

**REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE GREYHOUND WELFARE  
AND INTEGRITY COMMISSION**

**CORRECTED**

**At Temora Greyhound Track, Temora on Wednesday 2 June 2021**

**The Committee met at 12:00**

**PRESENT**

The Hon Robert Borsak (Chair)

Ms Abigail Boyd (Deputy Chair)

The Hon. Lou Amato

The Hon. Wes Fang

The Hon. Mick Veitch

**PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE**

The Hon. Mark Pearson



**The CHAIR:** Welcome to the fourth hearing of the select committee inquiry into the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission. This inquiry was established to examine the operation of the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission, in particular its policies, procedures, mechanisms and overarching principles in relation to industry participants. The inquiry will also look at issues such as the appropriateness of disciplinary action and options for appeal, the relationship between Greyhound Racing NSW and the industry participants, current funding arrangements and the commission's role in improving the welfare of greyhounds. Before I commence I would like to acknowledge the Wiradjuri people, who are the traditional custodians of this land. I would also like to pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging, and extend that respect to other Aboriginal people present.

Today is the third of four regional hearings that the Committee is conducting for this inquiry. Last week we held hearings in Newcastle and Bathurst. Tomorrow we will travel to Goulburn. We will finish our hearings at Wentworth Park racetrack. Today in Temora we will hear from greyhound owners, breeders and trainers, and representatives from two greyhound clubs, Temora and Wagga Wagga. Before we commence I would like to make some brief comments about procedures for today's hearing. Today's hearing is being broadcast live via the Parliament's website. A transcript of today's hearing will be placed on the Committee's website when it becomes available. In accordance with broadcasting guidelines, media representatives are reminded that they must take responsibility for what they publish about the Committee's proceedings.

While parliamentary privilege applies to witnesses giving evidence throughout this inquiry, it does not apply to what witnesses may say outside of their evidence at the hearing. I therefore urge all witnesses to be careful about comments they may make to the media or others after they complete their evidence. Committee hearings are not intended to provide a forum for people to make adverse reflections about others under the protection of parliamentary privilege. In that regard, it is important that witnesses focus on the issues raised by the inquiry's terms of reference and avoid naming individuals unnecessarily. I also remind members of the media here today that while the comments made during this hearing are protected by privilege, this may not extend to reporting potentially defamatory comments.

All witnesses have a right to procedural fairness according to the procedural fairness resolution adopted by the House in 2018. If witnesses are unable to answer a question and want more time to respond, they can take a question on notice. Written answers to questions taken on notice are to be provided to the Committee within 21 days. Following the public hearing will be a public forum. We have a few slots available for speakers. If anyone would like to take part in the public forum but have not registered, please see the Committee staff. In terms of the audibility of the hearing today, I remind Committee members and witnesses to speak clearly and into the microphone. Finally, could everyone please turn their mobile phones to silent for the duration of the hearing.

**NEIL STAINES**, Greyhound Owner, Trainer and Breeder, sworn and examined

**The CHAIR:** I welcome our first witness. Would you like to start by making a short opening statement? Perhaps limit it to a few minutes.

**Mr STAINES:** That would be great. Thank you. I would like to start off by saying that as the leader of Greyhound Racing NSW, Tony Mestrov has surrounded himself with professional people that know a lot about the industry and also the positions that they hold. The Greyhound Welfare Integrity Commission [GWIC], on the other hand, have surrounded themselves with two or three senior people that bully and intimidate their own staff and are there, in my opinion, for us to self-destruct. I have some documents here I would like to table on some of the things that I will be speaking about today.

**The CHAIR:** Would you like to hand them up? Give them to the clerk.

**Mr STAINES:** Thank you. I would like to start off with Barbara Katon. Integrity inspection officers inspected her place on 20 July 2020. To let you know about these people, they are a family. Barbara has bad health. She has three or four kids at home with their own kids. The husband has to go away to work. Just to give you a bit of an idea of their morning, they start their dogs at daylight. They get the dogs done, then they proceed to—as everybody does—get their kids ready to go to school. Where they are, there is no school bus; they have to drive their kids in to school. That is just to give you a bit of an idea of what these people have to put up with. They get a phone call at 7.30 in the morning saying, "I'll be there at 8.30," from an integrity officer. She is then told by the daughter, "We're on our way into town to drop the kids off," blah, blah, blah. She was asked what did she need. She said, "I'm after some microchips for puppies." She says, "We can get them sent to you." She agreed to that. They went on and by the time they had done their duties and come back—got the dogs, cleaned up the yard, whatever they have got to do—they sent the microchips off to this certain integrity officer.

The next day on the way to school, Barbara's daughter-in-law had a car accident with the kids in it. She got a phone call again from this integrity officer. "I'm on my way to your place. I'll be there at"—a certain time. "I want to come in and see your dogs. We want to inspect them." Barb was in no state to talk because she would go to pieces every time she heard a voice, that is how bad she had them. Then they stated, "Well, this is what's happened. We've taken the kids to the doctor. They come first." This integrity officer says, "That's okay. I'll get over the fence." "No, you can't get over the fence. The shepherds are out." "That's okay. I get on good with shepherds." In that, Barb hangs up. She takes the kids to the doctor. She gets in contact with myself. I leave a message on Matt Tutt's phone, who is the legal man for GWIC. He got back to me within about five minutes. I said to Matt, "You'd better get something done about this. Shit's going to hit the fan."

It was not very long and I got a phone call to say that everything had been taken care of. I don't know whether it says six months ago—whatever that date was. Do you know, if it was that important—them people have never been back there since. They did not come back. If it was so important that they had to see those dogs—they have not gone back. Okay, there is Barbie over the road. I want you to think how things operate in the bush. We are not talking about the city. Everybody is in a pattern in the city, of course, but in the bush they are more so. Anybody who has anything to do with the bush knows how it works.

Myself, I have had them come to my place, introduce themselves and come in dressed as riot police, with body cameras and boots wrapped up. Most times they get there when most people have got to have their tablets or have morning tea saying, "Oh yeah, we are alright. We will look after you." But the first thing: you do not let anybody touch your dogs. That is a golden rule: Nobody else touches your dogs. I had my missus walk out and just ask the question, "Would you people like"—she got "would" out of her mouth and this integrity officer walked towards her with her hand out and said, "Could you please not speak before I warn you. I am wearing a body cam and it is there to protect what you say and what we say." Now, I do not know about you people, but if somebody walked onto your place and treated you like that—we are talking private homes; we are not talking about stable areas and we are not talking about stable complexes. We are talking about private homes where if your daughter wants to sunbake out in the pool without her top on, she should be able to. Not lay there and sit there and have an integrity officer staring at you. So there is one case that we have got to put up with.

There are times when they come that we know of where they have taken people's phones. Just because we sign up to be greyhound trainers, we give away all of our liberties. How would you people like a phone that your grandkids ring, your daughter rings, your son rings, your missus rings, you do your work on—how would it be if they just came in and said, "We are taking that phone"? I can tell you why they took one of our member's phones. That is because there were four scratchings in a race at Richmond and he did not scratch so they must have thought, they are greyhound trainers. They are crooks. They are up to something. They had that phone for two days. He had a tracker on that phone and it never left the GWIC office. They brought the phone back saying,

"There you go", with nothing—no reason why they took it, no sorry about that and no thank you. They just handed it back. This is some of the stuff we have got to put up with as greyhound trainers.

We have got another one there about Jodi Micallef. Jodi is a young girl—we will get off the integrity officer for a moment and we will go into their licensing part—who bought a greyhound that her dad bred. She named the greyhound. It was sitting there for seven weeks and they took the money—fair enough. She waited seven weeks and rang up and said, "I want to know where the name for my greyhound is." They said, "I am sorry, you have got to do a police check. You can't be an owner unless you have had a police check." Normally, if you owned a racehorse or whatever, that does not happen, only with greyhounds. You can go and get a racehorse anytime you like and all you have to do is sign a bit of paper. They then said you need a police check done. So she looked on the website and she got her police check done and heard nothing. She rang again three or four weeks later and they said, "I am sorry, we do not accept police checks off these people if you live in ACT or"—what is that State on the coast?

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Jervis Bay.

**Mr STAINES:** Thank you for that. So there is another thing that is happening in our industry. We will go on to Paul Supple. With Paul, he has got 160-odd dogs on his property up in the north. This certain integrity officer—he got a phone call one day saying, "Hello, it is"—such and such—"I am at your front gate. What are you doing?" He said, "Well, I am down the back doing the dogs." She said, "I am here for an inspection." He said, "Well, geez, you have come at a bad time." She said, "It doesn't matter what time I get here. I am here for an inspection. I am at your front gate now. Could you please come and let me in?" He is down in the paddock so he rings his missus and says, "Is there a car at the front gate?" She says, "No. There is no-one there." So he says, "Look, you are not at my front gate." She says, "I am at your front gate." They find out later she is an hour away at someone else's place. They got out and did the inspection anyway.

When she finally got to Paul's—her and another guy—there was one dog in the yard. You can have a look at the picture. Have a look at the picture there with that dog in the yard. See that little spot on the dog's shoulder? Have a look at the picture and just tell me if you can see that little spot on the dog's shoulder. She orders Paul to get that dog out and says, "Give me a look at that dog. Right, that dog has got to go to the vet." Paul had been treating the dog and, anyway, he raised his eyebrows and said, "Okay." He grabs the dog out of the yard and takes it to the vet kennel before he takes it into the vet. While he was away the integrity officer said to his wife, who was standing there, "Do you know that myself and my partner have given people six months jail for that sort of stuff?" You can see the wound on the dog and he took it to his local vet. In the document you can see that the vet said, "I would like to know where they are getting their veterinary advice." But, actually, I would not repeat what the vet said about the ridiculous thing of sending someone in with a dog with an injury like that.

You might see another picture there. This is another little thing they have got to pick at. You will see there where they have put up fence posting. There would be people here familiar with fencing. You can see a bit of red paint on the fence post where he has put the stay. The other character said, "What is that on there?" He said, "It is a bit of red texta where we are lining up the stay." The officer said, "It looks like blood to me. We'll go and have a look at it." He said, "I can assure you, it's not blood." The officer said, "It looks like blood to us. We had better have a look at that." These are things that they intimidate you with—they walk onto your place, the way they are dressed, what they say and what they do. They put you on the back foot straight away. You are treated as a criminal as soon as they walk onto your place. There is none of this "Hi, how are you?" like normal people do or, "How are you going today, mate? We are here to do a job." Every greyhound person knows that we have got to get inspections done. We are quite happy to have inspections done. But to be turning up dressed like riot police and speaking to us as though we are the scum of the earth is just not happening.

We will move on to the vets while we are going. I had a greyhound racing at Wentworth Park. He was five links in front. Next minute, I saw his head go up in air and I am thinking, "What is going on here?" He finished last. By the time I got around the catcher had already caught him in the catching pen. The vet is in there and he is saying to me, "Neil, your dog is cramped." So I said, "Okay." And the first thing I do is get the dog out and walk, walk, walk. I take him in for a vet check. The stewards have given me an "unsatisfactory", which means that I had to trial that dog again before he could start because of cramping. I then took the dog out and walked him around again and said to another steward, "This dog has got more than cramps." I could see. I do not like telling them their job. I could see just walking around what was wrong with the dog. We took the dog over and he said, "We will give you 21 days and we will take the satisfactory trial off." The stewards took it off my papers but the next day when the dog cooled down and I gave him a full check, I found that not only did he have a dropped back muscle but his hip support was gone, which would have occurred from the dropped back muscle where he kept trying.

I took him to a vet the next day. I drove all the way to Sydney with the dog to a vet, and he confirmed my findings. The dog was out, I think, eight months. He is back now racing and he has won two races and is going happily with his racing life. All in all, I just think that—I am not putting their vets down. They have got good young vets there; they have got old vets there. But I am saying that they are not teaching these people. These vets will tell you themselves, "We don't know enough about this industry." The ones that want to learn, they go out and ask. The ones that do not are taking notice from a certain vet that runs the show, who, in my opinion, would not know if a dog was walking to her or walking away from her. That is not trying to be funny. I have spoken to this person—we have had her on the phone in different meetings—and believe me, it is not good what she says at times. It gets back to where I say you have got a leader. I think with GWIC, they have got two or three people up there that are running the show: You go out, you do what I tell you to do or pack your bags. They don't listen to nothing. They are liars. You cannot believe anything they tell you.

I had an incident once where I got suspended. When it was time to get my licence back we went to the commission and found out that they—when it was time to get your licence back you never got it back. You had to go and blah, blah, blah. So we have gone to the commission to try and get—I was flyblown at the time. I had been out for five months. I was broke. I had done a hamstring and I could not work. Anyway, what we tried to do is get me back working earlier—back in the game. He would not agree with that. Then we also asked if I could have my licence reinstated on the day that it was due back. Commissioner Armati said at the time, "I can't rule on that." Then our Australian Workers' Union [AWU] solicitor said, "Well, we disagree with that. We're going to appeal that to the Racing Tribunal." In saying that, GWIC's solicitor said, "Just hang on, guys. We won't have to go there. Leave it with me." We have got the chief steward, three or four people, the head solicitor for GWIC, my AWU law guys and my character witness. We are talking probably 10 people there that heard it all. He said, "Just hang on, we'll come back and I'll make some phone calls." Three-quarters of an hour later he comes back, "Job's right. They've all agreed for you to get your licence back on that day."

The day before I was due to get the licence back I got a phone call from this solicitor. He said, "Neil, how you feeling?" I said, "Good, mate." He said, "Well you should be. You'll be back in the harness by end of working hours tomorrow." This was on the Friday. Five o'clock comes and I have not heard from no-one, so I give him a call. He said, "I was just about to ring you. It's out of my control but, no, you've got to get this done, that done", blah, blah, blah. That is why we cannot trust them. What I am saying is there are two or three people up there steering that. It does not matter what the people say. They cannot just keep making a mockery of their own employees, either. They have got to teach their vets. They have got to get behind their legal staff. But no, that does not happen.

**The CHAIR:** When did you get it back? How long was the delay?

**Mr STAINES:** About six to eight weeks later. You do your licence driving the car, you get it back the day you are due. Believe me, I was destitute. I am paying off a mortgage. I had to tell them everything. I had to put myself in the gutter to tell everybody how bad I was doing, and then they come back and say that. Come on! This is the people we are dealing with. They do not care about human beings. They have been put there for one word, one thing: for us to self-destruct. That is what they have been put there for. There is probably only a handful of people there that are doing it. Like I say, we have got some very good vets. But if you ask any of them they will still say to you, "Yeah, we need more." But that does not go there because they have got to take notice.

While I have got you all I will tell you, I had the misfortune to get one of my good dogs put down. He smashed his shoulder to pieces. The vets got him on the table in that racing thing. I am holding the dog and I could feel it moving under me, that the bones were crushed under his shoulder. We got this vet looking at him, "We can save this dog." I said, "Okay. How are we going to do this?" "Well, I've got to take his shoulder off here, around here." "Okay, who does this?" "You're going to have to take the dog home, see your local vet", blah, blah, blah. In saying that, I said, "I'll tell you what I'll do with you. I'll sign this dog over to you and you can take the dog and get it done. He's yours. But he's not coming back to Yass with me." It was a four-hour trip. Get out the road after that needle, in half an hour they bellow and scream all the way home; then take them down to your local vet and your local vet puts them down anyway.

This young lass—it was no fault of hers—has tried to get in touch with the head vet, Michelle Ledger. Could not get her. She was too frightened to do anything. She was petrified. So she decides to ring another greyhound vet who everybody's got a lot of time for and who knows greyhounds backwards. He said to the young girl, "Who's got the dog?" She told him and he said, "I would respect Mr Staines' wishes." She came back to me and she said, "I really do respect your wishes and this is what we'll do." The dog was put down. Nobody likes that—we do not like that. I have got to come home and the kids come out the next day to an empty kennel saying, "Where's Goldie?" We do not like this sort of stuff, but these things happen. They do not happen all that often, but when they do then vets have got to be able to make their own decisions. If that dog needs euthanising that is what should be done—there and then.

**The CHAIR:** What you are saying is that there is no delegation from the chief vet to the vets on the paddock?

**Mr STAINES:** No, she is all—that is what I am saying. She is running the ship, mate. They have got no—to a certain extent, but she is making the bullets, mate, and they just fire them off.

**The CHAIR:** Sounds a bit strange.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** We have heard in some of the other hearings this idea that trainers and owners feel like they are criminals or are being treated like criminals, with suspicion and with disrespect. That is not a unique thing; we have heard that from other witnesses. Are you the same Neil Staines that was disqualified by the former Greyhound Racing NSW—before GWIC—for eight weeks through seven charges, I believe, of failing to comply with the race day hydration and hot weather policy?

**Mr STAINES:** That is me. Can I just explain that? I took that on because we know our dogs better than anybody. Here is another thing. This is another thing. I am glad you brought this up. That cost me \$5,000 to take that on. Another thing that I thought of where they went bad and that was all brought on trying just to please other people. Now, we rehydrate our dogs as we see fit. When we travel, we pull up and go so far and pull up. If the dogs have an early race, give them electrolytes—whatever they need. Now, this is where this was my idea. Not all my dogs—some dogs I would not give a water bowl to, okay? Because, the simple reason is, they either grabbed it, tore it off—and we have got photos of it—tore it off the thing and had bloody mouths, or we had other dogs there, what we call the gulpers.

Now a gulper is a dog that, when it gets excited, just gulps the water into him. That is it. So you walk in to get the dog out to go racing, and he gulps that water into him. You can see when you walk out he is bloated in the guts. I would take anybody on to say if we go out there and we have a 50-metre race and you get a gut full of water into you—know who is going to pull up the best. This is where it is: Some dogs cop it and this is where we do not get enough recognition as trainers knowing what we do. We know that dog. We are 24/7 with that dog. We are with that dog all the time. If we are not with that dog, someone in our family is with that dog.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Just to clarify, though, that was before GWIC. Correct?

**Mr STAINES:** That was before GWIC but what was the ruling brought in? It was brought in just because somebody out there that knows nothing about canine athletes thinks, "Ha, it's a good thing." And do you know the other thing they wanted us to do? Is put food in while they are in there, too.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** You were disqualified for eight weeks in 2017?

**Mr STAINES:** I was not disqualified.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Okay. What happened?

**Mr STAINES:** I beg pardon?

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** What happened after that?

**Mr STAINES:** No. I just paid a fine—suspended.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Then in 2018 is it correct you were found to have nandrolone steroids and testosterone prohibited substances and were disqualified for 24 weeks?

**Mr STAINES:** I was not charged with administering that. I was charged with turning up at a meeting with the drug in its system.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Yes.

**Mr STAINES:** Now you would have heard this as you were going along in the last fortnight, and I will stand by my words now that I never administered that to the dog and even some of the legal people with GWIC—why would I? This is a story. I rely on my dogs for a living. The race was worth \$500. I have not had a conviction for 30-odd years. I have been in the industry 30-odd years. The race was worth \$500. I got half of that. The owner got the other half. Now, contamination, this is another thing with your water. We talk about our watering cans and this is where you just do not listen to us. Contamination, we have got zero tolerance—zero. There are people coming back with their own medication. If a dog is on something, it pees, as the bitches do. They will pee and the dog will come along and have a sniff, a lick if you are not quick enough—the same as the watering can.

We walk in. We sit that watering can down on our beds. You have got nowhere to put it. They say, "Oh, there are kennels and there is this"—I have seen it happen. I have seen blokes pick up the wrong water dish and wrong beds and go in and then come back. I am getting to the thing where there is contamination and this is where a lot of these things are coming from. Take a building site, for instance. Take a mine. Everybody has got to be

drug tested before they go on to a building site or into a mine. Is our kennel staff? Is our integrity officers? Are they drug tested before they come into their workplace? No. So, to answer your question, I did not administer.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** That was not my question. My question was, were you found by the predecessor to GWIC—

**Mr STAINES:** Yes, and that is the one where I brought up where I was.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Okay. So can you—

**Mr STAINES:** It is a very soft spot to me because it nearly cost me a lot of things.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I understand that. If you put yourself in the shoes of GWIC who are coming in under the circumstances they came in, to regulate the industry or to regulate the welfare and integrity, and they have on their books a person who has been disqualified previously for 24 weeks and who had seven charges of failing to comply with the hydration and the hot weather policy, can you understand that, on paper, they might reasonably suspect that you might be breaching another policy or there is a need to do an inspection?

**Mr STAINES:** Do you understand that these people that you deal with are speaking to me on a regular basis and meeting me face to face, and they make their own minds up about that? They know themselves that you are not into that sort of stuff. It is only there because they have been told to go there, but we do not mind that. They have to do that job but you do not come there kicking things over. My daughter had a—here is another little one I will tell you why we are up against these people. We do not mind them coming if they train them properly. They have been trained to do this sort of stuff. You could not breed a person that could be so nasty so they have obviously been trained by people. You just could not breed people to be that nasty.

I had some drawers in the kennel block that belonged to my daughter. When they came and done my first kennel inspection there was no key. That was okay. When they came back for the second one, "Oh, what's in this cupboard?" "You should know." No, what I said was, "Well, that's my daughter's. We've got no key for it. Last time you were here you said that was fine." She said, "Oh, I wouldn't have said that." I said, "Go back and have a look at your camera and see if you would've said it or not." "Oh, hang on, I've got to go and come back. I'll go and ring the boss." Come back, "No, it's got to be opened." So we go out and get the jemmy bar and smashed the cupboard open and there you go. How many people have got to do that?

You are questioning me on why we are so uptight about these people coming to our places. Why have we got to lock gates? Have you ever walked into your house, looked around and then thought, I think someone's been here. Things aren't right. There's somebody been there. Well, that is what happens to us. They will walk onto your place whether you are there or not.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Yes. That is—

**Mr STAINES:** I am sorry I get upset about these things.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I understand.

**Mr STAINES:** It is not at you.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** We have heard that there is an attitude issue with GWIC.

**Mr STAINES:** Oh.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I get that. But I am trying to, I guess, tease out whether the objection that you have with GWIC is predominantly because they are doing the job that they were tasked to do when we had the backflip on the ban.

**Mr STAINES:** They are doing the job they were tasked to do and that is to shut us down. Like I said, there are senior people in GWIC—and I am not on my own—and you have some of these things that I have tabled here. You have a look through there. You just do not—you know, you think you are reading a movie script. Like, these things, they are planned and, like I said, you do not breed these sort of human beings that they send out there. They have been trained to do this.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Staines, you mentioned drug testing. We have got a lot of evidence in the last week or so about all sorts of substances that are found. I tried to extract evidence from the chief vet about the scientific background on cobalt, what supports those judgements and other things. Do you think that it would be advisable that stewards, vets, owners and trainers should be drug tested before they come in and around the dogs at a meeting?

**Mr STAINES:** Unless they start putting levels on—



**The CHAIR:** Let us just put levels aside. I hear what you are saying, and that came out in evidence as well earlier. Things like cocaine are being found on dogs.

**Mr STAINES:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Who is to say who, if we accept the evidence, actually had that one 200-millionth of a nanogram—a couple of molecules—of cocaine on them and somehow or other got it into the dog's system? It could have been a steward, it could have been a vet, it could have been an owner, it could have been a trainer, it could have been a handler or it could have been anybody.

**Mr STAINES:** In saying that, yes, I think that is the way we would have to go. If that is the way things have got to go, that is the way it has got to be—that everybody be drug tested. If that is the path that they have got to go down, do that.

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** You mentioned about a phone being taken off someone.

**Mr STAINES:** Yes.

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** Did GWIC give those people a warrant so they could say, "We are going to take your phone"?

**Mr STAINES:** No. They just turned up on his doorstep and took it. They knocked on the door and said, "We are here to get your phone."

**The CHAIR:** Can they demand passwords for access to that phone?

**Mr STAINES:** I would say so, Mr Borsak. I would say they would ask for the access and you would have to give it to them. You walk into someone's place that is doing greyhounds for a living and you say, "I want your phone." If he had refused—boom. If he had dogs in that night, anywhere, and if he had refused to give them that phone, they would just have crashed all his dogs—no money.

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** Out of curiosity, are you aware of the rules and regulations that you have to abide by? Do other trainers know what are the rules and regulations and what your rights are?

**Mr STAINES:** Of course we are.

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** So you know all the rights of what they can do and what they cannot do?

**Mr STAINES:** It is pretty hard because they change the goalposts when they want to. There could be a law there one day—a rule there one day—and it is gone the next. Or, "When did that come in?" "Just a moment, I will have a look." Come back, "Oh, that was not brought in until yesterday." They do it all the time. They change the goalposts.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Thank you, Mr Staines, for appearing today and thank you for sharing your story. I just wanted to talk about the body cameras. I know you raised the body camera issue before. When you indicated that there was some inappropriate stuff said by the officers, do you know if they had their body cameras running or did they cover them up, switch them off et cetera?

**Mr STAINES:** That I cannot tell you, Wes. But I do know Barbara Katon has asked for the body camera—the film—and also asked for all the stuff that they wrote down and nothing came out of it.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** That was going to be my next question, actually. Can you actually request for that?

**Mr STAINES:** Yes, I think you can but they do not honour it. She requested it. That is something I would have to find out. I think if you request it they have got to give you a look at it, and they would not give Barbara a look at it.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Is that only in the instance where they actually have an adverse finding, or any visit that occurs?

**Mr STAINES:** Any visit.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** In answering one of the questions from Ms Boyd, you said it was to do with something being closed and the next time the integrity officer turned up they said it should be open. You said, "You should go and check your"—I missed what you said there.

**Mr STAINES:** I said to the young lass, "You were standing at the same place last time you were here and we had this same conversation and you said that was okay." And she said, "I wouldn't have said that." Then I replied, "Get your camera out, sweetheart, and have a look and see what you did say."

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Yes, so this cuts to what Mr Fang was saying. This is about the camera. Are you able, upon request, to access those camera records?

**Mr STAINES:** She never worried about giving me a look at it. Like I said, Barbara Katon has requested a couple of times for the footage because there were a few times when they were being very rude and stand-offish. Barbara, if you could picture her, she is a little lady. She has bad asthma and heart problems. You just do not go there. You walk away. It does not matter. These people, if they want to act like police officers, take a leaf out of those two people in Victoria the other day that gave that homeless guy the bag of groceries. They treat us with respect; we treat them with respect. It is the same as anything. I do not go to my mate's place and I do not go to my sister's place without ringing first.

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** You mentioned bullying earlier, that the GWIC staff get bullied within their own department.

**Mr STAINES:** Yes.

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** Do you feel that perhaps, because they are under pressure or they are being bullied or intimidated or whatever the case is, that could be a reason that they are giving greyhound owners and trainers a difficult time?

**Mr STAINES:** For sure. Like I said, they cannot be that nasty people. They have got to be taught it. You go to the source where it is coming from. You are going to have trouble getting it because they will not admit where it is coming from. It is definitely coming from upstairs. You talk to some of the vets and they are good vets and will be good vets if taught the correct way. We have got some good vets in the industry. They will admit to themselves. Even the good old dear that is 70 years old, she has come from the racehorse industry and she will admit herself that they need to be updated with the canine athlete. There is a big difference.

**The CHAIR:** We might halt it there. Thanks very much, Mr Staines, for coming. Thanks for your evidence. I do not think you took any questions on notice so we do not need anything from you further. Thank you very much.

**(The witness withdrew.)**

**BILL SCHWENCKE**, President, Temora Greyhound Racing Club, sworn and examined

**The CHAIR:** Before we begin I might remind witnesses that Committee hearings are not intended to provide a forum for people to make adverse reflections about others under the protection of parliamentary privilege. It is important that witnesses focus on issues raised by the inquiry terms of reference and avoid naming individuals unnecessarily. I also remind members of the media here today that, while the comments made during this hearing are protected by privilege, this may not extend to reporting potentially defamatory comments. Mr Schwencke, thank you for coming. Would you like to make a short opening statement?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** Yes. I would like to talk a little bit about drivers, vets, stewards, the cost of the GWIC, getting young people into our industry, the rules and regulations, and the integrity officers. Firstly, I would like to talk about the drivers in the current place now. There are very few drivers left in the State. Without drivers in our industry—and with GWIC, it is an all-round thing. The cost of them there is—without them, there is no race meeting in New South Wales. They are one of the main people of a race meeting. The stewards and that still sort of work underneath them to a certain extent. Without these drivers in the future—as I said earlier, there are very few drivers in the State now and most of them are all in their 60s or over, and it is coming to a stage where there has got to be something done with both GWIC and Greyhound Racing NSW to improve this so they go forward.

It is one of those things that it is not an easy job to do. They are probably one of the first people to get all the abuse at any racetrack, if something goes wrong, from the stewards right up to the owner and trainers. It is something that has got to be directed before people, especially the stewards where they are in control of the meeting, to understand what goes on as a race driver. It is not as if you can just jump up in a race tower and start driving the race around and understand that you've got to do this and you've got to do that. It takes years for you to learn to do that. As the rules now state, we are supposed to be seven to nine metres. It is not always practical that a driver has the hare at that distance. At times it can be closer and at times it can be further away. It depends on the dog and what happens in the race. It is one of those things that is very hard to understand unless you are a driver yourself. I think it is something that the stewards should take forth to understand what happens in a race. It is all right looking at a TV screen or watching out that window and seeing how they are going, but to actually drive it, the lure itself, and to get the understanding of it is something that should be addressed.

My next part is on the vets, as I spoke to earlier. There are very few vets at this current stage that turn around and know anything about greyhounds apart from two or three towards the city. So it is one of those things with vets that they make decisions on ordinary house dogs that they have been taught through the university in Sydney or Wagga—Charles Sturt University [CSU] at Wagga. They are the only two veterinary courses that are in New South Wales. Some years ago one of the head vets from GWIC turned around and was going to take it forward to try to get this covered. But under the present stage, that person left and it sort of went back where there has been nothing done towards greyhound racing at all. As you heard earlier, greyhounds are an athlete; they are the same as a racehorse. So it is something that has got to be understood with GWIC, to get some control for vets that understand that because they go to a lot of tracks.

I have been in the industry over 50 years and something you have got to understand is that the vets make decisions and they don't know nothing about some of the things. Say will say this bone is broken or fractured or a metacarpal has been done, and it comes to the point that they are not always that at all. Just recently at a track they turned around and said it was a torn muscle and the dog then had a broken shoulder. So it just goes to show that a lot of them do not understand the ins and outs of a racing greyhound. I have not got much more to say about that. I think it is something that should be discussed through the vets to get some of these to go forward if our industry is to survive with Greyhound Racing NSW and GWIC.

As for the stewards, to me, there have been too many. Years ago, there was only one and a club steward. Now there are two paid GWIC stewards and there is one in the bunker. So there are three at a race meeting. Personally, it is way over the limit, I think, that they are having three at a meeting when years ago there were more meetings, more dogs and the stewards used to do the swabbing themselves. Now we have got a swabbing steward beside. I think it is something that should be addressed.

**The CHAIR:** Just to clarify, we know that there are two stewards plus one in the bunker. Are you saying there is another swabbing steward that does swabbing only?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** That is right. That is a separate person.

**The CHAIR:** So you actually have 3½ stewards, I suppose, or whatever it is?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** That is right.

**The CHAIR:** That was not the case previously?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** No. Previously, the steward used to turn around and he used to do the swabbing, and he could do all these reports and all that beside. Today, there are two stewards there, put one in the bunker and then you have got a swabbing steward. To me, where the stewards used to do the swabbing before, I think the vets should be doing the swabbing now.

**The CHAIR:** What does a vet actually do on race day?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** Who is that?

**The CHAIR:** The vet. What does he or she do on a race day?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** He turns up at the race meeting. He checks the dogs over before they are getting kennelled. After that, he sits out front and watches the race, and if there is an injury, he checks that injury out. To me, that is just a waste of time. So I think, personally, they should be able to do the swabbing beside.

**The CHAIR:** How many vets attend a race meeting?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** Only one. While you are on that part, the vets themselves, instead of taking a urine sample as they are today, I think they should be taken as the dog comes off the track and it is hosed down and watered down. I think the vets should turn around—if it is a swabbed dog, I think at the present stage the vets should turn around and just take blood out of the dog, snip a hair and the bloke can go straight home after the races. As it is now, with a vet being there and it gets locked up and he's the swabbed dog, turn around, he has got to wait there for two or three races. If his dog does not urinate when he takes him back out, he gets locked back up again and he is there again for another two races before it goes again. If that person is travelling 200 or 300 kilometres to a race meeting, that means it puts him a couple of hours or an hour or more behind leave time, which means that he is getting home later of an evening. It could be one or two o'clock in the morning and if he has got to go to work at seven o'clock or eight o'clock the next morning, under occupational health and safety, he is worn out.

**The CHAIR:** You are talking about taking samples. What is your view in relation to the compulsory requirement to provide water for dogs before they race?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** I do not believe in that. As you heard earlier, I do not think water is there until after race six or seven. I believe in giving them water after they race, put the water bowl in then. I have got dogs that turn around, you put the water bowl in there, you put the water in it and unless you put it up high and where the dog cannot get a drink or get his foot at it, most of the time some of them will scratch the dish over and all you have got is a wet bed and a wet kennel. Then that is what the dog has got to lie in until such time as he races. To me, I do not mind putting it in afterwards, but otherwise—I would rather leave that out until such time because a lot of the dogs knock them over. That is not good for animal welfare, as far as I am concerned.

**The CHAIR:** Do you think the vets are qualified for the job in terms of being specialists that can handle and interpret the condition of greyhounds?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** No, I do not.

**The CHAIR:** What leads you to that?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** They have not been taught on greyhounds. They may have been taught on an ordinary dog, but we get vets come over here from CSU once a year to do animal checks, but they are not taught nothing about a racing greyhound or a racing horse.

**The CHAIR:** What is CSU?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** That is a university over at Wagga where they teach vets and that there.

**The CHAIR:** So that is just general education of veterinarians, yes? They are not specialising in teaching them anything about greyhounds.

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** No, that is right.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** It is a complete veterinary course.

**The CHAIR:** We have taken evidence that vets, if they are going to preside at race meetings, should actually be specialised in their veterinary training.

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** I think so. They should be specialised in that because it is not like an ordinary dog that runs around in the bush or a kelpie that runs out or a German shepherd that runs around. Greyhounds—he is in an enclosure and that there. He does not want a 50-acre paddock to run around in. He is happy of a morning to

get out of bed and his kennel and have a run around, get exercise and that. Then once he is finished there, he goes back into his kennel again and he is quite happy. That is where I think it is way over the top. But that is only my opinion, I suppose. As I said, with the vets and the stewards, I think they are things that they have got to come forward and understand a lot better than what they are today.

Also, the cost of GWIC now has gone way out of proportion. I know animal welfare—and I believe in animal welfare to a certain point, but the cost of running GWIC now, if you put Greyhound Racing NSW into it, which comes somewhere in the vicinity of \$30 million to \$35 million a year just to run our industry, you get back into the horse people. The horse industry runs on about \$11 million to \$12 million with animal welfare. So why is there such a great cost there? Are people getting paid over and above what they should be getting or not? It is something that we have got to seriously look at, as far as I am concerned. The cost factor there comes out of our industry, and the Government sort of pays a lot of it now. I think the Government will start looking at it and thinking why is there such a great cost there?

There is people in there—you know, you have got multiple people doing multiple jobs. I do not know how many are there at the cost today. But years ago, with the old Greyhound Racing Act 2017 [GRA], they only had two people doing registrations and licences. I think we have got somewhere around 15 now with GWIC doing the same job. They are doing only around about 4,000 dogs a year and around about the same 3,500 or 3,800 participants there. Years ago they were doing nearly 14,000 dogs and we had nearly 12,000 participants. The participants now have dropped down to next to a third of what they used to be. The dogs have dropped down to not even a quarter. Why is the distance there between so far that a few people could do it before without computers and that, whereas now we have got computers and everything else that they have got at their fingertips and cannot do the job that they have got now? It takes you days to get—

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Thank you very much for appearing today, and thank you for providing your insights into the industry. We have heard quite a bit about the culture within GWIC at the moment and how they are very adversarial. Have you experienced that at all? Can you provide some insights into how, as president of the club, you find the conduct and the behaviour of GWIC officials when they visit?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** To me, the conduct there, you have got to have—sorry, I am talking a bit further along the line. You get GWIC inspection or integrity officers that come to your place and turn up. I will just get an example from my own place. They turned up. They come from another person's place and they did not even change their shoes. They never even had the decency to wipe them. They never wore gloves when they were checking my dogs. They went from one kennel to the next and never washed their hands in between. Every time they would want to talk to you they held a hand over the camera, and when you were talking they took the hand away. To me, that is not right. That is more or less dictatorship. I will not wear that at my place anymore. If they cannot do the right thing—they talk about animal welfare. That is not animal welfare, when they go from one person's place to another place. Say it is your place and you have got parvo. They are at your place and walk around there, then they come from your place to my place and walk around my place; 99 per cent the chances are that I am going to get parvo at my place.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** So they do not look to practise any biosecurity between visits?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** No. They never even wore gloves when they went from one place to another. I spoke to one of the girls there and she said that she was an animal welfare nurse or vet nurse. She should have had more sense than that and had more intelligence to turn around and wore all these things, which she never.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I am also interested about the body cameras because we have heard this quite a bit. They will obscure or turn off the body cameras when they are visiting places until such time as they actually want to get—have you requested any of the footage or have you been provided any of the footage?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** No, I have not, but I have taken notice and that there. I will ask why. But anyway, I never got any further answers.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I guess I am hoping to find somebody who has actually been able to access and view the footage of an inspection of their property. At the moment, I have not been able to find any.

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** I suppose most owners and trainers do not worry about it because they are sort of in charge and that there. This is what eventuates. But why should they cover it up? They should be openly about it sort of thing.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Do you have any CCTV footage at your property that may have actually had them covering their—

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** No, I have not. But I have got cameras there now, I can assure you.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** It would be interesting to see if we actually had evidence where they did that. It would be helpful to actually have that.

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** I understand.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Thank you very much.

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** How do you find the interaction between the stewards and the vets?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** It is hard to say. It depends on where you have been. Some of them, to me, are a bit overboard, some of the stewards. To the vets, I do not know. Between the two of them, I think a lot of them do not understand. I think some of the stewards do not put all of the injuries down that they should be putting down. I think it is one of the things that should go forward. I think a lot of it stems back to the vets. They are not knowledgeable enough—a lot of muscle tears and things like that. Just recently, a dog that I used to train, it dropped a back muscle and the vet never even picked it up. It is something that should be addressed, I think, and understand a lot more than what they do. Unless it sort of bleeds outwards and bruises up before the person goes home, and the owner or trainer turns around and gets that dog re-vetted again, which most of them don't—all they are worried about is getting home, especially if it is towards the end of a meeting. They do not pick that part up where they should be picking it up.

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** Are they young vets, not long out of university? Are they still new and inexperienced?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** Some of them are. Some of them have been there for a while.

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** So the older ones just do not have experience in that particular area?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** I understand that. But I think you will find some of them there, one of the ones we use now—artificial insemination and that. He is into cattle and sheep and that there, where he artificially inseminates a lot of stud cattle and things like that. He is learning about greyhounds. He understands a bit more than others because he had a greyhound himself years ago, so it helps a bit in our area. But the average vet, they are not—we had a vet just up the road that was not even interested in doing our dogs. If we took the dog there they would look at it, but otherwise not. If you get an injury over the weekend, it is at least a \$200 call-out fee before you even start.

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** How long have you been in the industry for?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** Me? Over 50 years. I started back in the early sixties.

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** Were the vets better, say, 30 years ago than obviously what they are today?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** We had a lot more vets them days that turned around. It used to be university lecturers. I cannot mention any names, but they were sort of taught off some of the old vets in Sydney and then it was passed down the thing and some of them now—well, later ones—work at Sandown Veterinary Clinic. We had some at Albury and one over at Harden plus the ones in Sydney. Most of them old vets now that understand greyhounds have all gone by the wayside.

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** That knowledge has not been passed onto the younger generations.

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** There are only a few now who have still got that knowledge and who are trying to get a greyhound industry going back again where they can sort of talk on the greyhounds and lecture on greyhounds and see that part of it.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Thank you for your attendance. There are a lot of things that are going through my mind. Based on your comments and others' comments and even the submissions, have you got some views around the accountability and transparency on the way in which GWIC operates?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** No, not really. You have got to be fair to the industry. A lot of these people should be working together. I do not think they are at the present stage. One is sort of against the other to me. Unless they sort of pull it in together as a whole, it makes it hard for change to go forward. For our industry to go forward, something has got to be looked at very seriously.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** I do not want to put words in your mouth, but what I am hearing you say essentially is that there is a relationship issue between GWIC and the industry that needs improving.

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** Personally, I think they should be joined together with our industry and race under the one banner. Regardless of whether it is animal welfare or Greyhound Racing NSW, I think it should be under the one banner the same as like it is with the horses. They are all under the one banner and have a committee to

work together. You cannot have one mob pulling one way and one mob pulling the other way; it makes it too hard. There is no stabilisation in our industry when you start doing that.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** If you looked at removing GWIC, then what are the regulatory controls or the mechanism you would put in place? Are you suggesting that the industry goes to self-regulation or should there be independent regulation but a different model?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** I think it should be monitored, but I think the regulation part—there has got to be a lot to be desired there. You have got a lot of young people coming in and there is no significance there now. The attitude to them is sort of pushing them out of the gate because they have got that many restrictions on them now where they turned around, they have got to be 18 before they can get into our industry and you have got to have police licences and things like that. Kids today sort of do not want that. They had it back on an early path. There are young kids here that turned up, used to catch dogs and handle dogs underage and do it with their family with their own dogs and their parents' dogs. You have got to the stage now where those people are gone; they have gone out to the football. They are not interested in greyhounds no more. For our industry to survive you need them young people in our industry. The restrictions now and the licences and the attitude toward Greyhound Racing NSW and GWIC has got to the stage now where, them people, it is making it too hard for them to get into our industry.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** You were talking about the race drivers and how there is not a lot of them now as well. What is the training that is required to become a race driver?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** I think you have got to get up and learn. I am a race driver. I currently do both of our tracks now because the other lure driver at Wagga Wagga has been off. He has had a knee replacement and he is off. You have got to learn to feel. It takes you a while to understand that and get used to being a driver. One of your main objects is that you should walk around the track before you start, check your rollers and the cable and the lure and make sure everything is alright. You have got to understand them. When you get up in the lure driver's tower, you look down and make sure the people are on the gates that they are supposed to be on and that the starter is okay before you start a race.

It takes probably 12 months for you to learn and understand the lure driver. Your aspects are there. You have got to understand when the race comes out. Personally I look at the race form, what the dogs have been running the meeting before and that there. You have got to understand whether they are fast or slow or they are ordinary or all about the same or there is a fast dog in there because if you bring the lure down at the seven second mark—or roughly seven seconds—as you get to the boxes and they jump out, you have got to understand some of them jump quick, some jump slow and you gradually take it away. If one is sort of going along and you are going along, ordinarily you are seven to nine metres in front which you cannot always do and that is your limitation that you are supposed to be.

If one dog jumps out the pack on you all of a sudden, it takes a split second for you. You can turn the lure knob up to get it faster, but to do that it still takes a fraction of a second. Nine times out of 10 the dog is right on top of you and by the time you take the lure away, sometimes you might only be two or three metres in front of the dog. Then the steward decides to say, "It is a 'no race' because the dog was too close to the lure." You have got to sort of anticipate what the dogs in that race are going to do. It is something you learn over years and years. I have been caught a few times. Even though I have been driving for close to 50 years, you still get caught out at times and it is one of those things that unfortunately you cannot do much about.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** You have mentioned here about the current funding model for GWIC. How should it be funded?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** I think as it is now it comes out of our industry and the Government pays a lot of it at the present stage. You cannot overtax the owner and trainer. To get the licences and that is fair enough. We used to have a two-year period; we are back to a one-year period now. Everyone has got to be licensed, even the gate people and the starter where they never ever used to have to be there at all at one stage. I do not mind them turned around and getting to a stage where you have got to have a licence and that, but you cannot overtax the owner and trainer and the clubs all the time. I think if they were combined together as an industry as a whole, it would be a lot different. I do not think you need as many people at GWIC as what we have got there at the present stage. It is one of those things that is unfortunate, but it is one of those things that happen.

**The CHAIR:** Are there any more questions?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** I might talk a bit on, as I said there a while ago, young people getting into racing. I think it is something that has got to be seriously looked at in our industry as whole both from GWIC and Greyhound Racing NSW. If we do not get those people in our industry, it is just going to gradually go down and

down. I think GWIC has got to understand that the present attitude that they have sort of got to me and my way of thinking is that they think they own our greyhound.

It costs the owner and trainer a lot of money. He gets the brood bitch and breeds out of it. If he goes to breed out of it, he is up for service fees which can be anywhere from \$500 to nearly \$8,000 or \$9,000 and you have still got to look after that bitch. Then you have got to rear it. It costs you around about \$5,000 a pup to rear each one in a litter for 12 months. If you have say 10, you are looking at close to \$50,000 to rear those pups and to do it properly over a year. Then you have got the breaking-in expenses after that and then you have got the training on top of that and you have got to look after them. The food bill has gone up. It used to be only \$20 a bag; now it is getting close to \$50 a bag. It is the same as the meat where you could pick it up years ago for a dollar; now it is \$3 to \$4 and at some places more.

**The CHAIR:** Do you have a view in relation to prize money?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** The prize money has gone up a lot. We used to race for \$300 at country meetings. To sustain at a country level is nearly impossible for the cost if you have got a few dogs. As I said earlier about the drivers—I am a driver. I race greyhounds. As it is now, under the rules of GWIC, I cannot race my dogs. I put in for an exemption. I have got an exemption come through last week that I can race my dogs but only for a limited time, until such time as we get a driver. But there are not many drivers around. If it comes to an extended time, I am not allowed to start my dogs. My dogs sit in a kennel at home. I have got eight of them there and three pet greyhounds besides, and I am feeding them for nothing. And I am not even able to start my dogs. I do not think that is right, personally.

**The CHAIR:** Should Greyhound Racing NSW be sponsoring or running programs to train drivers and overview their overall availability of those sorts of human resources to the industry?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** I have been bringing this up about lure drivers now for over four years and nothing has eventuated at all.

**The CHAIR:** Who have you been talking to?

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** Wayne Billett. Sorry, Mr Chairman. From Greyhound Racing NSW's perspective, it has already been put back more or less on the clubs to turn around and find a lure driver, which is nearly impossible. Mostly at club level, dog blokes do dog jobs, more or less. It is pretty hard to get an outsider in our industry as we have found out—not only here but all over the State for lure drivers. I know some drivers—one in particular, he is doing eight or nine clubs. You can tax a person so much and where is he going to pull up? He will end up getting out and just say, "Well, I'll walk away from the industry". It is a shame to see that happen.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much for coming, Mr Schwencke.

**Mr SCHWENCKE:** Thank you, Mr Chair.

**The CHAIR:** I do not think you took anything on notice so we are okay from that point of view. Thanks very much.

**(The witness withdrew.)**



**Mr John PATTON**, Secretary and Manager, Wagga & District Greyhound Racing Club, sworn and examined

**The CHAIR:** Would you like to make a short opening statement of a few minutes or so?

**Mr PATTON:** Sure. I am the secretary and manager of the Wagga & District Greyhound Racing Club. I worked in the racing office at the Australian Jockey Club between 1996 and 2001. I worked in stakes payment at Racing NSW from 2001 until 2005. I am currently the secretary of Greyhound TAB Clubs NSW. My family have been in racing—gallops bookmakers—since 1956 here in New South Wales. Our club employs 15 people on any given race night. We race now 45 times a year. My experience between the gallops industry and the greyhound industry—the comparison of what the greyhound industry now has to go through since the live ban compared to the gallops industry is not fair. I think the greyhound industry back in 2016 was neglected by previous Greyhound Racing NSW. I will give you an example. I was on my first day on the job at Wagga and I had a manager ring me and say, "I won't stand over you yet but give me a couple of weeks and I will." So that was my first initiation at Greyhound Racing NSW.

**The CHAIR:** Sorry, "stand over"?

**Mr PATTON:** Stand over.

**The CHAIR:** And what did he mean by that?

**Mr PATTON:** Stand over me.

**The CHAIR:** He was a standover man?

**Mr PATTON:** Yes. That was the attitude of Greyhound Racing NSW then.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** When was that?

**Mr PATTON:** I don't want to mention that. He is not there anymore.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** No, I said "when".

**Mr PATTON:** When? In 2016. I had come from the gallops and thinking, "Well, that is a good attitude to have." Three months later the greyhound ban was put in and at the time we were, of course—we had to fight it then. Since Tony Mestrov has become the CEO of Greyhound Racing NSW it has swung right around.

**The CHAIR:** So Mr Mestrov is not a standover merchant. Is that what you are trying to say?

**Mr PATTON:** No, he has been terrific for the industry. The initial employment from GWIC of any person at Greyhound Racing NSW initially was not to work at GWIC. What happened was that good employees then went over and worked with Tony Mestrov. So we had no experience in the industry from GWIC. I have written four or five letters to Mr Anderson regarding decisions such as our race meetings being called off by stewards with no consultation with the clubs on race days, and also during the week before our race days—to do with the hot weather policy. I found out by Facebook about our race meeting being called off on the Wednesday and we were running on the Friday. This is how I have found GWIC's performance overall.

**The CHAIR:** That is rather capricious, isn't it?

**Mr PATTON:** What they did?

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr PATTON:** Yes. And it does not actually—

**The CHAIR:** You found out through Facebook two days earlier that your race meet had been cancelled by GWIC and you were not told or consulted?

**Mr PATTON:** No.

**The CHAIR:** Is that clear?

**Mr PATTON:** That is clear. They said they had consulted Greyhound Racing NSW and they did not consult Greyhound Racing NSW.

**The CHAIR:** And you confirmed that with Greyhound Racing NSW?

**Mr PATTON:** I have confirmed that with Greyhound Racing NSW.

**The CHAIR:** So how do they know what the temperature is going to be on the Friday on the Wednesday?

**Mr PATTON:** That is right. The hot weather policy being over 38, they will cancel the meeting, which is the rule and we will stand by the rule. But then, on that Friday, we could have raced.

**The CHAIR:** Sorry, say again?

**Mr PATTON:** We could have raced on that Friday because the weather had dropped.

**The CHAIR:** That is what I am saying. How do they know?

**Mr PATTON:** They do not know.

**The CHAIR:** They have not got a crystal ball, have they?

**Mr PATTON:** No.

**The CHAIR:** No.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I want to touch base around your experience with previous industries compared to the greyhound industry now. You have worked in a number, and your family has been involved for quite a long time. Can you provide some insights as to how other industries may have done similar, say, enforcement and investigative procedures that GWIC are not doing and perhaps they could adopt that may make them more streamlined, shall we say?

**Mr PATTON:** Well, I think the registration of staff has been a contentious issue with myself and GWIC about our race day staff who—90 per cent of my staff I have had since 2016 are the same staff. They wanted to register them so they come under GWIC, so they are ruled by GWIC on race day. This does not happen at Racing NSW. If there is a barrier attendant at Racing NSW who calls in sick on race day, they will then look for a barrier attendant outside somewhere. What I get from GWIC—they said, "If your person isn't registered," and I said, "If someone is sick on race day and I know someone can do the job who has not been a part of the club for a while." They said, "Well, you can't." They said, "If you don't get them registered, you won't be having a race meeting." Instead of using a bit of common sense—

**The Hon. WES FANG:** So there is no flexibility? I noted your comments in your opening statement where you said that you felt the greyhound industry had been neglected for a long time. I think that is what you said. Do you think it is a situation where it has perhaps gone from one end of the spectrum to completely the other, and what we really need to do is be somewhere in the middle?

**Mr PATTON:** Like I said before, if the management of Greyhound Racing NSW was to take over the integrity role at GWIC, we would not be having this. We would not be having this at all.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** But I guess there were some decisions made, certainly before my time, that we could not have the industry be the regulator as well. Is it your testimony that that is where you would prefer we were? Or, if there was to be a separate regulator, as the Hon. Mick Veitch indicated in one of his questions to one of the earlier witnesses, how do you see that working to provide a better, more cohesive product to greyhounds?

**Mr PATTON:** Well, you have got one body and one body would be in one office; that is the first thing. You have one at Bathurst and one in Sydney. All the other States, whether it is racing or greyhounds, are all working under one body. If there is toing and froing from GWIC and Greyhound Racing NSW then it affects the greyhound industry, but if you have got one body and you are directly—there are too many fingers in the pie. There has just got to be one body. With Greyhound Racing NSW, they have shown in the last three or four years that they have gone forward. Unfortunately I do not think GWIC has.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Do you think GWIC is an organisation that can be remediated or reformed to provide the service to the industry that was its original intent? If so, what are those reforms that you think could happen to GWIC?

**Mr PATTON:** It is embarrassing when you listen to 2GB or something and leaks come in from the GWIC office, whether it is about the vet or it is about CEOs. We are sitting back doing our best and we have a cross against our name—the clubs and the participants. We have been asked to reform and they have reformed; they have shown reform. And then, you have got to look up to them. It just leaves everyone with a bad taste in their mouth.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Can you clarify, when you say that they have shown reform, what you mean by that?

**Mr PATTON:** Well, a couple of things. Live baiting—the live baiting case that has happened.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Sorry, I am just trying to understand—

**Mr PATTON:** In the last four—there are no greyhound graves being found. What I am saying is, people look after their greyhounds. But if there is anyone in the industry, like all industries, doing the wrong thing, they are not in the industry anymore.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** When GWIC was introduced and that regulatory structure was introduced, it was introduced on the basis of giving the industry a second chance to be able to show it could reform. We are a few years down the track and you are saying that there has been some reform from the industry. Are you saying that would have happened without GWIC?

**Mr PATTON:** The inexperience of GWIC has shown that the rules and the regulations—there are policymakers making more and more policies all the time. People are finding it hard to enter the industry. But the stewards have a job to do and they have disqualified people who have done the right—they still have the stewards who made the decision, but unfortunately sometimes the stewards are getting advised by other people on what decisions they should make.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I will preface this by saying that I think every regulator can be better and GWIC is certainly not without criticism or without the ability to be reformed or for changes to be made. But when you have people from the industry claiming that GWIC needs to be amalgamated into another entity or to be abolished, it does look like the industry just does not want to be regulated in the way it is being regulated. My question to you is: How do you respond to that? How do you respond to the idea that this is really just about not wanting to actually reform?

**Mr PATTON:** They have reformed. Trainers have reformed.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Because of GWIC or not because of GWIC?

**Mr PATTON:** No, not because of GWIC. You said "a second chance" but 99 per cent of people in the industry before the ban—they were not doing anything wrong. You say "a second chance"; if I was not doing anything wrong or Bill Schwencke was not doing anything wrong, why do we deserve a second chance?

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** If you look at a bunch of laws and regulations, they are almost always designed to catch a few wrongdoers, even though that means that everyone has to be subject to it. Whether it is not stealing or whatever it is, we are all subject to a bunch of regulations we might feel we are not going to necessarily breach, but the regulator is in place to double- and triple-check that that is actually the case.

**Mr PATTON:** Yes.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Is this resistance to or bad feelings about GWIC driven by people not wanting to be checked on?

**Mr PATTON:** No. I think it is because of the experience from GWIC. The previous trainers bringing up the vets—the vets haven't got experience in the industry and we have got to live with that. I have begged GWIC to use a 50-year experienced vet in this State, Dr John Newell, since they have come in, and they would not use them. They just do not want to use him; I do not know why.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** We asked them and they said that he had never applied for a position.

**Mr PATTON:** Well, he had.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** That sounds to me like something that is fixable, though. If you are saying that what GWIC needs is to have vets with more experience in greyhounds who are being raced, that is a recommendation we can make.

**Mr PATTON:** But how long does the industry have to wait to get good vets or experienced vets?

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** But why abolish a thing when you could just take on board some of the change? It has only been there for three years. Do you think it has got better over time, or do you think that GWIC is the same now as it was when it was first brought in?

**Mr PATTON:** No, I do not.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Do you think it is pretty much the same problems you are seeing?

**Mr PATTON:** I do, yes. We had one case recently about bullying and harassment towards my staff at Wagga from a steward. My staff, he is over the age of 50. He was crying after one race meeting. He is the track curator.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** If you were not to abolish GWIC, and you were to make some recommendations, would it be fair to say—the Committee has heard this from other witnesses as well—there is a need for more

specialised or experienced vets, and so there needs to be more training and there needs to be a more respectful attitude from GWIC towards the industry?

**Mr PATTON:** Public relations, yes.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Anything else that you would add to that list?

**Mr PATTON:** The simple thing with the public relations is registration at the club. They were coming around to every club. It is just a simple thing. They turn up. They do not even say hello; they just go and set up. They do not ask you if I can help them, or whatever. Last week on Friday they put out a new form for the trainers. It has to do with walking the dog, what the dog likes to do, or whatever. That came out Friday afternoon, or they were going to introduce it Friday afternoon, as part of the code of conduct. We race the next day. You know what I mean? To set up a race meeting takes a week. We just want to be treated equally.

**The CHAIR:** To follow on from that, would it be reasonable if the rules, procedures, controls were to be changed, either for race day or for other purposes, that GWIC should pre-empt and give people notice of what is going to happen, and then ensure that they all understand the changes rather than just dump them onto trainers at a race meeting? I would suspect if they are not followed then they would penalise you?

**Mr PATTON:** Yes. I got in trouble because in summer a couple of years ago one of the stewards said, "We're going to be doing inspections around the trailers to make sure that no-one is leaving dogs in trailers." I have an email list of 200 trainers which I sent through and said what the stewards were doing, "So don't leave your dogs in the trailers." I was being on the front foot, so I got in trouble.

**The CHAIR:** How could you get in trouble for trying to come up with a better animal outcome? Or is it all about policing?

**Mr PATTON:** That is right—sneaking about.

**The CHAIR:** What they try to do is sneak around getting scalps?

**Mr PATTON:** Yes.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** In many other industries when there is a rule change about to occur, there is usually a consultation period, then there is a notice period where they say that this is going to be introduced and this is the procedure with which it will be done. There is a period of time where the industry is given some exposure to that rule change before it is brought in, and certainly before it is enforced. Are you saying that sort of workflow does not happen?

**Mr PATTON:** No. GWIC have put out their code of conduct and other forms of rules and regulations. But I am saying when it is actually to go out into the open to deal with the trainers, I think they leave a bit to be desired.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** For example, with that form, they said on Friday afternoon that they were introducing it and you must use it tomorrow. They were not pre-emptive, as the Chair said, to say that in future we will be looking to use this form, this is how you fill it out, and you must do X, Y and Z, and if you do not do these we will give warnings and in three weeks we will start fining, for example. That is what many other industries do.

**Mr PATTON:** That is what happens.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** They do that?

**Mr PATTON:** No, they do not. I find they do not do that. I think they have got it there but it is last minute at times.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** The issue around bullying concerns me greatly because it should not be tolerated. You said that a staff member was being targeted by the GWIC staff. Do you have a mechanism where you can raise that as a concern and have GWIC address it?

**Mr PATTON:** I did raise it as a concern at the time. We did have a meeting in Orange after it happened. It was a general meeting. It was a TAB, ClubsNSW meeting with some of the management of GWIC and some of the management of Greyhounds NSW. I wanted to talk about it and I said that until such time as we resolve this issue this person is not allowed on our track. I received letters from GWIC saying, "No, he will be coming onto the track. If you have a—

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** Serious concern.

**Mr PATTON:** —yes, or personality clash, they more or less called it. "We are not going to stop him from coming because you and your staff can't get on with this person."

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Is there a mechanism with which you can escalate that? You have concerns that there is a personality clash, or whatever it is. It may be this incident; it may be another incident. When GWIC makes a determination, do you have a higher authority that you can go to to review, override, overrule?

**Mr PATTON:** I speak to Greyhounds Racing NSW a lot. With this matter, GWIC ended up calling in an independent mediator. But I understand the independent mediator is used by GWIC all the time for other cases. That is who I call upon if I have got a problem or something, Greyhounds NSW. Only recently one of my committee rang up registration at GWIC. They said, "Oh, you're from Wagga." He said, "Yes, I am." They said, "You're from the keyboard warrior club." I just thought that was out of line.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** That is extremely inappropriate.

**Mr PATTON:** Out of line.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** It is. I think that feeds into some of the cultural issues we have perhaps heard about in recent times and probably is something that may need to be addressed by the Committee. The last thing I raise is around the hot weather and the greyhounds in trailers issue. When you sent the email, obviously it was somehow received by GWIC or given to GWIC. What did they say? What possible reason could you have for having been on the front foot and pre-emptive that GWIC would say you have been outside the bounds of what you are allowed to do? To me it seems quite reasonable that you would say, "It's hot weather"—

**Mr PATTON:** If you did that at Racing NSW, you would get a pat on the back. If you did it at GWIC, I was—

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I would assume if an inspector foreshadowed to me that this was going to occur, it was for the intention that I was then to foreshadow it to the owners and trainers and that was the intent of the communication. Is that not reasonable?

**Mr PATTON:** Spot on. I try and get on the front foot and try and make sure things are done properly and done well on race day and before race day. I do not want anything coming back to the Wagga club, any bad press or any incidents.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** On that, how many dogs have died at the Wagga track this year?

**Mr PATTON:** I think this year there are two.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Three possibly?

**Mr PATTON:** Could have been three, two.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** It is recorded as three.

**Mr PATTON:** Yes.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** That is quite a bit higher than you had last year. Do you think that is high? Do you think there is a reason? At the track is there more money required for upgrades?

**Mr PATTON:** Unfortunately these dogs ran into each other. It was not the track; they actually ran into each other. They were race injuries. They were deaths from running into each other.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Do you think there is a need for more funding for track upgrades from the Government?

**Mr PATTON:** I understand I am in the budget to have a new track at Wagga Wagga in the next couple of years.

**The CHAIR:** Maybe if you have a by-election at Wagga Wagga again, you might get some money. Have you thought about that? Maybe if you could talk Dr McGirr into resigning, we could have a by-election. Then you could get a promised \$15 million. What do you think about that?

**Mr PATTON:** Dr McGirr is very supportive of the greyhound track. He is a terrific member.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** I have a number of questions around GWIC. You have explored a number of these issues: the consultation, or lack thereof, the mechanisms upon which they operate and the relationship issues that they have with the sector. Do you think there should be greater accountability and transparency placed on GWIC?

**Mr PATTON:** Yes.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** What would that look like?

**Mr PATTON:** There is on clubs. Each week we have standards that we have to tick off with our tracks. It could help GWIC a lot—people who have been in the racing industry who are at management level. I think now they have a steward who I have not met but who I understand has a great reputation, Mr Birch. If he was allowed to apply some of his gallops knowledge into the greyhound industry, I think it would work a lot better.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** I do not understand how this works at the track, so it is really good to have you here. You talk about your stewards have to be registered with GWIC.

**Mr PATTON:** My staff.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Yes, your staff are registered.

**Mr PATTON:** They want me to be registered. Under a steward, they can fine you or suspend you. Sometimes on race night I will be on the golf cart in case there is a fall or I will be in the first corner in case there is a fall. I feel as though if I get registered and I do not agree with something, I could be suspended or fined. So at this time I am still waiting for clarification.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** The registration process, what does that actually mean? Prior to registration do you have to do a course?

**Mr PATTON:** No.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Do you have to sign up to anything?

**Mr PATTON:** No. It is \$81. All it is is being registered with GWIC and they do a police check on you.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** That is essentially so they would know who is working for you?

**Mr PATTON:** Yes.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Someone like a race driver, for instance, are they registered with GWIC?

**Mr PATTON:** Yes.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** But they work for you?

**Mr PATTON:** They work for us. This was my point. My lure driver is in his early 80s. He has been at the track now for 45 years. He has not missed a Friday night in that time. Early last year we made a chairlift for him because you just cannot get lure drivers, as Mr Bill Schwencke said. They wanted him to be registered. I said, "Well, you should be giving him a trip around the world or a gold or a life membership." Everyone makes mistakes. I feel as though on a night if something happens with the lure, I just do not want him feeling pressured.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** What if you were to have someone on the track who was not registered?

**Mr PATTON:** They have told me, "If you don't get all your people registered, you won't be racing."

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** So one person could actually—

**Mr PATTON:** One person.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** The other thing I want to talk about is if GWIC—we have explored this. Obviously there is a range of views from get rid of GWIC, bring it in under a combined Greyhound Racing NSW through to GWIC stays in its current format. I think Mr Fang and Ms Boyd have explored this. If GWIC is to stay then do you think the current funding model carries GWIC forward into the future?

**Mr PATTON:** No, I do not. For the industry it would cost over \$30 million a year. Like the previous speaker said, Racing NSW is \$12 million to \$14 million. The previous year before GWIC were established, it cost Greyhound Racing NSW \$10 million a year. Something needs to be cut back.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** What would that look like?

**Mr PATTON:** I do not know. There are policymakers in GWIC full time. You do not have them at Racing NSW or the harness racing, full-time policymakers.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** So you are suggesting rather than a different funding model, there needs to be serious consideration given to the current cost structures?

**Mr PATTON:** I think so. The stewards are the same. Like I said, you have someone in the bunker. Compared to the gallops, you have stewards at the track. They do not have anyone overlooking them. If you are competent at your job, you should not have to need anyone off course.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** To improve the relationship between GWIC and the industry—let us talk about your own track, for instance—do you have any suggestions on what they could do better?

**Mr PATTON:** I do not know, because I mentioned this to one of the GWIC people on Saturday night about me being a keyboard warrior and they just laughed.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Do you reckon there is a long way to go to try to fix the relationship?

**Mr PATTON:** I think so, yes.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Is there a consultation mechanism between your track and GWIC or do they just turn up as an authoritarian regulatory body?

**Mr PATTON:** The stewards turn up to do their job. The majority of them do a good job. Like everything, they do a good job. They are there to do their job. Management at GWIC should be more transparent with the industry, especially the clubs.

**The CHAIR:** We have had evidence and it was said to us that in the view of one witness, the culture at GWIC is dysfunctional.

**Mr PATTON:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Do you want to make a comment in relation to that?

**Mr PATTON:** Management at GWIC have told me that there is a toxic attitude at GWIC and it needs to be changed.

**The CHAIR:** Who told you that?

**Mr PATTON:** Do you want names?

**The CHAIR:** You can name names.

**Mr PATTON:** Management. Steve Griffin.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** I will leave it up to you whether you answer this or not.

**Mr PATTON:** Sure.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** What risk is there of you attending today's inquiry affecting your relationship with GWIC? Does it put your relationship into even further territory?

**Mr PATTON:** No. I keep on doing my job. They might learn something and I might learn something.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** You are not worried about retribution, in other words?

**Mr PATTON:** I hope not. I have not done anything wrong. I am telling the truth.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Mr Patton. You have not taken any questions on notice.

**(The witness withdrew.)**

**(Short adjournment)**

**The CHAIR:** Welcome to today's public forum for the Select Committee on the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission. This session is about hearing directly from people who are part of the greyhound racing community or have views about the regulation of the greyhound industry at present. We have a few time slots available for speakers, so anyone who has not registered but would like to take part in the public forum should see the Committee staff as soon as I finish speaking. Before we commence, I would like to make some brief comments about the procedures for today's public forum. Speakers were asked to register in advance for today's forum. Those of you who have been registered to speak will be called up to the lectern in turn.

Before you begin, you will be sworn in with either an oath or an affirmation. The words of both will be provided to you. You will then have five minutes to speak to the Committee, with a warning bell to be rung at four minutes and again at five minutes for speakers to conclude their speech. What you say today is being transcribed and will be included as evidence to the inquiry. For the benefit of those who have just joined us, while all participants are covered by parliamentary privilege, Committee hearings are not intended to provide a forum for people to make adverse reflections on others under the protection of privilege. In that regard, it is important that participants focus on issues raised by the inquiry terms of reference and avoid naming individuals unnecessarily. I now welcome our first participant, Merle Clarke.

**MERLE CLARKE,** having been sworn: Today I wish to highlight the severity and the lack of animal welfare and care of our sports management. In 2015 I was charged with animal cruelty for having two pet rabbits in my care. Greyhound Racing NSW then called the RSPCA, who came and took care of those rabbits and euthanised them that night. I was charged with animal cruelty. That night I was on TV and I was in the newspapers the next day. Anyhow, then an inquiry was held and that inquiry charged me with animal cruelty. One of my staff was charged with nurturing, caring and having his greyhounds on a property where rabbits were.

It cost me \$41,000 in legal fees to get those charges dismissed against us. In those eight months when that was going on, I was denied any income, I could not race, I could not sell and I could not transfer any greyhounds and I had 150 greyhounds on that property that had to be fed and cared for with no income. When the charges were dismissed, I was then given a 12-month bond and also my staff member was given a 12-month bond. That is one incident. But recently—I have been in this sport for 44 years constantly racing. Two years ago in June, I returned a positive swab. That swab was dealt with at an inquiry in January this year and I got a four-week penalty of suspension. I also asked at that inquiry—

**The CHAIR:** What was the swab positive for?

**Ms CLARKE:** Theobromine. At that inquiry I also sought a fine in preference to suspension due to the staff that I have to keep. Two of my staff members have got families and it is very hard in my area for them to seek other employment so I asked for a monetary fine. I was denied that and given a four-week suspension. I immediately appealed that and a fortnight ago I went to Sydney for that appeal. I have not heard the result of that appeal as yet. GWIC has no compassion for the people—owners and trainers. We are treated with great hardship and the compliance officers that come to your property leave very much to be desired. Two came recently to the property and found a dog in one of the runs with a small tear about the size of a 20 cent piece. They immediately told me to get the dog out of the yard and take it to the vet and if I did not notify them of the result of the vet's report by lunchtime the next day, I would have my registration cancelled.

I got one of my workers to immediately take the dog to the vet. The report came back about an hour later to say that the wound was doing nicely and it had been treated adequately. Those compliance officers arrived at my property at eight o'clock and they left at ten to six that evening and said they would be back in a fortnight to finish checking the property out. The next time they came was about five weeks later with Mr O'Shannessy. I spoke with the girl who had been there before and asked her for her qualifications. She said she had worked in a veterinary clinic. I said, "I have an artificial insemination certificate, I have a canine first aid certificate and I have a TAFE course on first aid. I consider that I am higher qualified than you. When you come here again, don't send my dogs to the vet unless they need to go there. I would have them there if they needed to go." We are under great pressure all the time. We are given very little duty of care for owners and trainers.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Ms Clarke. Jeffrey Simms?

**JEFFREY SIMMS,** having been sworn: I work at the greyhound complex of Merle Clarke. I want to speak about theobromine. We had two positive swabs to the dogs that I take care of. Theobromine is an alkaloid of the cocoa plant, which they make cocoa, coffee, chocolate and all sorts of things like that out of. I have never drank or smoked, I have never drank tea or coffee in my life and I have never eaten chocolate. Whether you believe that or not, that is the truth.

**The CHAIR:** I believe you.



**Mr SIMMS:** That is the honest truth because I was an international sportsman when I was younger, and I looked after myself and I never partook of any of those things. That eliminated any chance of those dogs having any of those things—the theobromine. We have got two positive swabs—and both the dogs came out of my kennels—of theobromine. Theobromine is so sensitive that if you had a cup of coffee and had it on your hand and touched my dog, my dog would show a positive swab to theobromine. I have delved into it to a great degree and I have studied the ACL copy that they did on theobromine on the computers. They say that theobromine is a very toxic thing and if a dog—probably no-one here knows this, but if a dog ate chocolate it could quite easily die, or it possibly would die, from theobromine.

What I am saying is GWIC never showed any duty of care to any trainer or owner or breeder in New South Wales to let them know the dangers of theobromine to the dog. Anybody—99.9 per cent of the population and people who handle greyhounds—could contaminate your dog. Even the stewards could contaminate your dog. The people that handle them getting them into the kennels, the bloke taking the what's-a-name numbers on them: any one of them. One of the swabs from our greyhound Timely Wish was leaked. It could have easily been contaminated by just being sat on the table where somebody had had coffee. It was very, very low, the content in that swab. Now we have got another swab to a dog called Too Bias. Nobody else has handled Too Bias except me, so how could theobromine get into him? People do not realise the dangers of theobromine and how they can get into trouble with it.

Merle's got a whole heap of dogs, and on many occasions we have four dogs in a race, sometimes five. We have to get somebody at the track to handle them. That was the occasion with Too Bias, and Timely Wish was that far back—like, it was 2½ years since they took it and we are just getting the result of the appeal, so I cannot remember whether anyone handled her. But somebody else had to handle Too Bias at Bathurst when he returned a positive swab. All the other dogs are handled. Merle had 81 swabs from April to November and not one of them returned a positive swab. She is 44 years in the industry and had countless dogs swabbed. She has only returned two positives in 44 years. They promised her a monetary fine at the inquiry and went back on their word and put her on a suspension for one month, which has caused all sorts of problems with us. I will not have a job, Kyle will not have a job, Gary will not have a job and neither will Dave. That is the pressure they have put us under with theobromine and not doing what they should have done: give people notice about the effects of theobromine on greyhounds.

**The CHAIR:** What effect does theobromine have on racing dogs?

**Mr SIMMS:** It interferes with their cardiovascular and their brain.

**The CHAIR:** To what effect?

**Mr SIMMS:** It can kill them. It sends them lethargic.

**The CHAIR:** So it is a downer?

**Mr SIMMS:** Yes, it is a downer.

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** How is the swab performed? How do they do it?

**Mr SIMMS:** I cannot hear you.

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** How is the swab performed? Do they just sort of brush the coat or do they do a swab of the tongue?

**Mr SIMMS:** They take a urine test.

**The CHAIR:** It is a urine test.

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** Just a urine swab.

**The CHAIR:** They swab from the urine?

**Mr SIMMS:** Yes. But theobromine is so sensitive to canines that just by brushing somebody that has—like, if you had chocolate—

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** Yes, that is what I mean.

**Mr SIMMS:** —on your hand it could show up in the swab.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Mr Simms.

**Mr SIMMS:** Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** I believe next we have Vicki Prest. Does anyone else wish to put their name forward? If so, could you please go to the secretariat and register?

**VICKI PREST,** having been sworn: This form, Robert, we received last week: I cannot fill it in.

**The CHAIR:** What is the form?

**Ms PREST:** It is called, "Exercise, Socialisation and Enrichment Plan". This is from what we are supposed to do with our puppies, rearing them, exercising—it is just ridiculous. They are telling us how to rear pups and train dogs and they do not know one end of the greyhound from the other. I would like to—

**The CHAIR:** You would like to table that?

**Ms PREST:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Ms PREST:** This is getting—it is just overbearing, that is. Merle has more or less stolen my thunder about the treatment of participants. I got a positive swab and I was—

**The CHAIR:** For what?

**Ms PREST:** For hydroxystanazol.

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** What is that?

**Ms PREST:** I don't know! But we found out through hair testing that it was from a scour medicine I used. I knew it swabbed and, apparently, we have either given it to the wrong dog or put it on the wrong dog's dinner. But they hammered me. Every day I would get an email—and in the mail, the same email—for weeks and weeks and weeks. Forty-three years I was training dogs for and this is my first positive. They ruined my life, GWIC, just by their attitude and the way they treated me. Unlike other people that have had stewards come to their kennel, I always had Mick. I do not know Mick's last name, but he was wonderful. He loved the place. He came and told me I had a positive swab, and it was the same level as Wow's—it was really low.

**The CHAIR:** What, one two-hundred-millionth of a nanogram?

**Ms PREST:** Yes, all these zeros, two-point—yeah. I would not plead guilty; I pleaded not guilty because I never would give my dogs anything. I ended up getting six months. As I said, it ruined my life. I have got anxiety now. I cannot go to the dogs. I cannot handle my dogs; my husband has to do it. It is just unforgiving, just uncaring, like Merle said. They just do not care.

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** Would you have got less if you pleaded guilty?

**Ms PREST:** Yes.

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** You would have got less?

**Ms PREST:** Yes, that is what they told me.

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** What would your penalty have been?

**Ms PREST:** I do not know, but I would have got less if I had pleaded guilty.

**UNIDENTIFIED:** Three months.

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** Sorry?

**Ms PREST:** Three months. We talked to a solicitor and he said to me, "You've got to plead guilty." I said, "I can't. I just can't."

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** No, I understand. If you are innocent, why would you want to plead guilty?

**Ms PREST:** Yes. The dog that got the swab is called "the golden child" in our kennel. I would never give anything to any of my dogs, but especially him. I trialled the dog at Bathurst. When he won his race he ran what he trialled—the same time—so it did nothing for his performance. But anyway, that has happened. The treatment of participants is cruel. They have got to think about participants: our health and our welfare the way they treat us. There is just so much wrong. The guilty plea—if you have an infringement you have got the chance of admitting that you did this and getting a suspended fine. But if you plead not guilty you face your accusers. You do not face an impartial person. You face them. I got accused of letting someone without a licence handle my dog. Never happened, but I just had to take the suspended sentence because it was not worth the effort, you know?

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** The accusation, did that come from GWIC, did it?

**Ms PREST:** Yes. And the other thing is the vets. I have here a vet from an on-course accident. Not long ago our dog broke her hock at Wagga. They sent her home. I did not go. Greg brought her home. She broke her hock. I got up in the morning and she had lost five kilos. They would not put her down. They would not euthanise her at the track. She had lost five kilos. I rang my vet at Coota. I could get there at 12 o'clock. I got there. The vet walked out because she had two people in there and with COVID you are going to have to—she came out. The dog had a bandage on her leg. She was a mess. She was stressed. She was in pain all night and she said, "The dog's got to be put down. Vicki, I don't even have to unbandage it." So I just left the dog with her. Usually I bring them home and bury them and I could not because the dog was upset, I was upset. And here on this, what the vet has put, "Fractured hock", down here, "Displaced central tarsal bone." Two completely different injuries from the vet on track.

**The CHAIR:** Sorry, what was that second one?

**Ms PREST:** "Displaced central tarsal bone."

**The CHAIR:** That sounds completely different.

**Ms PREST:** And the top one is, "Fractured hock." So they let us down too, the vets.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. All right. Thank you very much. We will now hear from Mr Bradley.

**COLIN BRADLEY**, having been sworn: I would like to talk about animal welfare and the tracks. We breed our own dogs. We have been ever since I was a kid. My wife has been involved in greyhounds for over 60 years. We have got all these rules and regulations where we have got to have our toys and all this. They are racing greyhounds. We have got pets in the backyard. They have got the toys. They play with the toys. Our greyhounds we breed to race. They are a racing dog. They are not a pet. If we want a pet, we would have went in and bred German shepherds or border collies or something. We breed racing greyhounds. GWIC turned around and said, "You've got to have pets. Teach them to walk upstairs." What racing track do you see that has a set of stairs and toys for them to play on? They are out there to race and do a job. They are not there to become pets. After the racing, fair enough; then you can teach your dogs.

The whole system is wrong. They make all these rules and regulations. What I would like to know is: What qualifications have they got to make some of the decisions that they make? I can tell you—absolutely none. They have got no idea about greyhound racing. They have got no idea about the people, the lives they destroy and as far as tracks go, who made them qualified to be track curators? We raced at Bathurst on Monday. They watered the track. The track was beautiful. Half way through the meeting they decided to water the track again. The track turned into a slop. Where the dogs run, the holes in the track they watered it, they run the tyres over it and it had become a slurry. The slurry went into the holes. Your dogs break a hock. They blame the track. They blame everything else, but they make the decisions.

**The CHAIR:** So who made the decision? The stewards?

**Mr BRADLEY:** The stewards. What steward ever became a track curator? They get a probe. They walk around the track. They stick it in. "Oh, yeah. The track's right. It's watered. It's soft." The track is as hard as this concrete but when it is wet, you can stick a probe into the track and the track will read, "Good". But the track is not good. The track is hard. Greyhounds cannot run time on a good track. Greyhounds run time on a hard track and that is a fact. All the track records. All broken all over are not broken on a good track. They are broken on a hard track and that is a fact.

**The CHAIR:** You are saying, Mr Bradley, that you believe the stewards do not have relevant experience?

**Mr BRADLEY:** I have been in the greyhounds. I have worked for Greyhound Racing NSW. I have been a club steward. I have been an ear brander or marker. I have worked at this track. I have been a club steward for years. I did Temora, Wagga, Young. I have learned a bit over the years but not one person has ever come to me and said, "What do you think?" If I express my opinion, I know nothing, but they do. Who taught them?

**The CHAIR:** So you are saying they do not have relevant experience?

**Mr BRADLEY:** None of them have got experience. You would not go and employ a painter to put a new motor in your car.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. We seem to have heard a fair bit about this with GWIC. That is right: I would not employ a welder so I would get a car mechanic. Anyway, thanks very much.

**Mr BRADLEY:** That is all right. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. We will now hear from Mr Glenn Schwencke.

**GLENN SCHWENCKE**, having been affirmed: I have a couple of grievances but mainly I think most of our people in the industry have got no faith in GWIC at all. When I started 20 years ago in the industry, everything was done by paper. You would send all your paperwork away. It would be all like your registrations for your pups and your naming them and whatever. There were six girls working in the office there and they did the horses too. Within a fortnight you had everything back. If you were real unlucky, it took three weeks. Now GWIC's got about 130 working and if you are real lucky you will get it back in three months—if you are lucky. That is just one of the grievances most of the industry people have.

The other is you can ring them, wanting answers and wanting some help, and they say, "We'll get back to you. We'll ring you back later. We'll ring you back this afternoon." I had a young fellow at home. They told him exactly the same. He sat on my verandah for three days waiting for them. He even rang them twice and he still has not got an answer yet, and that was three weeks ago. If the industry is going to treat our people like that—this young fellow chucked the job in anyway. But if the industry is going to be like that, what respect should we have for them when they cannot give it back to us?

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much, everyone, for attending today. This is the end of our inquiry for today. Thank you for stepping up to the microphone as you have done and giving the evidence you have done. It will obviously be part of our considerations. Thank you very much.

**Mr Bill SCHWENCKE:** Mr Chair, before we finish I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of our members here to thank you and the other members of Parliament for coming down and giving us the opportunity to have a say about the welfare of our industry. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. You are welcome. That is our job.

**The Committee adjourned at 14:57.**