved in?

Mr GATEHOUSE - I go to a local dog beach quite often in the summer, and there's certain times of day or certain days of the week where I won't go down there because of the risk to my dogs.

Ms WEBB - How many horrific injuries occur on dog beaches in Tasmania, I wonder? We could seek that information out. I doubt you can point me to any data that indicates that that's a high risk that we have catastrophic injuries on dog beaches.

Mr GATEHOUSE - They don't have the level of oversight and regulation that we have in the greyhound racing industry.

Ms WEBB - But they also don't have the level of risk that you have in the greyhound industry. Can we come back to the question: so we agree that there is a risk that dogs will be seriously injured, catastrophically injured and killed, but you won't define what's the acceptable level, because you must, by definition, by promoting this sport, agree that, from your point of view, there's an acceptable level. What is the acceptable level?

Mr GATEHOUSE - I'm not a policymaker, so you're trying to point me in a direction -

Ms WEBB - You're representing an industry. I'd like the industry position.

Mr GATEHOUSE - You will have to ask one of the controlling bodies, I'm sorry.

PUBLIC

Ms WEBB - You're the industry representative; you represent every single person that participates in this industry in Tasmania.

Mr GATEHOUSE - I'm representing -

Ms WEBB - I'm asking you: from the Tasmanian industry's perspective, what do they regard to be the acceptable level of serious injury and death to dogs?

CHAIR - Right. If Mr Gatehouse isn't going to answer, Ms Webb, did you have a question, a supplementary one?

Ms RATTRAY - Just in regard to the types of injuries, Mr Gatehouse, is there a percentage, and I possibly have heard it before, of the types of injuries, like low level, medium level and obviously the very serious and which could perhaps end up in a death; do you have that? I mean, I think we've talked about broken toenails before.

Mr GATEHOUSE - So there's category A and B injuries, which are zero to 10 days. They are the vast majority of injuries.

Ms RATTRAY - Is there a percentage with that vast majority?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yes, so-

Ms O'CONNOR - I'm not sure they're the vast majority.

Mr GATEHOUSE - 1.31 per cent of injuries are nought to 10 days.

Ms O'CONNOR - Where does this data come from?

Mr GATEHOUSE - From Tasracing's Annual Report 24-25. There were 156 nought-to-10-day injuries, there were 66 11-to-21-day injuries, there were 55 category D, which is 22-plus-day injuries, which are generally muscle or bone injuries, and there were two category E, which is euthanised deceased at the track injuries. So in terms of percentage wise, the total injury rate was 2.34 per cent of greyhounds that -

Ms O'CONNOR - We've got multiple dogs since the beginning of this year that have been stood down for 90 days - multiple dogs.

Mr GATEHOUSE - I'm using the actual annual report from 24-25.

Ms O'CONNOR - I'm using stewards' reports.

Ms WEBB - It's really distracting to quibble over seriousness of injuries when you won't even define what you regard as an acceptable rate of serious injury and death. It's really quite pathetic, to be honest, that the industry won't state that -

Mr WINTER - Chair, point of order: this is now a badgering. This is repeated. The witness has tried to answer questions and been cut off.

PUBLIC

Ms WEBB - No, he hasn't.

CHAIR - Mr Winter, we've been asking -

Mr WINTER - We just keep getting statements barked at him.

Ms O'CONNOR - He refused to answer a question before. Looked like Tony Abbott, Whyalla wipeout.

CHAIR - Mr Winter, it's very clear that we are trying to get the source of the data. So, what's quite clear is that Mr Gatehouse is referring to Tasracing's 2024-25 report. What Ms O'Connor is responding to is current data from stewards, particularly for this current calendar year.

Ms O'CONNOR - Since the 1st of January this year.

CHAIR - Since 1st of January. Ms Webb's question is very clear about - we're trying to understand what a percentage, or a number -

Ms WEBB - Rate.

CHAIR - that is acceptable, a rate as an industry perspective. Ms Rattray has also asked questions about the percentage of - and Mr Gatehouse is answering in response to certain data, which is not the same dataset that we have in front of us. If I may move on to another area in terms of you represent trainers and participants, Mr Gatehouse, in Tasmania, and we have data before us that shows that, of the trainers within the industry in Tasmania, approximately 10 per cent of those have 40 per cent of the dogs; would that be information that you would agree is correct?

Mr GATEHOUSE - I don't have that information, so I can't comment on it.

CHAIR - So, you represent the participants. Have you gone out to your participants and identified those who'd be most impacted, obviously by sheer numbers, by a closure of greyhound racing in Tasmania? Would it be fair to say that there are a very small number of heavily involved participants and a very large number of participants who have only one or two dogs in the industry?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yes, by the nature of greyhound racing, it's a family affair in a lot of cases. There's larger kennels and smaller kennels, as there is across all codes of racing. If we look at the thoroughbred racing, there's only actually 15 jockeys in Tasmania, so if we go down that path, there's not many people in Tasmania to participate; but take it out and you get the consequences of taking it out, in a state that doesn't have a lot of spare cashflow.

CHAIR - So, those participants, that have one, two - and there are a lot who have simply one dog - obviously their earnings from participating and racing are extremely minimal and you would argue that the maintenance and welfare of keeping a dog would be far more expensive than what they actually earn if they do have a successful dog that races and earns any winnings. We had a number of representations about people concerned that post-2029 that these dogs wouldn't be in the racing industry and therefore would be elsewhere. Would it be fair to say that those with one or two dogs, of course, could keep those dogs themselves? If

PUBLIC

they loved their dogs, would be able to keep those dogs, they would just no longer race. The real issue for the closure of the industry are the 10 participants - approximately 10 per cent of 100, 10 participants - who have more than 40 per cent of the dogs. We're talking here someone like Mr Bullock, for instance, who has about 70 to 80 dogs at any one time.

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yes, so the responsibility for the rehome of a greyhound sits with the owners. So, those who may be public trainers, really, it's their owners who are then responsible for that rehoming.

CHAIR - So, post-2029, the vast majority of participants - this is assuming, of course, the closure - the vast majority of participants will see no difference other than they can't race their dogs. Their dogs will still be in their company. They will still get to enjoy their beautiful greyhounds, because we know that they are absolutely wonderful dogs. It is 10 people who will be seriously impacted by the closure, or approximately 10 people, who will be seriously impacted by the closure of greyhound -

Ms O'CONNOR - Financially.

CHAIR - financially impacted by the closure of greyhound racing?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yes, so that's financially impacted, but the mental and social aspects need to be taken into consideration as well. For a lot of people, that's their only form of social outlet. There are a number of people in the industry who are sort of not part of mainstream society or workplaces, and that could be said across the three codes of racing, but they have their community. It's not really about the money; it's about the community and the health of those people, keeps them alive.

Mr WINTER - Thanks, Mr Gatehouse. It's been around a year since your industry received a letter from Jeremy Rockliff offering his full support to your industry in providing you with that certainty, and then three weeks later he announced that he was going to do the exact opposite and shut the industry down. What level - you mentioned earlier a letter from the Premier alerting you to or directing you back to the Racing Minister, which has now changed. Can you detail to the Committee what engagement you've had from the Premier or Racing Ministers since that happened? Have you had any meetings or are there any plans to discuss what appears to be a legislative impasse that we're dealing with at the moment?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Not, not at this point, Mr Winter. The response from the Premier was on 4 June and, as I said earlier, we had that change in Minister, so I'm hoping that the new Minister does get to it when he catches up with his correspondence and provides some engagement. Because we do want to go down a path, and Mr Vermey, if you can take it back to your government, we do want to go down a path of working this through and having a viable future. We will forever have the animal welfare arguments with those who are ideologically opposed to greyhound racing, racing animals -

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, it's actually about caring about the welfare of animals rather than any ideology but carry on.

Mr WINTER - Yeah and so in terms of that willingness, Mr Gatehouse, part of this, obviously there's been discussion about participants, both the dogs and the people, but also about finances. Just to get a bit further into the evidence you gave earlier around the financial

PUBLIC

impacts, we've received I think a really detailed submission from Tasracing which outlines those financial impacts, and depending on how you cut it, it outlines that the net costs to Tasracing, and therefore taxpayers from greyhound racing, is around \$3 million, and that's compared with well over \$10 million for harness racing and a loss of well over \$20 million for thoroughbred racing. So it makes greyhound racing the most commercial of the three codes. What's the willingness -

Ms O'CONNOR - The least loss-making.

Mr WINTER - The most commercial -

Ms O'CONNOR - Least loss-making.

Mr WINTER - Chair, I wonder if it's possible?

CHAIR - Keep going Mr Winter.

Ms O'CONNOR - Do you need protection?

CHAIR - Just continue, Ms O'Conner is going to ask a question shortly, we've only got another fifteen minutes.

Mr WINTER - I'm just asking you, Chair, it feels like whether it's a witness or someone asking a question, Ms O'Connor -

CHAIR - Just continue asking. You're wasting your time, Mr Winter, if you don't continue asking now. Keep going.

Mr WINTER - So in terms of your response to that and the industry's response to that, Mr Gatehouse, do you think it's possible for greyhound racing to be able to cover that gap, relatively small as it is, and what sort of things do you think the industry is able to do to ensure that financially it's a commercial and viable industry going forward.

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yeah. So without sort of going into detail of how to get the business fully turned around, I'm sure Mr Sellenger will have had a much better look inside and under the bonnet of Tasracing in his work. But, you know, the continual growth of the race field fees, there's innovations that can be undertaken within Tasracing in terms of the race programming, in terms of days of the week, slots that they can race under: at the moment greyhounds race on a Monday night, Tuesday lunchtime session, and a Thursday night, for a total of about 30 races a week. You can actually make that programming a little bit more economically viable on the cost side without affecting the income side. The challenges for the other two codes would be greater, but, you know, it would need to be a stepped process, so if we can get some certainty out of Government that we're continuing on beyond 2029 -

Ms O'CONNOR - That's not their policy.

Mr GATEHOUSE - then instead of this hanging over our heads for the next three years while we continue this dance, and have some certainty for good people in Tasmania. We can work together with the Government to come up with a viable model that is acceptable to the people of Tasmania; not acceptable to all of them, but acceptable to people that are happy that

people can undertake a lawful activity and be able to do that. That's the message we want to send to the Government.

Ms O'CONNOR - Mr Gatehouse, well. the people of Tasmania, in an EMRS poll, by a margin of 74 per cent, wanted to see the industry phased out and we're still getting emails from community members in Tasmania calling on us to support the phase-out legislation. But I wanted to ask you if you'd seen Tasracing's first ever, in all these years, code of practice for greyhound welfare?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yes, it was actually put on their website in November 2024 for consultation and has been sitting there for a period of a year-and-a-half and they finally got around to trying to release it, and it's now going through further consultation, I believe.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, yeah. So I wanted to talk to you about some of the standards that they've set, because it's not just what happens to greyhounds on the track; it's how they're housed that's an issue of concern to the broader community. We've got minimum housing requirements here for greyhounds of kennels that are 1.2 metres wide and 1.8 metres high, with a total area of three-and-a-half square metres, which conveniently, as I understand it, about aligns with the size of current kennels in Tasmania. Do you think that that's an adequate housing arrangement for these dogs, given that further on in the draft code of welfare, racing dogs are only required to be out of those kennels for 30 minutes of free exercise each day? Which means that for 23-and-a-half hours of every day, a Tasmanian racing greyhound is spending its life in a three-and-a-half square metre pen?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Have the Greens put in a submission to Tasracing in terms of comment for that? Because it's probably a better directed question at Tasracing than to me.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, but again, going back to Ms Webb's point, you are the spokesperson for the industry in Tasmania, noting that you're speaking to us from Queensland today. You are aware of the draft code of practice for greyhound welfare. I'm asking you whether you think this meets community expectations that these dogs are spending 23-and-a-half hours of every 24-hour day in a space that's 3.5 square metres?

Mr GATEHOUSE - That is the standard that Tasracing is setting.

Ms O'CONNOR - You think it's good enough?

Mr GATEHOUSE - That is the standard that Tasracing has set.

CHAIR - It is open for consultation.

Ms O'CONNOR - But is it the industry's position? Is this the industry's accepted position?

Mr GATEHOUSE - The industry will work with Tasracing on the code of practice.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, has the industry contributed towards the draft code of practice and suggested perhaps that that is inadequate housing and exercise standards and certainly doesn't meet the five domains of animal welfare?

PUBLIC

Mr GATEHOUSE - The industry has provided feedback through the clubs, yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - And what was the industry's feedback to the draft code of practice?

Mr GATEHOUSE - I don't have it on me at this point.

Ms O'CONNOR - Can we assume then, given that we're at this point, that the industry supports the draft code of practice as it is now?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Not necessarily.

CHAIR - Would it be possible, Mr Gatehouse, to get those submissions provided to the Committee, if it - was it a Greyhounds Tasmania submission?

Mr GATEHOUSE - It wasn't a Greyhounds Tasmania submission.

CHAIR - Are you able to seek that from the three clubs that you represent and provide it to the Committee?

Mr GATEHOUSE - I will do my best.

Ms O'CONNOR - Can I just check something, please, Chair? Earlier, Mr Gatehouse was talking about how you might make the industry more economically viable, and he was sort of calculating out the number of races in a week. Is it the industry's position that you'd make it more economically viable by running more races, that is, running more dogs, or more dogs more frequently?

Mr GATEHOUSE - No, that's not our position.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, can you just unpack a little bit what you meant by making it more economically viable while you were talking about the races that happen in any given week?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yep, so what you've got is three race meetings split across three days. You could split that into two race meetings across two days.

Ms O'CONNOR - But no extra races, no extra dogs being raced?

Mr GATEHOUSE - No, you actually run probably a maximum 14 races. They'd actually have two less races a week. But, and this is purely a hypothetical example, but you would have less of the staffing costs to run two race meets.

Ms O'CONNOR - I see, but that would really in many ways be small change in terms of the costs of running greyhound racing, wouldn't it?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Well, that's the good thing about greyhound racing, is it doesn't cost as much as racing horses. There's a smaller footprint of land and a smaller footprint of time.

PUBLIC

Ms O'CONNOR - But you're categorically ruling out any more races in order to become more economically viable, and that would mean no races in the north-west, of course.

Mr GATEHOUSE - Well, there's obviously three race meetings a week, and one of those is the north-west race meeting since they've closed down the Devonport track, but they haven't added any extra meetings. So, there's three race meetings a week; it used to be one at each track. Now, it sort of alternates between the two: Hobart and Launceston.

CHAIR - Mr Gatehouse, just following on from that: do you have data available that the clubs either have produced themselves in relation to each of those race meets in terms of the financials involved? So, as you said, there are three clubs, it used to be across the three regions, now it's across the two regions, but representing the three clubs. Do you have financial data about the cost to hold those race meets, on average, each time?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yes, again, that's a question for Tasracing because they employ basically all the staff and get all the revenue.

CHAIR - But from a club's perspective? I mean, obviously the clubs would have views about - and I know obviously north-west have been very vocal about the closure of the Devonport track and what that meant for their club - so the impact on the clubs of each of those race meets. Do you have that data?

Mr GATEHOUSE - The clubs operate on very small budgets, though I don't have the data of that because I'm not sort of a member of each of the individual clubs; but they operate on very, very small budgets, the three clubs. They don't have any what you would call executive employees. They run on a shoestring.

CHAIR - I'm just trying to get an idea of the impact. Obviously we can ask Tasracing for their data around the financials of each particular race meet, but the impact on the clubs to try to get a bigger picture of if, as you say, it was a move from three races to two race meets, what that actually would be, financially.

Mr GATEHOUSE - Again, that would be more to Tasracing because the major impact is for them in terms of their revenue streams and the cost of the kennel staff, the stewards, et cetera, which all comes through them.

CHAIR - We're just coming to the end of our time. Just on that sort of line of inquiry about how it might work, and you noted beforehand the difference between sort of the commercial and the regulatory functions of Tasracing before, so, your argument is that post-2029, whilst Tasracing might not receive government funding for commercial purposes, it would still have to receive funding for regulatory purposes to maintain greyhound racing and that that would have to be a government-funded regulatory function. Is that your position, that you believe you've received legal advice on?

Mr GATEHOUSE - That's our commercial position. We can play in that space.

CHAIR - So, all the commercial functions, the industry itself, could sustain the regulatory functions, though they would need government to fund those regulatory functions in order to operate. So, they couldn't, for instance, pay a fee for those regulatory functions; the industry itself couldn't pay a fee for those regulatory functions. Whilst the Government might have to provide them legislatively, and if there was no legislative change, your argument is that

the Government should fund the regulatory functions, not the industry pay a fee for those regulatory functions?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yes, otherwise you'd be putting that across all three codes and the other two codes wouldn't be able to pay it.

CHAIR - Why would you have to put it across all three codes?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Because you're funding Tasracing. The Government funds Tasracing, as such. So, they can't specifically direct - they cannot give directions contrary to the legislation.

Ms WEBB - They wouldn't be.

CHAIR - I'm just trying to be really clear about what you're suggesting.

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yes.

CHAIR - So, let's think about the practicalities of holding a race meet. Obviously Tasracing are an entity that operate broadly across all three codes. At a greyhound race meet, though, there are some certain regulatory things that have to happen at a race meet, stewards' provisions, all those kind of things. Could it not be that if the Government decided we are not going to support the functioning of greyhound racing, that they still have to provide those under legislation, if there hadn't been legislative change, that they could require those services be purchased by the industry for fee-for-service, and could greyhound racing continue on that?

Mr GATEHOUSE - That's a hypothetical that we'd have to work through with the Government, if the Government is willing to sit at the table with us.

CHAIR - Is that something that you've turned your mind to in terms of how that would look for the industry?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yes. And that's why we want to be able to sit down with Government to give these people some certainty to move forward over the next couple of years, because having this cloud hang over their head with speculation, with sensationalisation of things, is not good for them. So, you know, our plea to the Government is either bring the legislation up for decision or sit at the table with us, withdraw the legislation and let's work a way forward for the for the industry.

CHAIR - Thank you. That was useful.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. Mr Gatehouse, as we've noted at the table here today, greyhound racing ends in New Zealand on Friday, and I'm just looking at a media report here of a greyhound trainer in New Zealand threatening to blow all his dogs away after the ban is enacted; but we've got New Zealand ending greyhound racing on Friday, Scotland and Wales have recently announced an end to greyhound racing. We've got inquiries underway in South Australia and Western Australia. We've got the fallout from the Drake Inquiry at New South Wales, where the industry has been unable to meet any of the metrics for improvements set down by the Drake Inquiry. As an industry representative, you must be quite nervous because the tide is turning and it's turning hard and fast on your industry, isn't it?

PUBLIC

Mr GATEHOUSE - I'm not nervous. Thank you for the statement, however.

Ms O'CONNOR - I asked you a question.

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yes, you asked if I'm nervous; I'm not nervous.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, don't you think it's only a matter of time before the industry closes in Australia?

Mr GATEHOUSE - I don't get nervous. I don't get nervous, Ms O'Connor. You asked if I was nervous, I'm not nervous.

Ms O'CONNOR - I think Ms Webb's question earlier made you feel a bit nervous, because you couldn't answer it, but my question to you is, isn't it only a matter of time?

Mr WINTER - Chair, we've got one minute to go, and these aren't actually questions.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, I'm just asking a question, it is a question. Isn't it only a matter of time?

Mr WINTER - You asked him are you nervous.

Ms O'CONNOR - About the fate of the industry.

Mr GATEHOUSE - You asked me if I was nervous, I said no, I'm not nervous.

Ms O'CONNOR - About the future of the industry, do you think the future of the industry in Australia is secure, do you? Given all of the developments that are happening internationally and nationally, including here?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yes. Yes. We are a highly regulated industry, and what we have is a vicious campaign against our industry that we accept will be ongoing because we see the world differently, you and I, and that's how it's going to be.

Ms O'CONNOR - Don't you accept it's an unpopular industry? Don't you accept - like if you're into data, it's an unpopular industry?

Mr GATEHOUSE - I accept it's not the most popular industry in the world, but there are a lot of unpopular industries out there, but they're still allowed to continue and, you know, we're just dancing around in circles here. So, the Government needs to either bring this legislation on for decision or withdraw it and sit down at the table with us, because this ongoing charade is not good for anyone.

CHAIR - I will finish up. We've got two minutes left. Mr Winter, you've got a question.

Mr WINTER - Yes, back on to financials again, Mr Gatehouse. Again, in Tasracing's submission, they've outlined what their proposal to Government is in a future funding deed and it outlines that all the way up to financial year 49, so 24 years away, they will be seeking a total contribution from Government towards two codes of \$73.5 million every year to run two codes

rather than - and demonstrating that there's almost no saving at all from the demise of greyhound racing.

Ms O'CONNOR - I would check that with Treasury.

Mr WINTER - The question is: given that there's limited, if any, savings, in your view, in terms of the clubs you represent, the people you represent, what's the actual impact that Tasmania is going to see economically and socially over that period of time, given that there's almost no financial savings that goes with it?

Ms O'CONNOR - How would he know?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yes. Look, the major impact is the mental health of the participants. There's going to be economic impacts, particularly in the regional areas, you know, the north of the state is suffering a lot. You've had, you know, Liberty Bay Bell close down recently, Boag's exiting the brewing industry. The north is really suffering. And you've got a large population of people in the north-west as well. But they're rural people who enjoy their racing, they enjoy working hard, they enjoy the socialisation that occurs at the racetrack and with their friends, and I just feel for the people in all this. I really do. It's been going on for nearly a year. Next month it will be a year since that announcement was made, and it's time that you get a resolution.

Mr WINTER - Just my final one. On that, because I think it's important. I know you haven't heard from the Ministers, but in terms of the timing of this bill coming back on, if at all, have you got any clarity from Government about when this bill will actually return to the Legislative Council so we can get a result either way?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Absolutely none, and that's why we're saying we need some fairness here. I spoke about fairness before in one of the other inquiries we had, and we just want to be treated fairly. We want to be heard. We've been heard, the arguments have been put for and against and we're rehashing the same old things over and over again. So, let's bring this to a decision, please.

CHAIR - Okay, we might end there, Mr Gatehouse. We have gone a minute over time, so thank you very much for your appearance today. Just to remind you, what you have said to us here today is protected by parliamentary privilege. Once you leave the table, you need to be aware that privilege is not attached to comments you may make to anyone, including the media, even if you're just repeating what you said to us here today. Do you understand that?

Mr GATEHOUSE - Yes, thank you, Chair.

The witness withdrew.

The Committee suspended at 11.02 a.m.

The Committee resumed at to 11.06 a.m.

Greyhounds Australasia

CHAIR - Thank you. Welcome to today's hearing of the Joint Standing Committee on Greyhound Racing Transition. Thank you very much for your attendance with us here again today.

As you'd be aware, we have a number of members of the Committee. We are all here today. We have the honourable member for Nelson, Meg Webb; honourable member for McIntyre, Ms Tania Rattray; myself as chair, independent member for Clark, Kristie Johnston; honourable member for Hobart, Ms Cassy O'Connor; Labor member for Franklin, Mr Dean Winter, and Liberal member for Clark, Mr Marcus Vermey.

Could you please state your name and the capacity in which you're appearing before the Committee, please?

Mr STOUT - Simon Stout, CEO of Greyhounds Australasia.

CHAIR - Thank you. I know you have appeared before us before, but just for the record, can I confirm you've received and read the guide sent to you by the Committee Secretary?

Mr STOUT - I have.

CHAIR - Thank you. And as you'd be aware, this hearing is covered by parliamentary privilege, allowing individuals to speak with freedom without fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place out of Parliament. This protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside parliamentary proceedings. Today's hearing is a public hearing and the public and media may be present. Should you wish aspects of any of your evidence to be heard in private, you need to make that request to the Committee at the time.

Can I ask you to take the statutory declaration that's just before you, please?

Mr SIMON STOUT, CEO, GREYHOUNDS AUSTRALASIA, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, Mr Stout. Would you like to begin by making a short opening statement?

Mr STOUT - Thank you, Chair and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you again. I begin with the status of the bill itself, because it shapes everything else the Committee is being asked to examine, and there's a single point on which we would urge the Committee to most act. The bill was deferred mid-debate in the Legislative Council in April, and the Premier has said it will not return until the Government has the numbers to pass it. I should be direct about where GA stands. We oppose the bill.

Our opposition to the bill is not on the basis of what I ask in the Committee for. GA accepts that the legislative process is properly in place and it is for the Parliament, not any other party, to decide the outcome. What we cannot accept is that the process is being left suspended indefinitely or steered toward a particular result by means other than the vote which Parliament itself is constituted to take.

This is the democratic decision for Tasmania's Parliament to make in the ordinary course of debate and vote. A resolution, one way or the other, reached through the process Parliament itself set in motion, is what gives this Committee, industry participants, Tasracing and the Tasmanian public a clear and certain path forward. Continued deferral achieves none of that. It leaves every stakeholder in this hearing planning against a decision that has not been made.

Our strongest submission to the Committee is that it recommends the bill be brought back to vote. The same principle that the process Parliament has established should be respected and allowed to run its course applies equally to the framework already in force - that is, the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act*. It requires Tasracing to administer and promote greyhound racing and make and enforce its rules. It was enacted by this Parliament to govern all three codes together. GA's submission is simply that this act, and the integrity and licensing framework it established, should be respected, properly resourced and given every opportunity to operate as Parliament intended, rather than potentially disrupted by other means while the bill that would formally change it remains unresolved.

Turning to the financial evidence, the Committee has repeatedly heard a figure of approximately \$7.5 million cited as the net cost of greyhound racing to Tasmanian taxpayers. That figure is a misrepresentation of the industry's expense, and greyhound racing continues to grow, not shrink, its share of wagering and the base that funds all three codes. It accounts for close to 40 per cent of total Tasmanian wagering turnover. Removing the code does not remove the shared cost base that revenue supports. Tasracing's own CEO has confirmed that the business would need at least its current funding allocation even without greyhound racing.

On the evidence before this Committee, closure is considerably more likely to produce a net cost to the public accounts rather than a saving. The \$4.8 million the Premier has announced for transition should not be mistaken for a dedicated compensation package. Commissioner Carroll's own evidence to this Committee confirmed it is a scoping and administration budget - working groups, feasibility studies, staffing - and that no compensation model yet exists.

New Zealand, the only genuinely comparable jurisdiction, is beginning the process of transitioning a larger greyhound population than Tasmania's. It has funded daily care for greyhounds awaiting rehoming and a financial mechanism in excess of \$25 million per year to do so. Taking this into account, the Tasmanian closure and transition costs could reasonably be expected to amount to tens of millions of dollars modelled on a like-for-like basis, far in excess of the \$4.8 million announced, and a financial gap that needs to be in front of Parliament before any further decision is made.

On welfare, the record does not support the case for closure. Rates of major and serious injury have been declining even as reporting and transparency around incidents have improved, a combination that reflects the system increasing oversight and disclosing more, not an activity becoming more dangerous. Euthanasia protocols and oversight have seen rates decrease by close to 90 per cent since 2017. Welfare breaches that have occurred are isolated incidents, not

evidence of a systemic problem, and claims of a breeding explosion are not borne out by this year's litter and pup numbers, which sit well below the five-year average. What closure would actually remove is regulation, mandatory desexing, studbook traceability and veterinary oversight that most of the world's greyhound racing, conducted in over 20 unregulated jurisdictions, simply does not have. A closure does not make greyhounds safer; it makes them harder to see.

Dr Brittan has made claims in relation to New South Wales that have been appropriately reviewed by GRNSW and disputed. Amongst those reviews are veterinary specialists who are not in agreement with the disputed statements made by Dr Brittan. I won't speak to these disputes; GA seeks to be governed and aligned to the facts. GRNSW has prepared a comprehensive set of statistics recently provided in their detailed *Truth About Greyhound Racing* materials. I can say this statistical analysis does not align with the allegations by Dr Brittan, again both the statistics and further veterinary specialists are not in agreement with Dr Brittan's statements.

We can agree that there are notable statements from the Brittan Report that remain in question. As such, Greyhound Racing NSW has appropriately prepared a clear outline of its responses in its counter fact response report. I will provide this to the Committee following this meeting. This provides a comprehensive critique any party can review and assess for themselves. In short, Dr Brittan worked for GRNSW for a limited period of time, and GRNSW has appropriately reviewed all the allegations and statements and they're misaligned with the statistics and further veterinary review.

Finally, on the deed, its 2029 expiry is a genuine opportunity to proactively address a funding model that the 2012 parliamentary inquiry found was structurally weak. GA's first answer is not to remove the code that generates the industry's second largest commercial revenue stream, but to formulate a framework that builds a performance-linked three-code model that reduces taxpayer exposure over time. Similarly, suggestions of isolating one code from integrity and licencing frameworks that Parliament enacted in 2024, will undermine and damage the confidence in regulation of all codes and in the Australian industry in general.

Chair, our position is straightforward. Let the bill proceed to a vote so Parliament's process can deliver the clear outcome this Committee and the industry needs. In the meantime, respect and properly resource the 2024 act rather than pre-empting its effect. Properly test the financial modelling of the reported budget savings, the true cost of transition and the \$4.8 million transition budget against the evidence, including Tasracing's own commissioned modelling, and treat the post-2029 deed and as a whole-of-industry question of reformation, not a vehicle for achieving by contract what may not be achieved by legislation. GA remains available to assist the Committee in whatever way it is useful.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, Mr Stout. I know that you are here for the last hearing with Mr Gatehouse and a question was put by Ms Rattray to Mr Gatehouse that was perhaps best directed to GA. One of our main tasks as a committee in this particular work plan that we're doing at the moment is to do a jurisdictional analysis and, as has been indicated, New Zealand on Friday will end greyhound racing. So Ms Rattray had a question just in relation to that. So we'll go there first and then I know Ms O'Connor you've got one next.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you very much, and you've already given us in your overview, thank you, Mr Stout, just some broad touch on New Zealand, but if you could provide the

Committee with any further update or expand on what you've shared just around the significant challenges that remain, which we understand are in place, including the rehoming capacity, industry claims for compensation, and the movement of greyhounds to Australia to continue racing. That would be really useful for, particularly me, to have an understanding of that, seeing as we've used New Zealand, or it's been used quite a bit, looking towards for some guidance, if you like.

Mr STOUT - Yes. Thank you for the question. We are and have been working with GRNZ and the transition agency. The transition agency is in place and will take effective ownership of greyhounds that the participants wish to enter the rehoming scheme as of this weekend, with the last race meeting being conducted on Friday, which I'm heading off to actually be at. As part of that process, those greyhounds, a considerable number of them will remain in the care of the trainers and the people that are currently looking after them. They're going to be provided with a daily stipend for the care of those greyhounds, and that's \$36 a day, that doesn't include overheads including veterinary costs or other out-of-pockets that the transition agency will be covering. If the owners determine that they don't want their greyhounds to go into that scheme, they don't have to submit to that, and they'll be taken out of that scheme and they'll be responsible for the care of them on their own.

Ms RATTRAY - But there is full traceability for each of those greyhounds?

Mr STOUT - Yes. The systems that are in place - and importantly, too, from a licensing perspective, GRNZ have extended their licence period through to 31 October this year. What that has done is ensure that there's an umbrella of the GA rules and the licencing requirements and the licencing standards over that period as well, such that people will have, I guess, dual responsibility - one under the law and then secondly under their licencing agreements. There'll be contracts in place between those parties that determine they want to be part of the scheme and the transition agency going forward. But that three-month period will also give people the opportunity to determine if they want to relocate to Australia. We are aware that there has been some inquiries to regulators here in Australia from persons looking to relocate. Some of them have indicated that they may be seeking to try to bring their dogs with them as well. That's very much still a very fluid process.

Ms O'CONNOR - I think some of it's already happened, though, hasn't it? Because I read some reports about a New Zealand trainer who'd sent 60 dogs to Queensland.

Mr STOUT - That was actually a trainer that relocated about 18 months ago.

Ms O'CONNOR - Oh, okay.

Mr STOUT - So, at the very start of the announcement. He and his family had already started putting wheels in motion around relocation. The shiny lights of the new facility in Queensland had attracted him and his family. He had a relatively young family that, in terms of engagement in the industry, they were - so, he and his family relocated to give his son, in particular, who's taken over the business' training now, the opportunity to strike a blow in Australia and they funded their own way and put themselves here in Australia. We are aware of up to eight trainers at the moment that have basically sought expressions of interest to relocate.

Ms RATTRAY - This Committee heard yesterday from a witness around Greyhounds Australasia would no longer exist after Friday because New Zealand would no longer be a part of that organisation. Can you just explain whether that's the fact or confirm, and then what is the way forward?

Mr STOUT - Greyhound Racing New Zealand will continue to act until such time as they determine that they will wind up their entity and their company, and then from that point on, there will not be a legislated statutory body in New Zealand. So, in terms of our constitution, they will no longer be a part of our constitution.

In terms of the name Greyhounds Australasia, well, as keepers of the stud book, the Australian and New Zealand stud book, and we will have New Zealand-bred dogs within our jurisdiction, we have had traditionally over a number of years, we still have within the stud book itself over 100 years of tradition there. We are still going to maintain the Australian and New Zealand stud book and the name Greyhounds Australasia for the foreseeable future.

Ms RATTRAY - In regard to that three-month umbrella period that you talked about, have you addressed your mind to whether that's a long enough period? I'm just thinking about what the Committee might recommend in the way of a similar type of arrangement, should the legislation pass the Parliament, at whatever stage that might look like.

Mr STOUT - From a personal perspective, the key part of it was giving people and their greyhounds the opportunity to determine what their future looked like once closure had happened. We would have been comfortable with a longer period -

Ms RATTRAY - I thought three months was quite short, actually.

Mr STOUT - We are also very mindful that there is particular and very constructive, instructive legislation in place in New Zealand in regards to how the transition should unfold, what should happen to clubs, what should happen to GRNZ and then, ultimately, how the transition agency then works.

So, we were somewhat constrained to trying to fit in to the mechanisms that are in place around the legislation. We think we've been able to provide a happy medium there. It may not suit everyone, but we've tried.

Ms RATTRAY - Would six months be a more acceptable umbrella period?

Mr STOUT - Probably would have been, but under the situation that we were operating in, initially there was going to be zero, so the three-month period is a far better result.

CHAIR - Just following on from that line of questioning: obviously the stark difference between New Zealand and what we're proposing here in Tasmania is the timeframe. So New Zealand decided to do it very quickly, within a 12-month time frame, essentially -

Mr STOUT - Twenty months it was.

CHAIR - Twenty months, yes, in terms of the legislation. We're looking at over almost a four-year timeframe, so the wind-down period, or the transition period, is significantly different for the Tasmanian jurisdiction as to New Zealand jurisdiction. Do you have data - and

I asked Mr Gatehouse beforehand - we have data here to show that in Tasmania approximately 40 per cent of the dogs are owned by, or trained by, 10 per cent of participants, so we have a small number of people with a significant number of dogs. That does present a transition issue in terms of exiting, what happens to those dogs rehoming. Do you have similar data for New Zealand - noting, obviously, that there are many more dogs in New Zealand racing than there are in Tasmania - do you have data that shows the concentration of dogs per trainer? Particularly when we're talking about what happens on Friday with those who might have only one dog, they might decide to keep that dog as a family pet, or rehome it, or that transition period, trying to decide. Do you have that kind of data?

Mr STOUT - There are a number of trainers which have considerable operations in New Zealand and, similarly, we know of some trainers that have determined to stay that it might have been what you'd classify a more medium-sized trainer, who are seeing the opportunity to sort of increase their facilities and lend their support to the transition scheme. So every-

Ms O'CONNOR - As rehoming facilities?

Mr STOUT - As rehoming, yes. And many of these, I mean, the network, and in New Zealand, is somewhat a little different in terms of Greyhound Racing New Zealand did, whilst they had their own dedicated rehoming agency, Great Mates, they had affiliates as well. So, they had a rehoming network, and part of that network included some participants that specialised in that transition work with greyhounds through rehoming. So, there's a number of trainers that have sort of put their hands up to say, look, we'll increase our capacity to assist that transition framework.

They do have some significantly larger operations that, again, they're part of the people that are trying to work out what they do with their next steps.

But back to the point that you've raised about the trainers here and the concentration, I guess the key piece in all of that is - comes back to the ownership. You know, I would suspect that there's a number of the larger trainers that would be training for multiple owners, and ultimately the owners will have a say in how their greyhounds are treated and what happens during that transition and what that looks like.

So, I think that there's no sort of set answer to it, and it's not a linear problem, in terms of - just because the trainer has, you know, 50 greyhounds in work that they're all under their ownership. They might be under their custody and for the purposes of training, but they're not necessarily the sole determinant in the future of their greyhounds.

CHAIR - Certainly, the Racing Integrity Commissioner has indicated that in developing a transition plan, the aim is that over the now three years towards 2029 is that there be a decline in the number of races, a decline in the number of dogs - gradually over that time such that when we get to 30 June 2029, we haven't got 1000 dogs racing. We've got significantly less than that. New Zealand haven't had the time period in order to see that kind of gradual decline.

Mr STOUT - Twenty months has gone -

CHAIR - Very fast, I can imagine, absolutely. So, in your view, the ability to have that period of transition would be beneficial, as opposed to sort of a hard-and-fast, in the way that

New Zealand have approached it, in terms of managing not only the industry participants, the people, but the rehoming opportunities for greyhounds?

Mr STOUT -Yeah, well, personally I'd like to see no transition. But in terms of column A or column B - and certainly, yes, what we're seeing in New Zealand and what's being put to us now is that there's going to be a significant number of greyhounds that are going to be caught up in this transition -

CHAIR - Pinch point.

Mr STOUT -Yeah, in this transition. And they are even by, you know, the modelling that we've done around, you know, even with some uptick in rehoming in the initial period, we expect that to tail out. It's going to be a number of years in terms of process. And similarly here, depending on the number of greyhounds, if you instituted a similar scheme, even - I mean, we provided some numbers there, but even if you reduce that number and increased the number of greyhounds rehomed on an annual basis, you are still looking at, you know, tens of millions of dollars to fund that scheme on a similar cost scenario of that \$36 a day.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. Thanks, Mr Stout, for coming back and having another chat with us. I wanted to - you referenced Dr Alex Brittan's evidence, so if there's anything specific you wanted to take issue with in his evidence, feel free to raise it at the table, but I wanted to go back to the Drake Inquiry. The Drake Inquiry set a number of metrics that it expected the industry to meet as part of its inquiry recommendation, which was, basically, the industry should be suspended.

There was a December 2025 set of metrics on reduction of injuries and deaths and transparency, and can you confirm they were not met? And then there's been another June 2026 set of metrics that were laid out in the Drake Inquiry and a deadline that also the industry hasn't been able to meet in New South Wales. Can you confirm that?

Mr STOUT - I think you're referring to what was written in the report, not what the Government accepted and what the Government response to the Drake Inquiry was. So, I am aware that both the Integrity Commission and GRNSW have been working to a 1 July deadline around a range of matters that were in relation to areas that the Government had accepted from the Drake Inquiry and that they had that deadline to meet on 1 July and that includes the publication of their new minimum track standards, which they have.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, so getting back to Dr Brittan's evidence and, I mean, you know, he was the chief vet for Greyhounds New South Wales for a period of time. He gave evidence which he said was truthfully given to the Drake Inquiry. You have alluded to that evidence not being reliable. What is it about what Dr Brittan has said, either to the Drake Inquiry or to us yesterday, because presumably you've had some reports, that you are able to dispute in an evidence-based way?

Mr STOUT - Well, I think primarily around this, is the report that I will provide that was released yesterday by Greyhound Racing NSW. It's a counterfactual report to Dr Brittan's report and his evidence at the Drake Inquiry. They have presented - what's in that report was presented in totality to the Minister, to the Racing Minister, in New South Wales in relation to the Drake Inquiry. I only got a copy of that report yesterday. I've only had a cursory look at it, I haven't had an in-depth review of it, but there's certainly - in terms of some of the methodology

and accounting applied by Dr Brittan in relation to his interpretation of the numbers in New South Wales, and by extrapolation some of his methodology that he applied here yesterday, there's certainly some questions around those, which is contained within that report from GRNSW.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, thanks, Mr Stout.

Mr STOUT - As I said, I will provide a copy of that report to the Committee.

Ms O'CONNOR - So Dr Brittan told us that in preparing the material that he submitted in New South Wales, he had full access to the system and its data, and yet Greyhounds Australasia believes that his evidence is not to be relied on. Is that correct?

Mr STOUT - Well, I'm - from the GRNSW response, and this also includes evidence that was tabled with the Minister in New South Wales by the GWIC [Greyhound Welfare & integrity Commission] -

Ms O'CONNOR - The Government's industry body?

Mr STOUT - Yes, so the Welfare and Integrity Commission's Chief Vet in relation to - he reviewed those numbers based on the database as well and said that he believed that Dr Brittan was in error.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, so the singular, if you like, if you had to narrow down Dr Brittan's evidence, it's sort of focused on a few areas: the lack of transparency within the industry, particularly around its data, and what is evidence of a high rate of injury and death on the track. I know you were sitting here listening to Mr Gatehouse's evidence. We've been collecting information from stewards' reports here since 1 January: it's at least 104 injured dogs, and four or five of them 90-day stand downs, dozens of dead dogs; would you agree that, on that basis, Dr Brittan's evidence is quite reliable, that the rate of injury and death in this industry, it doesn't matter if it's in Tasmania or New South Wales, is unacceptably high and doesn't meet community expectations?

Mr STOUT - We are committed to working to reduce the level of injury. We have the most robust reporting available of any animal industry within this country in terms of, as you pointed out, the level of detail that you're able to garner from stewards from the -

Ms O'CONNOR - We have to extract a fair bit of it through right to information with Tasracing.

Mr STOUT - At the moment, and they will publish that come the end of this financial year, and so that level of reporting is the most robust of any type of animal industry.

Ms O'CONNOR - So just a final question on this line of questioning: what Tasracing doesn't publish, which we obtain through right to information, is the footage of injuries and deaths on track, and we got that back in early July, and it was really hard to watch. Why does the industry hide footage from races of injuries and deaths from the public record?

Mr STOUT - Each jurisdiction handles that on an individual basis, and they make a determination based on the type of injury and the nature of that footage. Like anything, there's

PUBLIC

consideration for the people that have also cared and loved those animals up until that point as well.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, but what about consideration for the dogs, because what's happening is that the public record is erasing their suffering?

Mr STOUT - Well, the public record will, through the stewards' reports, through reporting, through - not only that, every jurisdiction also has racing injury welfare committees that review these incidents and determine what can we learn from them, how do we mitigate that risk, how do we reduce it.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, it's all happening behind closed doors. Do you agree that it's an attempt to hide from the broader public the nature of this industry, because you can see these dogs tumbling or finishing the race with broken legs and, and you know, it's not palatable to the broader community.

Mr STOUT - And that's why - we're not trying to hide it.

Ms O'CONNOR - Tasracing is.

Mr STOUT - We acknowledge that these incidents occur, and what we are trying to do is, you know, like anything that's, you know, distasteful around, you know -

Ms O'CONNOR - It is distasteful.

CHAIR - We might move on. We unfortunately have a very limited time with this, so I will go to Mr Winter, and then to Ms Webb and then, unfortunately, we might have to end there. Mr Winter.

Mr WINTER - I just wanted to - how much time do we have, Chair?

CHAIR - We were supposed to finish at 1.30, but we did start a bit late, so we've got another five minutes.

Mr WINTER - Right. Okay. Well, in that case I might sort of change to the more important part, which is around - I was going to ask about Dr Brittan's, but we can talk about that -

Mr STOUT - I've just got -

Mr WINTER - Can I just give - generally, Dr Brittan claimed that you were changing the name from Greyhounds Australasia; that wasn't true. He also claimed -

Ms O'CONNOR - It's not that it's not true. Mr Stout said, just before, that for now the name will be retained.

Mr WINTER - Chair, I haven't interrupted Ms O'Connor -

CHAIR - We will continue.

PUBLIC

Ms O'CONNOR - But you're misrepresenting what a witness said.

Mr WINTER - No, I didn't.

CHAIR - We will just continue, Mr Winter, with your question. We've only got five minutes.

Mr WINTER - Dr Brittan also claimed that surgical AI was still occurring. Can you confirm that it's not occurring?

Mr STOUT - It has not occurred since 1 January [2026] this year.

Ms O'CONNOR - Only this year.

Mr STOUT - In fact, greyhounds are the only dog in Australia that you cannot get surgical AI performed upon.

Mr WINTER - He also claimed that there were rehoming failures and that up to 70 per cent of dogs were un-rehomeable; is that correct in terms of the data you've seen?

Mr STOUT - Not that we've seen, no.

Mr WINTER - He also said that the injury rates were going up. Is that correct in terms of the data you've seen?

Mr STOUT - No, that's not correct.

Mr WINTER - There were also - just because of the time, I'd love to get into this further, but because of the time constraints that we're operating under here: the compensation piece that you put in your submission is really significant. You've talked about in your submission, using the data from New Zealand, and extrapolating that out into what Tasmania compensation would look like. If Tasmania was to adopt the same compensation metrics as New Zealand, what would be the total cost to Tasmanian taxpayers?

Mr STOUT - Well, in what we established, and that was based on the audit where there was 1000 greyhounds, so, we worked off - there was a tick over that. If there was 1000 greyhounds and you rehomed at a rate of 100 through GAP and 50 through the other networks, that's 150, it would take over six years to do so, and the cost would be in excess of \$40 million. Now, if that - looking at - as I've said, you can balance that metric too: well, if there's only 850 greyhounds that we have to rehome and we can rehome 180 per year, it's still 4.7 years and \$26 million. So, it's still going to be, you know, a sizable exercise.

Mr WINTER - What we've seen in the evidence from Tasracing is that in fact they will be seeking more money over time, over \$70 million to simply run two codes and there's almost no savings. So, the evidence from Tasracing is that there's almost no savings from not running greyhound racing. Your evidence is it will cost Tasmanian taxpayers potentially \$40 million per year; so, is it correct to say that rather than this being a saving for taxpayers, shutting down this industry is actually going to cost tens of millions of dollars?

Mr STOUT - Yes.

Mr WINTER - In terms of -

CHAIR - Last question, and then we will move to Ms Webb.

Mr WINTER - Further to that, in terms of the evidence around - one of the pieces of evidence from Dr Brittan was about a backlog of dogs, which is evidence that I wasn't familiar with - those terminology - he said that there's a backlog. The number of dogs that aren't rehomed are classified as a backlog and they tend to live out their lives in commercial kennels, akin to being solitary confinement with no hope of ever being rehomed. Is that a practice you're familiar with occurring in Tasmania?

Ms O'CONNOR - Have you been to GAP?

Mr WINTER - He's talking about commercial - I'm sorry, commercial kennels. Is that a practice you're familiar with?

Ms O'CONNOR - There's a backlog at GAP, for sure, the same dogs on the list there for months and months.

Mr WINTER - I still haven't interrupted Ms O'Connor at all during this.

Ms O'CONNOR - Feel free to interrupt. I don't care.

CHAIR - Mr Stout, would you like to answer the questions?

Mr STOUT - I'm not aware of Tasmania having an arrangement where there's commercial -

CHAIR - Akin.

Mr STOUT - Yes, akin to commercial -

Ms O'CONNOR - His point was the backlog; his point was 30 per cent of dogs end up never being rehomed.

CHAIR - So I will move to Ms Webb because our time is -

Mr WINTER - Ms O'Connor used a lot of time. I've got one more if that's okay, Chair: in terms of there being - he also claimed that 70 per cent of dogs are unfit to rehome. If 70 per cent of dogs were unfit to rehome, that leads to huge issues for a shutdown of the greyhound racing industry. If there's 1000 dogs, then 700 would be unfit to rehome. Does that data from Dr Brittan align with anything you've seen? And if there were 700 dogs to -

Ms O'CONNOR - I don't remember him saying that. I don't know where you got that from.

CHAIR - Just quickly with the question because we do have to go to Ms Webb, sorry, Mr Stout.

PUBLIC

Mr STOUT - I don't think we'd be having the rehoming successes that we are if 70 per cent of greyhounds were.

Ms O'CONNOR - I think you misrepresented him, Mr Winter.

Mr WINTER - No, I didn't.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, I think you did.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. It's just a pretty straightforward one because I asked it in the last session as well, and that's that given we can all agree that there's inherent risk in greyhound racing as an activity for the dogs, from your perspective as an industry representative nationally, what's the acceptable level of risk for dogs participating in this industry in terms of serious injury or death?

Mr STOUT - We're committed to reducing risk at every possible opportunity and improving racing safety. We invest significantly in research to identify and study risks associated with greyhound racing and reduce that wherever possible. We've had implementation of initiatives such as upgraded safety rails, Safechase lures. You've heard the story of what had happened around a catastrophic injury around a cable lure that had broken. So, the Safechase lures have been brought in to reduce the need for the cable lures - that's one initiative - preferred box draws on races to reduce collisions, and we're consistently investing in other areas including studying biometric data to try and identify the precursor to risk around serious injury. We're committed to doing that across the board and reducing that amount of risk.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. I appreciate that and it's positive to hear about those efforts. However, they don't inherently make the activity safe. There's still an accepted, I think we would all agree, level of risk of serious injury and death. The industry participants that you represent are all choosing to participate in that currently and have dogs in that environment currently. So, is the risk that's there now the acceptable level of risk for this industry? If it's not the situation now, what is the minimum acceptable level of risk?

Mr STOUT - That risk has continued to reduce through the strategies and the measures that we've put in place. We're not done. It's not linear -

Ms WEBB - Would it be fair to say, though, that participants participating right now in the industry, with the level of risk sitting where it sits, they are all accepting the current arrangement as an acceptable level of risk of serious injury and death to dogs, given that they're participating today?

Mr STOUT - And that level of risk is significantly less than it was five years ago.

Ms WEBB - But clearly it's acceptable, though, the level of risk that's there today for the industry, given that people are participating in it with their dogs.

Mr STOUT - And we'll continue to reduce that risk.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, Mr Stout. Unfortunately, our time has come -

PUBLIC

Mr STOUT - Sorry, if I may, just in relation to Dr Brittan, I'd just like to put on the record that I found it - the GA found it highly inappropriate, given we're a federated national body made up of statutory bodies responsible for regulation, administration and licensing under legislation and answerable to respective state governments, to suggest such impropriety as an 'outlaw gang' -

Ms O'CONNOR - No, no, he's talking about the industry itself.

Mr STOUT - It is outrageous and it highlights the lengths that some will go to tarnish the image of racing.

CHAIR - Thank you, Mr Stout, for that comment. Unfortunately, as I said, our time has run short. We are aware that probably there are more questions we would like to ask you, particularly in relation to New Zealand. Would it be okay if we put some questions to you on notice in writing, perhaps following up after you provide us with the report from New South Wales as well, if there's any questions that we might have for you in the future, if that's alright?

Mr STOUT - Certainly.

CHAIR - Rather than dragging you back here, as I know you've been flown in today.

Mr STOUT - No, it's always a pleasure.

CHAIR - So, maybe it might be best to do it in writing next time. Thank you very much for your appearance today. Just to remind you, what you have said to us here today is protected by parliamentary privilege, and once you leave the table, you need to be aware that privilege does not attach comments you may make to anyone, including the media, even if you're just repeating what you have said to us here today. Do you understand that?

Mr STOUT - Yes.

CHAIR - Excellent. Thank you very much for your attendance today. I appreciate you flying in to do that. Thank you.

The witness withdrew.

The Committee suspended at 11.46 a.m.

The Committee resumed at to 12.00 p.m.

Welfare Alliance for Greyhounds (WAG)

CHAIR - So thank you very much for appearing at today's hearing of the Joint Standing Committee on Greyhound Racing Transition. We have two witnesses here today. If you could please state your name and capacity in which you're appearing before the Committee. We might go with you first Fiona, please.

Ms MASTERS - I'm Fiona Masters, I'm here as a dog trainer representative actually and part of the WAG group, the Welfare Alliance for Greyhounds.

CHAIR - Lovely, if you just speak nice and close into your microphone it just helps everyone to hear you nice and clearly. Michelle, we'll go to you on Zoom there.

Ms JESSON - My name's Michelle Jesson, I'm from the North East Animal Sanctuary Tasmania, and I'm here just to share my experience of having, you know, ex-racing greyhounds coming into our care. So just wanted to share our perspective on things going forward.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, Michelle. Fiona, Michelle, can I confirm you have received and read the guide sent to you by the Committee secretary?

WITNESSES - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you. So as to be aware from that guide, this hearing is covered by parliamentary privilege, allowing individuals to speak with freedom, without fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place out of Parliament. This protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated, or referred to, by you outside of the parliamentary proceedings. This hearing is public today and the public and media may be present and watching online in particular. Should you wish aspects of your evidence to be heard in private, you must make this request to the Committee at the time. Now just to introduce again the members of the Committee here today, we have everyone: Marcus Vermey, Dean Winter, Cassy O'Connor, myself, Kristie Johnston as Chair, Tania Rattray, and Meg Webb as well.

If I could ask you, Fiona, to please make the statutory declaration that's in front of you on that little card, if I may. Thank you.

Ms **FIONA JANE MASTERS**, DOG TRAINER, WELFARE ALLIANCE FOR GREYHOUNDS (WAG) AND Ms **MICHELLE JESSON**, [VIA TEAMS] NORTH EAST ANIMAL SANCTUARY TASMANIA, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. Would either of you like to make a short opening statement to the Committee today?

Ms MASTERS - I do have a little statement. So, thank you everyone very much for the opportunity to be here today. Really appreciate it. I'm Fiona Masters. I am a scientist and I have a master's degree in microbiology, and I'm also an accredited fear-free positive reinforcement dog trainer.

My career has been varied. I've worked in food manufacturing industries. I've worked in the DSIR in New Zealand - that's the CSIRO equivalent - and in the pharmaceutical industry. I regard myself as a practical person and I'm interested in science and solutions. I've lived in the Kingborough area for almost 30 years and I currently share my home with one human, two cats and two rescued greyhounds - often looking after other greyhounds and have previously fostered ex-racing greyhounds. My current professional work centres on companion dogs. I have my own business, and I run various puppy classes out of a vet premises in Kingston. I help dog guardians raise confident, well-adjusted family pets. I regularly attend professional development courses and conferences in Australia, and that ensures my professional credentials are current. My comments today are based on science, professional experience and practical involvement with all sorts of dogs, and they're my comments, obviously.

So how dogs learn: a little bit about dogs and learning. They primarily learn from observing other dogs. That's one of their main ways of picking up things, and just a short reminder here that greyhounds are no different to any other dogs - they're slightly faster, but they do have wonderful eyes too. So, dogs learn from other dogs. They're very keen observers, and they learn from the things that they experience. So these learnings that they do experience could be the positive or negative, just depends on what the dogs think and what humans think. Puppies that have been chosen to become companion animals are ideally exposed from a very early age to a wide variety of household environments: sounds, surfaces, sights, people and everyday experiences, and we call this socialisation and habituation. This is a key part of puppy development before they hit their first fear period.

My puppy classes are not just a fun family activity. They've got a very serious purpose and I have two main aims. One is to give help people understand dogs and to bond with their puppy, and the second is to give puppies the opportunities to understand while the world can be an unpredictable place, they can choose to react in a manner that is predictable and rewarding for them.

This early exposure is not an optional extra, it's one of the foundations of good welfare which allows dogs to exist with us and it has been well established for many years now that dogs feel fear, pleasure, pain, curiosity, insecurity, abandonment, and dogs are sentient and it has been recognised in law in ACT in Australia - nowhere else at the moment - in Australia that is.

Dogs are unique in having evolved with us over thousands of years to build bonds with individual humans. There's a fair amount of visual and written historical evidence showing early greyhounds as being part of our lives for a long, long time. Actually, they're one of the first recorded dogs.

So when running my puppy classes and having individual consultations, my aim is to help guardians understand the individual dog as well as understand the breed that they have, which is really important. This helps people understand their dog's behaviour. Being able to account for individual preferences - of the dog, that is - and breed needs helps us adjust expectations and train appropriately.

I have run group greyhound classes and have had individual consultations with many greyhound guardians and I can attest to the fact that greyhounds love these sessions just as much as any other dog breed.

So whilst greyhounds have been used for many, many years as hunting companions alongside their guardians, greyhound racing's only been in commercial form for about 100 years. I'm sure everybody knows that. The greyhounds bred in this industry have a very different early start. Once they're adults, their existence revolves around being taken to tracks to chase mechanical lure at maximum speed.

Many do not have guardians in any normal sense. Indeed, a significant proportion are syndicate-owned where they may see them only on a video during a race. It's normal for racing dogs to change hands regularly and to be shuttled from state to state, kennel to kennel, trainer to trainer and often country to country. If they do make their way to pet guardianship, they rarely have names that they recognise or respond to.

Like many adult dogs who find themselves at rescue organisations, they've got no concept of how to live in a domestic world. Stairs, noisy appliances, other dogs, traffic, children, mobility aids. The list is endless, right? So like other breeds, greyhounds are individuals and some adapt and learn really quickly. Others take a little bit longer.

A lot depends on how long they've been in the racing industry and what experiences they've had there. Whatever the experience though, it is a stressful transition and it's a bit like taking a child who's not experienced schooling and then chucking them in a really busy, noisy school. It's a bit overwhelming.

And dogs, in short, these greyhounds need to learn to be dogs, and they are amazing dogs. They're affectionate, they're goofy, quick to learn, and like all dogs, they have their own personality, love to play with toys and other dogs, they love a quick zoomie and they love a good bed.

As recently as 10 years ago, it was accepted practice in Tasmania to euthanise the majority of surplus greyhounds and bury them. Sentiment has shifted and the community will no longer stand for it. But rehoming all these unwanted greyhounds every year has created substantial challenges, which we're now seeing, and it poses a lot of costs emotionally and financially on the Tasmanian community. On top of that, it's well documented even with the recent expansion, the industry's own GAP [Greyhounds As Pets] scheme is unable to successfully rehome even half of the surplus dogs.

So a brief few words to finish - just going to briefly cover foster carers, adopters, and rescue organisations. So volunteer foster carers, a bit of a rare breed, right? Because there's not many people that want to invite a large dog into their home and help them transition from the racetrack to the home. They've never been in the house, of course. So, some dogs, as I've already said, adapt quite readily; others take a little bit longer. The financial cost of providing food, bedding and veterinary care for these dogs is substantial but what's impossible to quantify is the emotional wear and tear for foster carers who see dog after dog after dog coming through.

Adopters: a factor that's really considered is the impost on people who actually permanently adopt dogs: because of the legacy issues from racing, they're probably signing up

for a higher-than-average vet bills compared to other dogs. One is teeth, partly genetic with their dental problems, but often greyhounds come with damage to teeth from cage chewing, and it's not unusual for these dogs to need a dental under anaesthetic every year for about \$1000 a pop, every single year, that is.

So, figures provided by the Racing Integrity Commissioner show that greyhounds face a 50 per cent chance of injury every year they race. These injuries may be documented at the time but often what happens is that they result in arthritis in older dogs and it, again, probably means a little bit more money in vet bills for someone who's adopted a greyhound, trying to keep these dogs pain-free. There's a lot of substantial musculoskeletal damage with these dogs.

Last, but not least, there's the emotional toll. So, for some people who've adopted a greyhound who may be four or five - that's about middle age - we can expect 10-to-12 years lifespan with a large dog, greyhounds are no different. So, within five to six years, a lot of people have lost their dog that they've adopted and there's a lot of science around understanding the impact that grief can take.

Lastly, charities. A fact to be considered is the impact on unfunded and struggling charities. Puppies are always adopted first, then the large dogs last and if someone adopts a greyhound over another dog, that other dog stays there longer again or vice-versa. So, you've got a problem with any charity moving large dogs through.

Yes, greyhound racing, by its very nature, generates a huge surplus of dogs.

Last but not least, I'm aware of the broad parameters of the Racing Integrity Commissioner's preferred plan for the transition to assist people involved in greyhound racing. The decision has already been delayed by over six months, which means that yet more greyhounds are being bred and the longer the delay goes on, the more challenging it becomes to rehome all the dogs. Finding homes for greyhounds over the transition period is a welfare issue that the rescue organisations, RSPCA, Dogs' Home, northern east Tasmania- we're very willing to help with, with support.

It will be significant. It will be manageable, with cooperation. In a nutshell, we have the opportunity to be a leader here. This is the first time that the Government's actually willing to go through a phase-out period and not just say 'stopping right here'. So, let's be leaders and follow this one through. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

CHAIR - Thank you, Fiona. Michelle, would you like to make any opening statement?

Ms JESSON - Yes, I agree a lot with what Fiona is saying, and as a small, 100 per cent volunteer-run small sanctuary, this phase-out needs to happen sooner rather than later because small places like ourselves, we don't have the infrastructure, we don't. The only funding we get is what we raise. So, we really need to start doing something now and as Fiona was saying, the dogs or the greyhounds that we have coming in, they do take a lot longer to find homes for because we need to do a lot more work. The majority of the greyhounds that have come into us have all got health issues and they need to be addressed. We've got one foster carer that can take greyhounds. We have other ones here, but they don't get the one-on-one treatment that they need. So basically, we'll have them here with us and then they'll go to foster care, so it's a very long process.

And we've recently adopted out Quinn, who we've had with us for 10 months. He was hard to rehome because he had a very minor medical issue, which was treated with inexpensive medication. But having him for 10 months, you know - say you've got six dogs like that, it's going to take, you know, a lot of time and effort from us and a lot of money to be able to help these dogs. So, the sooner we can start the phase-out, the better we can be and the better we can get prepared. Also, I understand that racing participants need to be compensated, but I also think organisations like ourselves, we need some help to be able to set up more infrastructure to be ready for these dogs coming through our system.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms JESSON - Also, the one thing - we did have another dog recently come in and the owner of these dogs said to me, 'Oh, have you got room for another six?' And I'm like, 'Well, not right now, no.' So that's a bit scary to be thinking we're going to have a whole slew of animals needing help straight away. If we don't start this transition, I can only imagine it's just going to get worse and a lot more out of control, which is quite scary.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, Michelle and Fiona, for your opening statements. I want to begin by acknowledging the enormous work that charities and volunteer organisations and people like yourselves do for these wonderful, sentient beings. I'm biased, as a greyhound rescue owner myself - recognise just exactly how much work goes into rehoming a greyhound. And I want to start there, because Fiona, you spoke about your experience in training. Michelle, I know you have experience in trying to seek homes for dogs just like Quinn, and I think you've got Crippler at the moment.

Ms JESSON - Yes, we do.

CHAIR - In terms of when they come into your care, can you talk to us about the trauma, the mental health impact that the industry has had on each dog, and the difficulties that volunteer organisations, charities, have to overcome to be able to ensure that those dogs can be rehomed successfully? And the kinds of things you need to tell the new owners of those dogs, what you need to be aware about with a greyhound who maybe has never been inside a house before, doesn't understand what a door or a window is, or stairs. How people can be kind?

Ms JESSON - Yes. Well, we do. I mean, also they're not house-trained, so they've not been in that situation. They haven't had bedding, different things like, you know, the sounds of being inside a house - like, you're vacuuming - different things. They do come in quite shut down, because they just don't - you know, it's been a very big upheaval for them coming from racing and coming into a home or coming into a shelter, even. It's quite distressing for them, and it does take a long time for them to get over that, with our help.

And none of them seem to know their names. I mean, you've got to try and find a new name for them because they've just got no idea. They're just shut down, which is really distressing to see, because they're such beautiful animals - but yes, it is a whole new life for them.

CHAIR - Fiona, do you have anything to add to that?

Ms MASTERS - Yeah, look, I think this is nothing we haven't heard before. As a dog trainer, one of the things I do see with a lot of people who've just got a greyhound is that they

PUBLIC

kind of assume they're like every other dog. Like, they assume they're a dog, but greyhounds actually need to learn to be dogs. And in the same way that - I'm sorry I've forgotten her name -

CHAIR - Michelle.

Ms MASTERS - Michelle, sorry. Each dog is individual. At the end of the day, we have dogs who just work things out so quickly, particularly if you already have another dog in the household. But they have no idea about windows; I've seen so many walk into windows. Stairs - it is a challenge for them to understand stairs. Now, look, these are not huge problems, but it's these dogs that have no clue what it's like to be a dog - we have to help them through this adoption process.

CHAIR - Can I just pick up on something you said there, that 'they have to learn to be a dog'. Now, of course, they are a dog, they absolutely are a dog. But is there evidence for the Committee that in their time in the racing industry they are completely not treated like a dog, hence, why they now have to learn to be a dog and to be a companion animal, and so the impact of their time in the industry. And I'm assuming Michelle and yourself, Fiona, you'd see dogs coming in not just - well you wouldn't see puppies very often, but you would see, you know, dogs 18 months, four years, six years, occasionally older than that, knowing that they often don't last that long in the industry, coming in - have had potentially four to five years of not being a dog.

Ms MASTERS - Of not being a dog, yes. Then on top of that, we do occasionally see female greyhounds who've spent a few years breeding and, of all the dogs I've had anything to do with greyhound-wise, those are the dogs that take a lot longer than others. They've just not had a chance to really experience anything apart from being bred from. They've been raced and then they're bred, like any brood bitch. Look, it's very hard for them and it's a really big adjustment for any dog. It doesn't matter what breed it is. Any dog brought up in the conditions that greyhounds are, they only know one thing, one form of life. Some dogs are definitely in a home environment. There's no denying that at all. But at the end of the day, their life is the racetrack. So, they have a routine, and when they're finished and we get to adopt them, there is a very big adjustment period.

Ms RATTRAY - Hello, Michelle, and thanks very much for the work that you do at North East Animal Sanctuary, just over the hill from where my family lives.

Ms JESSON - That's it. Next door.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, next door. Just interested - I mean, obviously there's not a lot of greyhound trainers and owners in the north-east, so how many greyhounds have you had since you've had the sanctuary, which I think might be about 10 or 12 years now, from memory?

Ms JESSON - Yes, 10 years. We've had about 10 greyhounds since we started taking them on.

Ms RATTRAY - Right. From the local breeders or owners around that area? Or some from afar?

Ms JESSON - We've had one particular owner, I think he's local in Bridport, he has contacted us because his wife knew me from when I was doing dog grooming, and she knew that when I started the animal sanctuary. He is an example of a good owner. Quinn was sent over to Melbourne to have his leg fixed; he broke his hock in a race and the owner spent \$6000 on getting that fixed. So, like everything, there's some really great people out there, but there's also the other side, you know, where we get bullied from other participants - them making false accusations about us, which is pretty upsetting when we're trying to do our best for these animals. But most of the animals that come in are from a particular trainer, or we see them on Gumtree. We've had people who ask us if we can take them; they've seen them as a giveaway, so we've done that. But yes, we've had another pair of dogs come in from another well-known trainer and we've still got him - his name's Eli's Tractor. He's got a bit of a broken muzzle and he's, like, missing part of his nose and that, from whatever happened to him as a puppy. He's a lovely boy, but he's another one that is taking a long time to adjust to being a dog.

Ms RATTRAY - You mentioned, I mean, obviously we're well aware that it's very expensive, and we've had some figures provided to us about how much you would need. We've been given the New Zealand example of being provided with \$36 a day to look after a greyhound, and that doesn't include veterinary expenses. Do you have some idea of what you consider would be an appropriate amount of funding to care for and rehome a greyhound in your line of expertise?

Ms JESSON - Well, the thing is, I mean, we've had some that have cost us like \$3000 or \$4000 trying to get on top of their health issues. Every single greyhound we've had come in - every single one - has had stomach issues. So, there you go. You're poaching chicken, cooking up rice, trying to get these dogs - get their stomachs to a good position instead of them just having diarrhoea all the time. So, you're looking at least \$15 to \$20 a day just on food for them, so that doesn't really include anything else.

Ms RATTRAY - Thanks for that, Michelle. I appreciate your time today and the work that you do.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you both, Fiona and Michelle, for coming in to share your knowledge with us. I'd like to just delve in a little bit more to kennel life for dogs, so the consequence - what we've been talking about today is the dogs that come out post-racing. We know that these dogs, even under the new draft code of welfare for greyhounds, are spending 23 out of 24 hours a day in very small kennels. Is that the primary - where does the trauma for these dogs do you think come from? I mean, it's a particular kind of life, it's a not very socialised life. It's highly routine, I guess, not a lot of personal, physical, human contact. Where do you think the trauma comes from? Cause I've met greyhounds who, for example, are afraid of men.

Ms MASTERS - Well, this is my opinion as a dog trainer. The trauma is because these dogs have not been allowed - so when you, when people get a puppy, puppies have development periods, and so for the first fear period, which I mentioned in my opening speech is around 12 weeks of age. If we can expose puppies to a lot of things, and when I say expose puppies, I mean puppy guardians have that ability to take their puppy, sit with them and the puppy can observe things: life, buses, kids, mobility, men, men with beards, fluoro-gear, they can observe these things and react in a really calm manner because they've got their person beside them. If they miss that fear-free period, that results in a lot of fear. Well, that's why we call it a fear-free period.

So, if our puppies, and as a dog trainer, if I see a puppy that's not had that, they've not had that ability. The poodles up in the middle of bloody Tasmania, excuse my language: that's another example of dogs that had to have a huge adjustment because they had no exposure to anything. So, greyhounds are a similar thing. I do understand that there are people who have greyhounds who bring them up in their home environment. They have them in the home and they probably have a little advantage over other greyhounds where they're shoved in pens. What they're missing out on is the world - doesn't matter where they're being brought up, they're missing out as a dog on the rest of the world. It's a very confined, routine-based life that they live.

So, the trauma depends very much on, you have, as I mentioned, some dogs adjust beautifully, it's obvious they've had people that have cared for them, but a lot of dogs come out of the industry, particularly if they've been racing for three or four years, they've got no life outside of being in their kennel, going out training and then being shoved in a box to race. That's not dog-companion life. Does that answer your question?

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, it does, and as the guardian of a recently rescued greyhound who's a bit shut down and traumatised, I'm quite interested to know how you get help get them through this.

Ms MASTERS - Yes, helping them through, it means just taking your time -

Ms O'CONNOR - Love and time.

Ms MASTERS - And being gentle.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. So, we have a draft code of practice for greyhound welfare that's been put out by Tasracing. It's the first one in all these years of greyhound racing in Tasmania, and the draft code prescribes certain expectations around housing. One of them is that dogs, greyhounds, a pen, a kennel has a minimum width of 1.2 metres, a minimum height of 1.8 metres for a total area of 3.5 square metres, and then later on in the draft code it talks about racing greyhounds having to be provided with at least 30 minutes of free exercise each day outside their housing area.

In your view, is that a contemporary code of practice for dogs? Is that, in terms of a dog's life, being stuck in a 3.5-square-metre kennel and being let out for 30 minutes a day?

Ms MASTERS - No, it's not a life. It is the same as chaining a dog up in the back yard and not offering any shelter. It's a different aspect, but it's the same process, and the RSPCA has the ability to pick that dog up because they're not being provided with adequate shelter or food or clean water. So no, simple, it's just simply, it's not any way to treat a sentient dog.

Ms O'CONNOR - In your view, is it cruel?

Ms MASTERS - In my view as a dog trainer and a person. As a human being, I think that's despicable.

Ms WEBB - Just to clarify in your answer to Ms O'Connor's question, when you said RSPCA can act in those circumstances, you mean they can act if that dog was being treated

that way in a back yard but can't act to respond to dogs being kept in that way within an industry environment?

Ms MASTERS - Yes.

Ms WEBB - Some of the complexity of this matter is the variety of circumstances within the industry where you have everything from very much hobby owners and participants who have one or two dogs who treat their dogs very much as family and look after them and no doubt have better conditions that they are kept in that are far beyond what's described in the code as Ms O'Connor just read out. And then you have others in industry who are very much commercialised around this and have tens of dogs.

So, in terms of the ones that are coming through rehoming services like Michelle's out in the community, I'm imagining and perhaps you can confirm whether this is true, you're more likely to see dogs that are coming from the more commercial end of things and the circumstances in which they're held there rather than the ones from more home-like environments because I presume once they retire they stay. Can you confirm that for me and speak to that a little bit?

Ms JESSON - That is correct. I mean like you said, we don't get many that come in that have been in that environment where they're getting care from people because they generally keep them as pets. We're getting the ones that are coming from commercial where they've got a lot of dogs. So they're not getting the treatment that they deserve as sentient beings.

Ms WEBB - When it's held up for us as an exemplar of the industry - more the hobbyist end of the industry as the quite empathetic end of the industry - we're not seeing the end of the industry that you see when you're rehoming dogs out of racing.

Ms JESSON - That's correct.

Ms MASTERS - Can I add to that, Meg, and again, this is my personal opinion. The hobbyists have these dogs and, yes, they do care for them, but at the end of the day they are still prepared to shove these dogs in these chutes and ask their dog to chase a mechanical lure, knowing all too well that injuries are going to happen. And again, as a dog trainer, dog lover, animal lover, I do find that kind of incomprehensible. It's just bizarre.

Mr VERMEY - Fiona, with the dogs and different ages coming through, is it harder to sort of retrain the older dogs opposed to the younger dogs, and then them going on to a house, to a family, do people still find those older dogs, you know, with more complex issues? How do you find that, and with extra dogs coming through once things are shut down, how do you sort of get people to understand greyhounds? Do you need a campaign? I know there's people here who are very good advocates for it, but there's that belief they've got to be muzzled and everything else. How do you sort of change that opinion as well?

Ms MASTERS - That's actually a really good question because you're quite correct. We do, again, as a dog trainer, and I'm sure Michelle will speak to this too - so we do see a variety of the ages of dogs coming through. So the dogs that are about the 1.5 to 2 years of age, absolutely a lot easier to not only adjust, but train and things like recall is a really good example of that. So I've trained greyhounds in recall.

PUBLIC

Ms O'CONNOR - Amazing.

Ms MASTERS - Understanding their breed, still understanding breed limits. So I mean, recall's one of the hardest things with any dog, like recall is just something you have to practice and practice.

Ms O'CONNOR - But with greyhounds, they just consider your proposition for a while.

Ms MASTERS - It's all about bribery.

Ms O'CONNOR - Is that right?

Ms MASTERS - Bacon.

Mr WINTER - Bacon, is that the trick?

Ms MASTERS - So the younger ones are definitely easier because the older ones have raced and they're just in that mode of chase, and it takes a little bit longer. And it's like any breed of dog at all, which is why I mentioned breed needs, you've got to look at the needs of each breed and then each individual and it depends - Michelle absolutely attests to this - on how they respond. You know, you've got dogs who love other dogs, but that's only a really small percentage and most dogs couldn't give a toss. Greyhounds, as they are dogs, they're the same. So, I'm waffling a wee bit. But really good question. It does change how you would train them.

To your point about all the greyhounds coming through and what we can do to help people understand. I think it's a really good aspect to think about and I haven't thought about it, but it would be great to have a little bit of a campaign around adopting a greyhound. Let's do some training, let's learn about these dogs because a lot of consults I've had have been from people who've adopted a greyhound and gone, 'What the heck is this?' They've got no idea and people need help just going - and Michelle understands that they're just such a unique breed anyway.

CHAIR - Michelle, anything you wanted to add.

Ms JESSON - Yeah, well, the longer they've been in the racing industry, it does take longer to get them ready. I mean, we've got Crippler, he's two, he had two races and went no thanks, I'm not doing this. So, he's actually transitioning fairly quickly, and yet on the other end of the scale, we've got Tractor, who, he's four and a half and he's still, you know - we've had him for months and he's still learning but it is taking longer. But it would be nice to be able to have a campaign because people do get these, you know, get the greyhounds as pets and then they're like, well, it's not - what's going on it's not doing what, you know, it's just standing there. It won't, you know, it just freezes and it, you know, you're trying to get it to get in the car and it sort of stands there and looks at you and it's, yeah, so we do need to educate people, you know, on these dogs and how we can help them get through to be part of a family.

CHAIR - Just following on from Marcus's question, obviously, because greyhounds have been treated as a commodity and not as a dog for such a long time, we have unique laws when it comes to and regulation around it. Muzzling is a good example. I know when I take my dog out, you know the comments and questions: why is your dog not muzzled? Well, he's gone

through a temperament testing. He's the only one at the dog park that has had a temperament testing; everyone else hasn't had a temperament test and you know, very gentle nature. They are very gentle nature creatures just by genetics.

What do you think we could do in terms of overcoming some of those urban myths, you know - that they need extensive exercise to be able to have a greyhound, you know the biggest couch potatoes you could possibly imagine. So, what are some of the things that from your experience in terms of engaging with foster carers and other in the community to help rehome greyhounds that need to be debunked by any rehoming program?

Ms JESSON - Well, I would say we need a lot more - like we have adoption events every month at Petstock, but we need to get out there in the public eye and, you know, educate people. I mean, so many people have met our dogs who've been through the muzzling process and the difference that you see when you've got your greyhound out with no muzzle compared to when you have got a muzzle is very different and just a perception that people have when they see a greyhound with a muzzle. It's just like, 'Oh my God, what's that scary thing?'

So, like you said, they are the most gentle dogs that you could ever meet. They're just amazing. So, I think we need to get out there in the public eye and maybe, like you said, do some more campaigns, get some more exposure to help promote how amazing these dogs are.

Ms MASTERS - I've actually seen a real change, particularly over the last five years. I'm no longer seeing people go, 'There's a greyhound', or picking their little fluffy number up going, 'Oh, there's a greyhound'. I'm not seeing that anymore and in actual fact, because I'm out and about a lot with my dogs, obviously, everyone has said, 'Shouldn't be doing the racing. These are lovely dogs.' There's been a real shift in public sentiment, real shift. It's very noticeable. Absolutely. So, I think certainly down here in Hobart, there is absolutely no doubt that people no longer have these myths about greyhounds and would love to see the racing stop.

That's around - so I live in the Kingborough area, so it's definitely around the southern area. I go across the other side as well, the other side of the bridge, so it's limited to an area I'm saying but at the end of the day campaigns are something, I think it requires a bit of a thought, though. That's not just saying they're wonderful pets, we need to develop a plan around that.

CHAIR - And going back to Meg's line of questioning beforehand, I think, in response to one of Meg's questions, you indicated that - particularly you, Michelle - dogs coming into your care have come through a variety of ways and you mentioned Marketplace and Gumtree and just being given up. I know that's been the experience of other sanctuaries, that dogs have often just been dumped at a gate or very kind individuals have gone - and I know for you, Michelle - picked up a dog down here, for instance, offered on Gumtree and driven it all the way up to the north-east to be able to ensure that it's gone somewhere safe rather than inappropriately into someone's care.

Ms JESSON - Yes, definitely.

CHAIR - Can you talk a bit more about those processes of dogs coming in? Are you there, Michelle? We might have had you drop out just at that moment by the looks of it.

Ms JESSON - Yep I'm here.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Did you hear the question, Michelle?

Ms JESSON - No, I didn't, sorry.

CHAIR - That's all right: Just wanting for you to elaborate on how dogs are coming into your care. In response to Meg's question earlier, you talked about dogs coming off Gumtree, Marketplace. We know from other sanctuaries that dogs have often just been dumped at a gate, that dogs are being taken into your care that someone's picked up at Gumtree down here in the south and driven all the way to the north-east to you so it's ensured to go to someone that's going to care for that dog rather than inappropriate homing. Can you talk about that a bit more please?

Ms JESSON - Yes. So, we've also had dogs come in. Like you said, we've had people come from - like seeing dogs on Gumtree, they'll go and collect them, bring them up to us and you don't know anything of what these animals have been through. So, really, you're starting a bit on the back foot.

CHAIR - So, you don't get a full history, for instance. I mean, I imagine a dog offered up on Marketplace or Gumtree, you may not be dealing with the person who's had primary care for that dog, so the owner or the trainer, for instance, and so you wouldn't know their medical history, you wouldn't know the conditions they've been kept in and so, it's very much a period of time trying to understand what that dog might have been through.

Ms JESSON - Yes, exactly, and also, you know, generally we find the microchip and we get in touch with Tasracing to find out if they've been vaccinated, if they've even been through the correct wind-down periods. And trying to get information sometimes is really difficult because trainers - we've had a couple of trainers down south, they're like, 'Oh no that's not my dog' and you're like well, Tasracing says that it is, but they don't want to help you find out more about the dog that you've just taken on because they were just going to give it away, so it is quite difficult.

CHAIR - Dean, I think you had a question.

Mr WINTER - Just following up there, so you used the example of Tractor earlier, Eli's Tractor, I think. So, can you just take us through the detail on how, just in this one example, how Tractor came into your care?

Ms JESSON - Yes. Now, we had Tractor and his sister, who was Hang-On Sylvie. They both came in to us because people got them from the trainer and then they said, 'Well, we're moving, we're going to be travelling around Australia for six months in a caravan, so we can't take these two dogs with us'. And they're fine together, so they're in the same run together, but in fact they're not fine together. And, 'They're good around children', but it turns out they hadn't had them for very long. So, really, the information they've given us wasn't really correct.

Mr WINTER - So, had they been through GAP or through any formal process?

Ms JESSON - No, no, no, we had to do all that. We had to go through -

PUBLIC

Mr WINTER - I'm just sort of trying to track what's happened here for them to get to your care. So, you're not aware of what happened, how they arrived in the care of that couple that went away?

You might have dropped out.

Ms O'CONNOR - I think because there's a big backlog at GAP. Trainers try to work their way around the backlog a bit.

Mr WINTER - As well as a good example to explore how -

Ms JESSON - I'm sorry, just lost you for a minute there.

CHAIR - That's all right. Michelle, I think Dean was asking about are you aware of how the couple that you received the dogs from had got them in the first place? Was it direct from the owner or trainer to that couple, and then after a short period of time to you, is that -

Ms JESSON - That was from the owner, that actually went from the owner to someone else, and then they - this couple got them from like an intermediary. So these dogs have changed hands three times.

Ms O'CONNOR - Poor dogs.

CHAIR - And that happens a lot on Gumtree, I understand, too. So often I think a dog that has come to you from Gumtree had gone through a number of people: the kind volunteer who picked it up, took it up to you, reported that the person that they met at the side of the road to pick up the dog from said, 'Oh, this is not my dog, this is someone else's dog', who's turned out to be someone else's dog.

Ms JESSON - Exactly. Yes. So this, you know, then this dog has been through like four different sets of people - at least. So how confusing is that for these dogs to be going through that sort of thing?

Mr WINTER - Do you know if they're still registered? Are they still racing greyhounds as far as you're aware, registered through Tasracing?

Ms JESSON - No. They're retired.

Mr WINTER - So they've been retired? That's what I was - thank you.

Ms JESSON - They've been retired correctly, yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - Do you know what Tractor's racing name was, by any chance?

Ms JESSON - Yes: Eli's Tractor.

Ms O'CONNOR - Eli's Tractor, okay, thanks. Michelle, I've got a question: we've heard from industry representatives this morning who note the undeniable mental health impact on industry participants of the Government's announcement, and then the uncertainty over where the legislation is at, and, in fact, future funding. I'm interested in exploring the mental health

impacts on people like yourself, on foster carers, volunteers who work for rehoming organisations. You know, there's some amazing people right around the state who are advocating for an end to this industry and who are doing great work with these beautiful dogs; but I am sure it's having an impact on them too.

Ms JESSON - It does, because of how long it takes us to get greyhounds ready, you see so many more that need to come in and that you can't help them all at once, it's really - it's frustrating and it is heartbreaking when you see these beautiful animals that they don't know how to be a dog. As a dog lover, it's really, really sad, and it does break your heart to see some of the conditions that they come in, and to think some of the injuries they've sustained that aren't treated and you just think, I don't understand how people can do that like, you know, with these beautiful animals, and it does take its toll on you. Then you've got the other side, the racing participants that get online and troll and try and cause trouble and put your name in disrepute, that's quite distressing as well when you're just trying to do the best for these animals.

Ms O'CONNOR - I wouldn't mind just exploring that a little bit, because there's at least a couple of us at the table who have been subject to similar sort of abuse on social media; but I've seen much worse directed at other people by some industry participants. In fact, I saw one overnight. There does seem to be some industry participants targeting people who take a different view from them. Do you want to just talk a little bit about the kind of feedback - using a kind word - that you're getting from industry participants?

Ms JESSON - Yes. Sure.

Ms O'CONNOR - Are people making threats? What's happening?

Ms JESSON - More allegations, like when we had the kennel cough that was going around in the greyhound industry, we were targeted, saying that we were where it all came from and we're like - and they were just making up false things, like false screenshots saying that it started at NEAST, then it started with this particular animal, but they were a bit silly, because the animal they chose to pick on was actually one that came to us from the vet because she'd broken her leg; and our vets had tested that she didn't have kennel cough, and none of our animals have ever had it, so they were insinuating that we were the start of this outbreak when in fact we weren't, and we've got all our screenshots from that, you know, calling us liars and calling us frauds.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes. I hear you.

Ms JESSON - And we're like, well, we're just trying to do the right thing. We even went to our vets to get them to make a statement, in case it came to us that we were going to be - not charged - but, you know, have any legal actions taken when it was completely falsified.

Ms O'CONNOR - So, you feel, at some level, like you've been targeted because of the work that you're doing with greyhounds?

Ms JESSON - Yes. Well, actually we were having an adoption day at Petbarn and we took every precaution that we could, but we had a greyhound - we had Quinn there on the day - and because we had a greyhound, that's when it all started from a couple of industry participants. Then we got probably half a dozen that kept saying, 'Well, you're a bunch of liars',

and all sorts of cyberbullying and nasty stuff that really puts you down when you're trying to do the right thing.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes. That's one of the reasons I close off comments on greyhound stories on my social media. Unfortunately, it has become a bit like that. Just a final question, Michelle: you talked about taking a dog to a vet that had a broken leg, and I know you sort of touched on some of the conditions that the dogs are coming to you in; but are you saying that a dog was presented to your sanctuary with a broken leg?

Ms JESSON - Actually, the dog was presented to the animal emergency hospital, and the owner was going to - it was not a greyhound, but just a dog that was going to be put down. She was a staghound so everybody thought she was a greyhound, but she was a staghound puppy with a broken leg and the vets called us to see if we would be able to take her and have the surgery done.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes. Has she got a good home?

Ms JESSON - She did. She's got a wonderful home. I can see why they say she looks like a greyhound, but she's not.

CHAIR - Thank you. Michelle and Fiona, can I touch on some of the costs associated? Obviously, Michelle, you'd have enormous interaction with your local vet -

Ms JESSON - Yes.

CHAIR - and I know that many of the organisations and foster carers and things have a lot of contact with their vets trying to get dental work done, stomach issues sorted out, parasites, a whole range of things, whether it's arthritis or various musculoskeletal issues as well with their greyhounds. You'd be aware of a network of vets who are very sympathetic to the plight of the greyhound in terms of their extra care that they do need, and it is expensive, but who do provide generous payment terms and things like that to people who are adopting or fostering or caring for them, to provide care, first and foremost, because that's a veterinary obligation, is to care for an animal. Can you talk a bit more about that in terms of the experience you've had with the veterinary community in terms of their desire to help greyhounds through a very difficult time?

Ms JESSON - Our vets - we use numerous vets. We have Scottsdale vet and Mowbray vet we use. St Helens, we used one of their vets, too; but they are great in the fact that they will allow us to pay our vet bills off, and if we need to have an animal seen to, they will fit us in - they will move things around and help because they know that we're not - that we need to get in, and if we call, it's for a good reason.

CHAIR - And obviously these things aren't free; there is a bill that has to be paid at the end of the day. So, particularly for you, Michelle, in terms of fundraising, you're very reliant on community donations. You receive no government funding; is that correct?

Ms JESSON - That's correct, yes. We're always doing auctions, raffles, anything we can do to try to raise money. So, that's correct.

CHAIR - Have you found over the time, and I think you noted, Fiona, that people's attitudes towards greyhounds has evolved, particularly over the last five years, a greater awareness of what beautiful, gentle creatures they are and their life in the racing industry, people are being more willing to sort of get involved in fundraising activities as the campaign, the community awareness of what the greyhound industry is doing to these dogs has increased?

Ms JESSON - Yes, I definitely think public support is definitely there for helping us with find greyhounds new homes and also support whatever medical costs that they have. So, it's been amazing.

CHAIR - I suppose then we do have three years, and it's under three years now, to the phase-out on 30 June 2029; that provides an opportunity then, obviously, for organisations like yourself to work and to build up that awareness and knowledge and support base, unlike New Zealand. We've heard from Greyhound Australasia, just before you, about how quick that transition has occurred and that there was a lot more dogs than we have here in Tasmania and how difficult the rehoming task is; but do you feel that over time, with the three years that we do have, recognising we don't want that to be too short, that there is an opportunity and a willingness amongst Tasmanians to rehome, just as we saw the labradoodles?

Ms JESSON - Yes, I think so.

Ms MASTERS - Yes, absolutely, and I think organisations like - it's not just the rescue organisations, but dog clubs as well are, I wouldn't say pivotal, but they're absolutely another avenue that can help. But absolutely the support's there, definitely, to phase it out. I'm here for the dogs, but I also understand that people who are in the industry themselves are concerned and are worried about this, but we've got three years to do this, and support from the Government. I mean, that is world first, and let's just do it.

CHAIR - I'll just check to see if there's any further questions from Committee members. We do have someone else appearing online at 1 p.m., but we might -

Ms WEBB - Could I just have one more?

CHAIR - Absolutely. We've got time.

Ms WEBB - One of the things that we hear from industry is that they put in, and have made progress on, efforts to put in better safety mechanisms, or address issues that have been identified around the safety of the industry and the racing itself. I accept that those efforts are being made. The question I have for you around it is: do you see any way in which you could have a greyhound racing industry, that included the conditions in which dogs are raised and kept and trained and then raced, that was compatible with animal welfare standards, if we were to institute the right set of circumstances and rules and regulations and standards?

Ms MASTERS - Short answer, no. I can't see it. I can't see any way in which animal welfare needs are met with a racing dog industry.

Ms WEBB - Can you expand on that a bit more, just in terms of what would prevent us from putting the right rules in place to deliver that?

Ms MASTERS - So, let me give you an example. So we've got - I don't know whether they still do it, actually, but the good old agricultural shows who, every now and again, have had a Jack Russell race. They're pets from a home where somebody's gone, awesome, my little doggy would love to run in this. So they just plonk their dog on the ground. and it's hilarious, and the dogs love it.

That is a completely different scenario to - I cannot see where, back to the industry standards of dogs that are kept in cages, given exercises half an hour a day, and then shoved in cages unwillingly to chase the lure on a racing track that is not safe. I don't know what people are thinking, in terms of what they'd like to bring in that would increase the welfare standards, but at the end of the day, there's two things that are happening: dogs are being bred, kept in cages, and then being shoved in a chute to race on a very unsafe track.

So that's why my short answer is no.

Ms WEBB - And just to be really clear, when you say 'a very unsafe track', are you primarily referring to the shape of the track and what that means in terms of a pack of dogs racing at high speed around it? Or are you talking about other features of the track?

Ms MASTERS- I'm talking about, yes, there's the shape, but there's also the fact that you've got multiple greyhounds running together chasing something. Even if a track was straight, you'll still have unsafe conditions, because you've got multiple dogs running after one thing. And if, for example, the track was a straight one - which people I know have heard is a great idea - towards the end they're still going to be aiming for this little mechanical lure. So, they're all still going to be converging, and accidents will happen as a result. It is unsafe inherently.

Ms WEBB - That running-in-the-pack aspect of it.

CHAIR - Just following up on that, one of the issues for a greyhound is the checking. It's natural behaviour, if you're running, to check to see your surroundings, to see if you're safe, to look over your shoulder. Domestic dogs and companion dogs, they're playing all the time. They'll be doing that, watching their environment, looking around. But a greyhound is trained not to check, because it's a penalty if it checks. It's a mark that's noted on a steward report if a greyhound checks itself.

How unnatural is it for a dog to be trained to focus solely on a lure and not to protect itself, in terms of if something's coming up behind it or approaching it, that might present a risk to itself, in terms of behaviour?

Ms MASTERS - The run itself means it's unnatural, so for a greyhound - think of a border collie, this is a really good example. Border collies are working dogs that are bred to be a working dog, to actually move sheep. So, they're constantly on the move. A lot of border collie owners make the mistake of having their border collies chase a ball back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. That does cause mental issues and it causes physical issues on border collies. It is the same principle for our racing greyhounds. It is unnatural not to look around, but you know, we've got greyhounds as pets. We do know they go, 'I can see something over there, I'd quite like to have a run'. And they do go for it, but it's not a straight line necessarily, and they just sort of do a bit of a look-around. So, it is unnatural for the insistence on dogs not checking. That was a longwinded answer.

CHAIR - No, that's really useful.

Ms WEBB - One more follow-up on the tack I was taking before, as well. The other thing that we've heard, just in another hearing today, was that when I put it to industry representatives that this is an inherently high-risk activity, probably the highest-risk activity you could put a dog to do, and the industry representative suggested that, or didn't agree with that statement, and said that there were other high-risk activities, that taking a dog to a dog beach could be just as high-risk as greyhound racing. In your position as a dog trainer and someone who's very familiar with the different sorts of activities that dogs undertake, would you care to comment on that assessment of comparing dog racing to other activities dogs engage in?

Ms MASTERS - That's a very simplistic view. Yes, of course, taking your dog to a dog beach can be a little bit troublesome, because you don't know what the other dogs are going to do. It's always about what the other dogs are going to do on a dog beach. But I come back to this is a very unnatural thing for greyhounds, any dog, to do - shoved in a little chute and then asked to chase something under unnatural conditions. It is very simplistic to say that dog beaches are just as dangerous.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, the data doesn't support that anyway.

Ms MASTERS - No.

Ms O'CONNOR - There's no data to support that contention, which I think he pulled out of his backside, to be honest.

Mr MASTERS - I'm a very top line thinker, and the data doesn't - yes, correct. The other thing I've heard, too, is that greyhounds love to run. I will touch on that, if you don't mind.

Ms WEBB - Please.

Mr MASTERS - Yes, of course they do; any dog does. Like, it's a no-brainer. Dogs love to run and some dogs run really fast. Greyhounds do, others don't quite so much, but again, they don't necessarily - I challenge anyone to agree that dogs love being shoved in a chute with a muzzle on, chasing a lure and getting hurt. It's not the same as the greyhound having a little zoomie in a figure-eight or a circle. Simplistic view, and did I answer the question enough for you, or would you like me to -

Ms WEBB - Thank you, that's fine.

Mr WINTER - Do you have a view on greyhounds being allowed to participate in lure coursing?

Ms MASTERS - I do. Again, it's a similar - I know some people do it. This is only my personal view, Dean. I do think it's - again, because of the greyhound's build. So, traditionally they have been hunting animals, right? They've been companion animals, they've gone hunting with their people and they've helped chase down prey. It is, again, a bit different with the lure coursing. It's the same principle of chasing something along a particular course without allowing a dog free movement. Greyhounds, when they're chasing a rabbit, would be

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zigzagging, and because they've got that 270° eyesight, they can see where a bunny's going. That's a different thing to chasing lure coursing.

My personal thoughts are: I would never have my greyhound do that, because you're asking for trouble. Leg breaks. We all know how spindly-legged they are.

CHAIR - They're very fragile.

Ms MASTERS -Just a personal opinion.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, just one quick question. I mean, I have views on this obviously, but your thoughts on why an ex-racing greyhound who's been through the appropriate behavioural program and comes into a home, why they make good pets? What is it about greyhounds?

Ms MASTERS - Look, I say this every day, it absolutely blows my mind that these dogs have gone through so much trauma and are still the most amazing pets. I'd love to have a greyhound puppy and just - like - wouldn't that be wonderful?

Ms O'CONNOR - See what you could do.

Ms MASTERS - Yes, see what I could do. Greyhounds, they are just a large, gentle, by and large peaceful - like, how can you describe them without getting a big grin on your face? They're just goofs.

Ms JESSON - You can't, because they're so goofy and they're just so affectionate and like you said, no matter what they have been through, once you've helped them get to where they are, they are just the most gentle, just so endearing. You know, they're amazing.

Ms MASTERS - They are, yes. Just the words - never have enough words.

Ms JESSON - And that's one thing I find funny, my husband, he was always, before we started getting greyhounds, he was actually scared of greyhounds. He said, 'I find with all those muzzles, I thought they'd be really scary,' and he's like, they're the gentlest, most peaceful dog he's ever met. And in all the times we've had dogs, he's just said, 'I've never met a breed of dog that is so gentle.' And considering what they go through, it's just astounding in that they still keep that spirit.

CHAIR - Absolutely. That's a lovely way to finish, I think, our hearing here today, with that one. That's a really lovely one and I recommend adopting a greyhound, a rescue greyhound, anytime of the week.

So, just before we conclude here today, I just want to thank you both for your time and appearance here today and just remind you what you have said to us here today is protected by parliamentary privilege and once you leave the table, you need to be aware that the privilege does not attach comments you may make to anyone, including the media, even if you're just repeating what you've said to us here today. You understand that, both of you?

WITNESSES - Yes.

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CHAIR - Beautiful. Thank you so much for your time here today, we really appreciate it.

The witnesses withdrew.

The Committee suspended at 1.00 p.m.