

REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

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

CORRECTED

At Goulburn Greyhound Racing Club, Goulburn on Thursday 3 June 2021

The Committee met at 11:15 am

PRESENT

The Hon. Robert Borsak (Chair)

The Hon. Lou Amato
Ms Abigail Boyd (Deputy Chair)
The Hon. Wes Fang
The Hon. Mark Latham
The Hon. Mick Veitch

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

The Hon. Mark Pearson

The CHAIR: Welcome to the fifth hearing of the Select Committee inquiry into the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission [GWIC]. 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 the industry participants. The inquiry will also look at issues such as the appropriateness of disciplinary action and options for appeal, relationship between the commission and Greyhound Racing NSW [GRNSW] and industry participants, current fundraising arrangements and the commission's role in improving the welfare of greyhounds. Before I commence, I acknowledge the Gandangara people, who are the traditional custodians of this land. I pay respects to their Elders past and present and emerging, and extend that respect to other Aboriginals present.

The hearing today is the last of four regional hearings that the Committee has conducted for this inquiry. Last week we held hearings in Newcastle and Bathurst, and yesterday we were in Temora. We will conclude our hearings at Wentworth Park racetrack. At today's hearing in Goulburn we will hear from a range of witnesses, including a number of greyhound owners, breeders and trainers, a journalist and a veterinary consultant, as well as former members of GWIC's Animal Welfare Committee. Before we commence, I will make some brief comments about the procedures for today's hearing.

Today's hearing is being broadcast live by 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 the broadcasting guidelines, I remind media representatives 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 witnesses to be careful about any comments they may make to the media or to others after completing 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 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 the reporting of such 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 within 21 days. Following the public hearing will be a public forum. We do have a few slots available for speakers, so anyone who has not registered but would like to take part in the public forum, please see the Committee staff. In terms of audibility of the hearing today, I remind everyone, including Committee members, to please turn their phones to silent and speak directly into the microphone.

SANDRO BECHINI, Greyhound owner and breeder, and former member, Animal Welfare Committee, Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: I now welcome our first witness. Would you like to start by making a short opening statement.

Mr BECHINI: I am a former trainer. I have been involved in the greyhound industry for the last 50 years. I first attended a greyhound meeting at the age of nine years old at the now-defunct Harold Park with my late father, who was later to become a bookmaker fielding at all TAB tracks in New South Wales, Lithgow and Wentworth Park. I was captured by the sport at a very young age and what enamoured me most about the sport was the fascination I had for the greyhound itself. It is a relationship with greyhounds that I still feel very strongly about to this day. For the last 30 years, I have seen the sport drop in its status and its acceptance in our society diminish. While this may be partially attributable to the development of new and diverse interests in our multicultural nation, I cannot help attributing a great portion of the blame to the mishandling of our sport by administrators in all jurisdictions, especially in New South Wales, to remain relevant to the changing needs and views of our society, especially in terms of the integrity employed in the running of the sport and the focus on the welfare of our greyhounds pre and post their racing careers.

I also see welfare neglect extending to participants in the sport. Prize money was never increased in line with the costs to maintain a greyhound in the manner in which it was expected to be maintained, no investment was made in appropriate training infrastructure to assist participants to keep their dogs fit and healthy, and the conditions of our racetracks fell into disrepair and became unsafe for our greyhounds to race on. This can be blamed, I feel, on the poor funding agreements negotiated by our administrators upon the privatisation of the TAB and the inappropriate share of funds that flowed through to the then GRNSW, which at the time was responsible for all regulatory, welfare, integrity and commercial functions. This lack of funding led to commercial considerations attaining more importance than welfare and integrity functions.

Since the ban was reversed in 2018, we have seen a far different landscape emerge with GWIC, which was given birth as an independent regulator by the Greyhound Racing Act 2017 (NSW), and GRNSW retaining the commercial arm of the sport in running racing and being responsible for rehoming. However, I still see the sport being underfunded in the endeavour to achieve the targets that the Greyhound Industry Reform Panel [GIRP] set when the sport was allowed to resume racing. My small role in the new world was to volunteer my services as the greyhound participant representative on the Animal Welfare Committee, which I held for two years from March 2018 to April 2020. The function of the Animal Welfare Committee, which also consisted of representatives from GRNSW, the RSPCA, the Department of Primary Industries and the Australian Veterinary Association, was to advise the commissioners and their staff on various matters as they arose, but our main function was to develop the Code of Practice that was released to the public on 1 July 2020, two months after my term ended.

As far as the terms of reference of this inquiry are concerned, my main points of interest are as per the sheet that I provided to you, but I will reiterate. I will say that as a former Animal Welfare Committee member, I have great interest in the development and appropriateness of the Code of Practice published by GWIC, including licensing for different levels of the sport and to make them more accountable for the welfare and development of a racing greyhound; gaps in the whole-of-life tracking system and where it can be tightened up; inspections conducted by GWIC officers and their effectiveness—should vets be included in registered premises inspections, that is a question; whether vets being trained up in the greyhound industry, detection and treatment and prevention of sports injuries; the conflicts that exist between GRNSW and GWIC and the way they affect the participants in our sport; the effect of the funding arrangements on GRNSW to GWIC and how it affects its ability to deliver on the GIRP recommendations in regard to track safety, centres of excellence, rehoming options for retired greyhounds et cetera; should GWIC be funded totally from revenues derived from the Betting Tax Act 2001—and I referenced McHugh's report where he says that the regulator should be independently funded and not under-resourced; licensing of rehoming agencies other than Greyhound Adoption Program [GAP] to take on greyhounds in preparation for home life and a register to be kept of greyhounds that are transferred from registered participants to members of the general public. They are some of the issues that I have.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Mr Bechini, thank you very much for your attendance today. I want to go to that last item you raised on your list, number nine, about the licensing of rehoming agencies other than GAP. Can you just expand for the Committee why you suggest that and what your concerns are? If you were to broaden the licensing arrangements, what other organisations do you envisage being involved?

Mr BECHINI: What I have seen is that most of the unlicensed—let's call them "unlicensed"—rehoming agencies are mainly voluntary agencies. People who have a love for the greyhound want them placed into homes,

and they are basically also underfunded. They have to basically pay for it out of their own pockets or from donations from the owners of the greyhounds themselves, which is commendable to the owners of the greyhounds in our sport but why should they have to be cap in hand when they are doing a service to the industry? I feel they should be licensed because they need to be regulated as well as to how many they take on and what procedures are put in place to actually prepare a dog for rehoming and make sure that it is qualified to be rehomed safely in the community.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: The other thing I want to just touch on—and I daresay others might explore this as well—is that you mentioned conflicts that exist between Greyhound Racing NSW and GWIC and the way that they have affected participants of the sport. Can you give us some examples of those conflicts so we have a better picture of what you are talking about?

Mr BECHINI: The first one I can think of is a couple of debacles regarding cancellation of meetings and preparation of tracks where the tracks were not prepared properly. The stewards have come in at the last second when all the participants are there with their dogs ready to race, and they have called meetings off on welfare issues, which is probably correct from the stewards' point of view, but why was the track not prepared to the standard that it was supposed to be prepared to in the first place? Another conflict was—sorry, it has just dropped out of my mind.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: How do you envisage overcoming those conflicts? What is the way forward?

Mr BECHINI: Well, each have their duties. Just using that example, if the track is not prepared properly, how can the steward allow a dog to race on welfare issues? How can the chief steward allow that or the stewards on board? You have a conflict, but each has their job to do. So if their job is not done, then it is not going to work, is it?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you for coming along today and sharing your experience and your views. There are a couple of things I wanted to touch on. This idea of the non-GAP rehoming agencies—we touched on the high rates of euthanasia for dogs that are deemed to be unacceptable to be rehomed in a previous hearing. There was an opinion put forward that if you have got a dog that has got a severe injury or you have got a dog who is too aggressive, it is very hard to get them rehomed through the official channels, whereas what my office hears a lot about is these smaller organisations who are not registered but who will take basically any dog. They bring them back to health and they spend years with them to socialise them and put them in a position where they can have them in a home. Do you have a view on the rates of euthanasia? Basically, what are you seeing from your perspective in terms of dogs?

Mr BECHINI: Part of the code of practice was developing the euthanasia policy. As far as my recollection of that is, before a greyhound can be committed to be euthanised, it has to go through two tests—with GAP and then a second test with GAP or a foster agency. And if a dog is deemed unacceptable, then the owner is supposed to take it back and, I think within two or three weeks, try to socialise it as much as possible and try to overcome its problems. If it cannot, then it has to go to a vet for assessment and then be humanely euthanised.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Is there a reluctance in the industry to comply with the new enrichment policies that are designed to make it easier to then socialise a dog at the end of its life?

Mr BECHINI: I do not think so. I think a dog is socialised right throughout its life, to be honest.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Just to be clear, you are saying that—

Mr BECHINI: I will expand. Once a dog enters a racing kennel, it is being handled continuously. So it is always with people—with its handlers, with its trainer, with family members or whoever is there. A greyhound is continuously being handled. It is subjected to travel in a car. It is subjected to going to the vet. It learns what socialisation is, and it learns to trust people. They are probably the easiest dogs in the world to actually place in homes.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: We heard evidence yesterday from a number of owners and trainers—and I apologise, I cannot remember exactly which witness was referring to this. They were referring to the difference between racing greyhounds as athletes versus dogs as pets. They were saying, and I do not have the quote, but it was along the lines of "I would give a toy to my pet, but I am not going to give a toy to an athlete."

Mr BECHINI: I do not know what context that was meant, but—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: From your perspective, is that something that is a common view in the industry?

Mr BECHINI: When a dog is in racing mode, it needs to be focused on racing. Therefore, it needs to be trained and looked after and attune to the racing environment. Therefore, perhaps giving it a toy to play with

may or may not—that is in the view of the trainer, and that is personal to the trainer himself. That may not be with every trainer or participant that is in the sport because I know of plenty of trainers who will give a toy to a dog to muck around with just to get it to de-stress a bit from its racetrack.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Do you think that the GWIC policy in relation to socialisation and enrichment is the right policy?

Mr BECHINI: I think it is a step in the right direction. That is what I think, yes. I am not saying it is correct or right because, while I had a hand in it, a lot of it was developed by people who do not really have any experience with greyhounds either.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: You mentioned the gaps in the whole-of-life tracking system. Are you referring there to a dog that once it is transferred away from a registered participant there is no oversight by GWIC anymore? Can you explain to us what the gaps are?

Mr BECHINI: What I meant there is, many times, a litter of pups is born and they are sold to various owners. The owners do not register their ownership until well after the dog is broken in or tried out. Many times, the pup can remain in the breeder's name for up to 12 months. That breeder may have sold that dog nine months before then. So there is no accountability of where that pup has ended up. It could be in South Australia for all anyone knows, but as far as GWIC knows, that dog is still with the breeder. That is a lack of accountability to where that pup has ended up. Eventually, if it makes the grade, it will get registered and we will find out it is in South Australia with a trainer. But in that period, what has happened to it? That is not being policed hard enough, I feel, in their processes.

The CHAIR: Mr Bechini, you talk in your notes—and you might want to elucidate on this a bit more—about the training of vets and the specialisation of vets in greyhounds as it relates to GWIC.

Mr BECHINI: As it relates to GWIC. I can only gain from my own experiences. When I was involved in the sports hands on, we had a lot of vets in the sport that specialised mainly in greyhounds. They learnt their skills on the job. They learnt by being involved in the sport. What I have found and what I have seen through the Animal Welfare Committee is that there are vets who have no idea about detection and prevention of sports injuries as it relates to a greyhound. I do not see that that is improving at all. I heard the evidence given by Michelle Ledger that they are looking at cadetships and training programs. That is a step in the right direction, if that happens. It should happen. It has to happen. And there should be, I believe, programs put in place with universities to fund people through universities where they get their education paid for, but then they have to give maybe two or three years back to the sport in terms of a cadetship. That would be a very positive move in building up the level of knowledge within the veterinary industry with greyhounds. You might get a couple of those young guys or young girls sticking in the sport as greyhound vets and becoming specialists. There is definitely a market for it.

The CHAIR: It came out in evidence pretty clearly the other day, and I do not know whether you were watching—

Mr BECHINI: Yes, I did watch it.

The CHAIR: —but GWIC do not seem to have any sort of program.

Mr BECHINI: They say there is a program coming, but it has not eventuated. Whether that is a matter of funding or whether it is just a matter of disorganisation, I cannot comment on that.

The CHAIR: What is your view on threshold testing for prohibited substances?

Mr BECHINI: My view is that there should be a threshold for these. In our community I could have touched something today in the toilet and picked up one nanogram of cocaine and it could be in my system right now. I would not know. I do not think my performance is affected by it today. Therefore, how is it fair that we have such rigorous testing procedures and the equipment can go down to two to the minus nine of a nanogram per millilitre of urine and say that that minute amount of prohibited substance is affecting the performance of a greyhound?

I think Michelle Ledger pointed to the levels of cobalt the other day. She said that the level is 100, and 90 per cent of the samples taken were under 10 and there was an argument to actually reduce it. That is another issue, but the point is there is a threshold there and if you are under 100, you are not going to be caught. You are not going to be penalised unnecessarily for that. Getting penalised for such small amounts is just devastating to the people in the sport. If any of you can appreciate the work that is involved in training a greyhound, it is basically a 24/7 job and you win a race worth \$100,000 and all of a sudden for this minute amount of substance that you could have picked up anywhere in the environment you were in before the race, you have lost your race and you

have lost your reputation as well and lost all of the prize money that goes with it and the dog is then disgraced as well. It really is a very high-impact area that should be looked at very closely.

The CHAIR: Going along with that, is it your view that the process of automatic assumption of guilt should be looked at and the application of penalties based on that?

Mr BECHINI: Once you have it in your system, yes, you are guilty.

The CHAIR: But the question is, are you guilty of applying that?

Mr BECHINI: That is a matter of investigation. I would have to say if it is a small amount, if it is under a threshold amount, then it has been picked up in the community I would say and probably should not be guilty if that is the case.

The Hon. WES FANG: We heard yesterday about people whose greyhounds had been caught with substances through testing. The process with which GWIC then prosecuted but then also continued to attack and put down the people who had been caught, effectively made them feel like they are continually guilty. Do you have some experience with that?

Mr BECHINI: Are you saying that GWIC maliciously attacks people? Is that what you are trying to say?

The Hon. WES FANG: What I am saying is that people spoke yesterday about the psychological toll it took on them when their greyhounds were found to have illegal substances and that they felt that it was too draconian and actually led to mental health issues for many people.

Mr BECHINI: I probably have to agree with that statement.

The Hon. WES FANG: Can you actually provide some insight into that? Through the animal welfare part, how did they handle it and how could they potentially have done it better?

Mr BECHINI: That was not really addressed in the Animal Welfare Committee with us. It is not something I am an expert at providing, but I do know of cases where these situations have happened, especially one lady that I do know about. She has considered suicide in this situation, only because she just does not have the strength mentally and physically in her own constitution to fight it. She should fight it because what has happened to her is completely disgraceful in my view.

The Hon. WES FANG: These are the concerns that I have got. If somebody is guilty of having introduced substances into the dog for performance enhancing reasons, by all means punish them.

Mr BECHINI: That is the question, isn't it? At what level do we say it was actually introduced by that person? If it is 0.2 to the minus nine of a nanogram per millilitre, it is like a drop in the Pacific Ocean. No-one is going to give that much; it is not going to do anything.

The Hon. WES FANG: I guess that is the argument. At what point does it become an issue?

Mr BECHINI: Exactly, so we need threshold testing.

The Hon. WES FANG: But also the way with which GWIC goes about the enforcement afterwards is actually where a lot of those mental health issues are coming from. I am hoping to have some conversations about that because I think it is—

Mr BECHINI: Correct me if I am wrong, but I think some of the procedures are governed by the national rules as well.

The Hon. WES FANG: Yes, but we heard testimony about receiving letters daily and—

Mr BECHINI: I do not know about that.

The Hon. WES FANG: —the way with which they were I guess—

Mr BECHINI: I cannot—I do not know then. I do not know about that.

The Hon. WES FANG: I just wanted to see if you had some insight into that.

Mr BECHINI: No, that part I do not know about.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Mr Bechini, you said you listened to the GWIC evidence on Friday. Did you hear their statement about what happens now with dogs that have bitten a person, a child for example? They will not be taken to vets; they will go to the council pound for some assessment.

Mr BECHINI: Yes, I find that quite surprising actually to be honest because that was not in our code of practice. It is not in the euthanasia policy. That is something new to me if that is the case.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Your impression was this was an announcement that was made on Friday and it had not been considered by the Animal Welfare Committee in the past.

Mr BECHINI: I do not know if it has or has not because I have not been there since April '20. But if it has been considered since then, then I am really surprised if that is the case.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: That was the first time you had heard of it on Friday.

Mr BECHINI: Yes, actually, it was. In fact, in the Animal Welfare Committee when I was on it, we eventually basically discounted giving a dog to a council pound. We did not want that to happen.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Why was that?

Mr BECHINI: Because we feel that it is just a path straight to euthanasia.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: In your consideration there of passing these dogs onto council pounds, was there any evidence that local government pounds have vets or animal behavioural experts there to make these judgements?

Mr BECHINI: They may have, but I think they are very loosely called that to be honest.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: So you would not be confident that the pounds have got the qualifications—

Mr BECHINI: I have never seen a dog come out of a pound, unless someone has gone and rescued it themselves.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Alan Brown was arguing—

Mr BECHINI: He may argue that.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: —in what I think was a slur against family vets. He said that there are too many instances of—

Mr BECHINI: Possibly.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: —a claim that the dog has bitten a person, taken to the family vet and then put down.

Mr BECHINI: If a dog has bitten a person—and let's not just talk about greyhounds, let's talk about any dog now because that then applies to every dog in the community. If a dog has bitten a person, it certainly has got a problem. There is a danger in the community for that dog. If there is evidence that a dog has bitten a person, whether it is a greyhound or a poodle or whatever, possibly there is an argument that it should go to the pound and be euthanised, but there has to be evidence for it I feel.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Right, but Mr Brown's argument was that there was too much euthanising of these dogs at the family vet, and I think he implied in his comments he thought there was going to be a more accurate assessment at the pound. But you think that is nonsense?

Mr BECHINI: I am not sure what he was alluding to, but he could have been alluding to the fact that there could be familiarity between the participant and the vet.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Do you think that is a fair statement?

Mr BECHINI: I do not think a vet these days would put themselves in those positions.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Vets are very well regarded in the community and the racing industries.

Mr BECHINI: None of the vets I deal with would ever do that.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: You found this to be a strange—

Mr BECHINI: I found it surprising when he said it.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Does it create two streams now? You said earlier on that if there are assessments in other places about whether a dog is rehomed and it cannot be rehomed, they take it to the vet to be humanely euthanised. That is one stream that seems to be in place—

Mr BECHINI: Under the code of practice euthanasia policy, yes.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Under the code of practice that is one stream.

Mr BECHINI: They have to pass two tests.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: But now we seem to have a second stream of practice where if the dog has bitten a person, the vets are bypassed and it goes straight to the council pound and you say—

Mr BECHINI: If that is something new, I am not aware of it.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: —automatically put down.

Mr BECHINI: I am not aware of it.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: It looks like we have got two sets of rules now.

Mr BECHINI: That needs to be clarified. But I would expect that any dog in the community, whether it be a greyhound or not, if it bit a person, it would normally be euthanised.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Sorry, I will just ask about that and then turn to funding. When a pet dog bites a person there are a number of options for that dog and a vet will look at whether that dog can be kept safely by other means: for example, not going outside without a muzzle or being kept inside when there are children around. There are ways and there—

Mr BECHINI: That is circumstantial, based on the ownership of the dog, isn't it?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Sure. There is medication that you can give to rehabilitate dogs. There are all sorts of things that you can do. It is not necessarily a case of—

Mr BECHINI: Some dogs bite because a child bothers them. It is just a reaction. It might not be because it is malicious either.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: That is right. It is not an automatic—

Mr BECHINI: It is circumstantial. It is up to the owner of the dog to decide that.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: You do not automatically put down a dog because it has bitten a person.

Mr BECHINI: Well, it should not be, I do not think.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: No. I will turn to the funding issue.

Mr BECHINI: Sure.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: As you say, in the McHugh report there was a recommendation that GWIC should be independently funded and also not under-resourced. I agree with you that there seems to be a lack of resourcing.

Mr BECHINI: It is actually in Greg Purcell's submission. He puts it on page 1 of his submission and it is reference 30.99-30.101 at page 217 of the McHugh report. I am just taking it straight from there.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Do you think that if the regulator was independently funded, the relationship between the regulator and the industry would be better?

Mr BECHINI: I think it would be, yes. I think Greyhound Racing NSW [GRNSW] in its own submission says that as well. It works together on various panels—the Race Injury Review Panel and various other issues regarding greyhound racing, where they work together. They seem to work quite coherently there. I think the main gripe that GRNSW has, from what I have read in their submission, is that they cannot control the cost of GWIC and they are made to fund it. So like any business, if I was advising somebody as an accountant and they had a division which they did not control and costs were going out of control, I would be advising them to sell that division pretty fast if they are not getting any value out of it, which it appears they do not.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: So it might reduce the conflict if we had independent funding.

Mr BECHINI: That is right. There would be less tension involved for sure. Definitely.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Following on from Ms Boyd's line of questioning around funding, when you say independently funded, do you mean funded by government?

Mr BECHINI: Yes, definitely. It was placed there by government; it should be funded by government.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Do you have another model of a regulator in New South Wales that we could look at?

Mr BECHINI: The funds that are received under the betting Act—I think under PACT—I do not think Greyhound Racing NSW gets all of those. I think some is withheld by the Government and there is money in reserve. Perhaps some of that money could be allocated directly straight to GWIC.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: You are not talking about GWIC and GRNSW being combined again.

Mr BECHINI: No.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: You are advocating for an independent regulator.

Mr BECHINI: Yes. I think it is required and I think it has been better for the sport.

The CHAIR: We have come to the end of your questions. Thank you very much, Mr Bechini.

Mr BECHINI: Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity.

(The witness withdrew.)

JASON BOLWELL, Greyhound Owner, Breeder and Trainer, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Before we begin, I 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 comments made during this hearing are protected by privilege, this may not extend to reporting potentially defamatory comments. I welcome our next witness, Mr Bolwell. Would you like to start by making a short opening statement? Keep it to a few minutes if possible.

Mr BOLWELL: Firstly, I would like to thank the Committee for inviting me along to speak. I would like to commence by saying that I strongly believe in a practical, decisive and workable welfare integrity arm of the greyhound industry but unfortunately the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission [GWIC] is not that arm for the greyhound racing industry in New South Wales. GWIC, in my opinion, is the most dysfunctional and inexperienced body of the industry. It is full of rules, regulations and overpaid staff armed with overreaching powers to enforce them, which is destroying the industry from the inside out.

To understand how we ended up here today, I have to go back to 2015, when the ABC *Four Corners* program deliberately broke the law in airing footage designed to destroy the New South Wales greyhound industry. The Premier at the time, Mike Baird, ordered an inquiry into the operations of Greyhound Racing NSW and engaged the services of former judge and keen thoroughbred racing man, Michael McHugh. The media continually played a massive role throughout this inquiry in trying to influence the public with falsified figures and inaccurate accusations, and when McHugh produced his inconsistent and hopelessly incomplete report, which entailed 80 recommendations, Mike Baird opted for one, and that was to shut the industry down.

It sent minority groups into a frenzy and opened the floodgates for more media lies. Once Baird reinstated the sport by adopting the other 79 recommendations to enable its operation, GWIC was formed. The inclusion of GWIC with the expectation that the industry would be able to self-fund is implausible. This organisation has been formulated to end the industry permanently with overreaching powers and agenda-driven employment strategies, along with its lack of working knowledge of the industry, which is clearly evident. Committees were formed to implement changes, along with subcommittees to confuse things even more.

Information was sought from so-called professionals, uni grads, domestic pet veterinarians, animal welfare groups, RSPCA et cetera. A lot of these rules and regulations seem to be designed to limit participation and cause anxiety and stress to both the greyhound and the participant while slowly destroying the industry. No other racing industry in New South Wales has ever had to endure anything like this due to the behaviour of a minority within the industry. GWIC consistently talk about welfare of the animal yet keep introducing rules and regulations to try and alter the animal's DNA to appease screaming anti- groups that totally ignore the animal's genetics as they do not fit their agenda.

A good example of this to me would be the lure. I strongly believe taking away animal matter from the lure has caused stress and anxiety to the animal. The regulators have totally lost track of what the animal was bred for. Instead of encouraging the animal's natural instincts, they have opted for trying to confuse the animal by asking it to chase a synthetic lure without rendering any reward and a lure which looks like nothing like any type of prey. It amazes me how this can be a positive for the animal's welfare or for the industry as a whole. As I have outlined in my submission, there is clear evidence of GWIC employing persons with little to no experience and others with alternate agendas who are there not for the betterment of the sport but only to hinder, disrupt and destroy the industry. I have also touched on the incompetence involved within GWIC when reporting on a welfare issue of my own.

To this day, I have still have not received anything that resembles a judgement on the case at all. The submission also contained what I believe to be some senseless and over-the-top rules and regulations. Some examples include kennel sizes, water bowls and muzzles; you could also add socialising pups, banned substances and record keeping, along with kennel inspection intimidation. While researching the 330-plus pages of rules and regulations from GWIC, which I believe may be a little excessive, it also outlines how owners, trainers and breeders are discriminated against in regards to input for the industry.

It also demonstrates why it is hard to get new people involved in the industry; who wants to read through the Greyhound Racing Rules, the Greyhound Racing Act, the Greyhound Racing Regulation, the code of practice, hot weather policy, trial track policy, swabbing policy, rehoming policy, greyhound transfer policy, the Code of Practice for Breeding, Rearing and Education, and the Code of Practice for the Keeping of Greyhounds in Training? Another interesting rule I found in the Act, which was legislated by Government: You have to seek

permission to have animals on your property, further proof that the greyhound industry is still being treated like criminals. Section 41 (1) of the Act makes it an offence to keep on the premises at or on which greyhounds are kept, trialled, trained or raced any animal reasonably capable of being used as a lure in connection with the trialling, training or racing of greyhounds.

It provides that the commission may, on application by any person, make an order or an exemption authorising that person to keep an animal of the kind specified in the order. Participants need to apply for an exemption order for any animal that could be used as a lure, such as cats, small dogs, guinea pigs, ferrets or chickens. An exemption is not required for large animals such as horses, sheep, pigs or goats, although you do need to apply for an exemption for lambs, piglets and kids. In fact, if you want to breed any of those animals, you have to have an exemption. An exemption order can specify any kind or number of animals except for possums or rabbits.

The Act does not allow the commission to grant any exemption order for a rabbit or possum; this means that participants cannot keep these animals at all. Participants are also to provide information on where the animal is kept. In fact, you can have wild rabbits, which I do on my property, but I am not allowed to have a pet one. I pity the trainers who have possums in their sheds or roofs of their houses, because they will have to get rid of their greyhounds. In the McHugh report, while I went through that, I came across another recommendation that I do not believe has been addressed in the industry. It was recommendation 64:

If the racing codes cannot agree on a more equitable distribution of TAB revenue, the Parliament of New South Wales should legislate to amend the current arrangements by providing for a distribution that reflects each code's contribution to TAB revenue.

This was also sent to the reform commission run by Mr Lemma and his recommendation—

The panel has recommended funding options for the government to consider.

What they were, I still do not know. On viewing the codes of practice and the workings of GWIC, I came across the Race Injury Review Panel, which I found interesting. It further proves that GWIC are not seeking people with the knowledge as required. Mr Bechini before me spoke on that—that he was a member who would be able to sit on there because it did say that someone from the Animal Welfare Committee was to be a member. The committee was to be chaired by Mr Brett Day; he is the commission's chief steward, who is chairing the meeting. He replaced Gail Thorsby. It also states in there that a local trainer can be included in the industry, but to be that local trainer—the local trainer has stipulations. The local trainer has to be in the area or training in New South Wales for at least five years; has to be a professional greyhound trainer, not a hobbyist; have no previous welfare rule breaches or convictions; have no recent two-year prohibited substance rule breaches; and regularly race at least three different tracks in New South Wales.

Involvement in breeding or rearing would be an advantage; passionate about improving the outcomes in the greyhound industry and ensuring the sustainability of the industry; concerned with improving public confidence in greyhound racing through transparency; working alongside GWIC and Greyhound Racing NSW to achieve a reduction in the incidence of race injuries; and able to put aside self-interest and work cooperatively and represent all trainers and the greyhound industry's best interests. I do not know if it is just me, but I think there would not be many trainers who would be willing to sign up for that. In closing, for GWIC to work—or any other regulator, if they are to be replaced—it needs to limit the advice they are receiving from woke minority groups, seek some experienced advice and stop setting out to discredit the participants. Thank you.

The Hon. WES FANG: Thank you, Mr Bolwell. I just wanted to pick up on the issue around pets and the permissions required for a greyhound owner having a pet on their property. What part of the code restricts that?

Mr BOLWELL: What part of the code? It is in the—I took that from section 41 of the racing Act. It comes from 2017.

The Hon. WES FANG: Okay. Can you elucidate on that? Certainly it is not my interpretation and I do not believe it is the intention of any code to actually stop—

Mr BOLWELL: There is actually a form that you have got to fill out to have an exemption. I have chickens on my property. I have to state where the chook pen is in relation to where my greyhounds are kept. I have to send that into GWIC for them to say that, yes, it is okay for me to have chickens. We live on 12 acres, so they are separated from there. As I was saying in the opening address there, I have rabbits running around everywhere and it is a major concern because the set-up in the runs that I have—I have got 100 square reo in the corners that brace the fencing. Now, a rabbit can get through that, no problems at all.

The Hon. WES FANG: That is not the issue, though. The issue is around pets in particular. Poultry may be an issue, but pets on a property with greyhounds is not an issue, is it?

Mr BOLWELL: It says it in the Act.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: If I can help, section 41 of the Greyhound Racing Act makes it an offence to keep—not just to have a possum in the roof, but actually to keep—an animal that could be reasonably capable of being used as a lure. I do not know whether that applies to a chicken, but it would apply to a rabbit, for example, which brings me to my question to you, Mr Bolwell: To what extent are your problems with GWIC to do with GWIC itself, as opposed to GWIC's rules as prescribed by the Act? GWIC has been established with a purpose under the Act and those sorts of things are things that it is obliged to do under the Act.

Mr BOLWELL: Yes, I understand. I had initial problems with GWIC, which was in my submission, and I am not here to name and shame anybody. I contacted them after doing an investigation for myself on what I believed to be a severe welfare issue on one of the greyhounds which I sold. I want to table this. This was my statement here, which I table to everybody, that I made to GWIC. That was back in 2019. To this day I still have not got a result either way, whether it was I have sold the dog in a bad condition, or it was the person who purchased the dog, if it was his fault that the dog ended up at the vet, which he then handed over to the vet to be euthanised. Basically they let the dog go, put it in the hands of the vet. It was only when the vet contacted me that I did my own homework and went through it. If we have got an integrity and welfare committee set up, and I put in an honest statement, one would expect that they would get back to you with an outcome.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: To clarify the question, because I think there are two separate issues going on here, we have heard from a number of people that they do not like the attitude of GWIC, and that they find them not to be personable, sometimes to be rude and to look down on them, et cetera.

Mr BOLWELL: I agree.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Then there is the idea that the actual regulation that GWIC is carrying out is problematic. What I heard in your opening statement was a lot of opposition to the regulation that was brought in in 2017.

Mr BOLWELL: No, I would not say opposition. What I would say to it is that I think the Act is there, but GWIC have taken it that extra step further. A perfect example is the lure. If I went to Australia Zoo now I still see them putting a chicken on a stick for a crocodile to eat.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: But it is in the legislation.

Mr BOLWELL: Okay, fair enough.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Is the problem with the legislation? That is my question.

Mr BOLWELL: The problem is with the legislation, yes. I think it stems right back. The problem is with the McHugh report, full stop.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Your opposition is to the entire reform of the industry, not—

Mr BOLWELL: No, no, no.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: —GWIC necessarily?

Mr BOLWELL: No, you are putting words in my mouth now. No, it is not with the reform at all. I said in my opening statement that a workable integrity arm for the greyhound industry, I support it.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: We had an integrity arm function, or notional function, before GWIC.

Mr BOLWELL: Correct.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Are you opposed to the reform, being what happened in 2017 when GWIC was established, when we had these laws put in place?

Mr BOLWELL: I abide by the laws. I abide by the laws and whether I oppose them or not, they are not going to change the legislation because I am sitting here talking to you now.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: It is important because we are looking into GWIC as a regulator, not into the regulations that set up GWIC.

Mr BOLWELL: I think they are overreaching with the regulations, yes.

The Hon. LOU AMATO: In your submission you mention the possibility of amalgamating GWIC and Greyhound Racing NSW. Can you run through the benefits or positives that you see out of that?

Mr BOLWELL: That was how it was before. But, after listening to a lot of the inquiries—I have been watching it. I was in Newcastle, and I livestreamed the other ones and spoke to people—whether or not it should

be one, I am happy to support it, wherever it is. I just think that it should be, for the money that people are on out there and the amount of people they have got, I would expect the industry to be running a lot better than it is now. Whether it is amalgamated or not, that was my initial thought, go back to how it was. But, hearing from a lot of other trainers, I am probably in a minority there.

The Hon. LOU AMATO: What do you think needs to be done to fix the problem, in your opinion?

Mr BOLWELL: I looked at the vets that they have got there. I know when you interviewed people from GWIC they said that there is no such thing as a specialised greyhound vet. But, to me, having experience with the animal for a period would make you a specialist. If I have a Toyota vehicle, I am not going to take it to Mazda to get serviced. I would like someone who has worked on that car. The same with an animal. We have got a lot of good greyhound vets who I believe they should be taking advice from in the way of the industry. I just think they need to get more people with experience and maybe even listen to some of the participants. I mentioned in my submission about tracks. I know tracks was a big thing and Mr Bechini spoke on it. People turn up with their dog ready to go, prepared, ready to race. I am an hour and a half to Richmond, and that is where my trainer comes from. For them to turn up there on a day that is perfect weather conditions, it is not raining, it is 25 degrees, beautiful day, and for the meeting to be called off when everyone is there ready to participate, because somebody did not prepare the track correctly. I know that their stewards are doing their job.

Prior to GWIC and Greyhound Racing NSW being separated I cannot remember a time really when a race meeting was called off. Whether Greyhound Racing NSW were not doing their job properly as stewards, I do not know. I have not got the facts on hand to say there were more injuries or less injuries with the new model. I do not know what the answer is. But if it was me I would be seeking more specialists or people who have been in the industry longer. It would be like in my trade if I was setting up a worksite and I was supervising that site, I would seek to find people who I know are good at that part of the job and put them in charge. Happy to bring new people in, no problem, but at least I would be confident in having someone that knew the job before we started.

The Hon. LOU AMATO: That brings me to another question. You mentioned earlier on there were 333 pages of rules and regulations. When all that came about were people with hands-on experience in the industry ever consulted when formulating those rules and regulations? Sometimes that commonsense approach is needed from industry people.

Mr BOLWELL: Yes. I was not. I cannot say if they were or were not. I could not answer that.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Thank you for your submission and your presentation here today. I thought you made some really telling points on page 7 of your submission about the real nature of greyhound behaviour and what might be thought of as animal cruelty. You pointed out here that the greyhound is a hunting and running dog and is happiest when in touch with its natural instinct, as you put it, to be chase prey, fur and meat. It raises the question of what is the real cruelty here. Do you think there is an element of cruelty in taking these hunting dogs and making them stuff around with squeaky toys and plastic mops on the lure, as opposed to what nature has developed these dogs to be, that is wanting to chase and enjoy fur and meat?

Mr BOLWELL: I find with my own experience—I am only breeding and rearing and what I call a hobbyist. My dogs go to trainers, so I do not train myself from home. What I am finding with my dogs is, I am finding more dogs that are not willing to chase. They will go around, because they are with other dogs, but they are not chasing to their full ability. I do not know how the rule came about. I still struggle to find why you are not allowed to use any sort of animal matter. I do not see what the reasoning is. I do not know if it is a part of rehoming, or they think they make the dog aggressive. I do not know. As I mentioned earlier, with zoo animals, they are still feeding live—not live, but dead animals, whether it be a chicken or whatever, to crocodiles. They use fish for dolphins and stuff like that. But with a greyhound, you cannot use any animal matter to encourage the dog's natural instinct. To me it makes no sense.

The CHAIR: Is it an abuse of the animal?

Mr BOLWELL: I think it causes more stress on the animal.

The CHAIR: You say in your evidence:

Code of practice states; "Participants must provide greyhounds in their care with opportunities for expression of normal canine behaviours, to prevent stress and anxiety."

What is normal canine behaviour for a greyhound?

Mr BOLWELL: Chasing prey.

The CHAIR: In your view, does chasing a plastic orange-coloured lure as a substitute work for greyhounds?

Mr BOLWELL: For some, yes. Since they have taken animal matter off the lure, just with my own breeding—I would say compared to 18 per cent before were hard chasers, 50 per cent probably are now. They all get to play with toys when they are puppies, naturally. Ours are a part of the family. My daughters and son have grown up with them. When they are babies, of course they have balls, stuffed toys. Anything I can I put on a little bit of rope, get them to chase it, encourage them to do it. I sent mine away to be educated. I sent them away a month before. They go to education to another trainer's facility simply to get them out of the environment they are used to. I can handle them fine and they are socialised, as they should be, but what the educators have told me is if I took a mare straight from my place, they will say to me, "Oh, the dog won't look at the lure." Wear it at home, where he knows the toy lure I have got, he will chase it no problem. If you take him out of the environment, he will not lead on the collar.

I kennel mine. They run all day in the paddock. They get kennelled of a night. They are taught to be in a kennel. They get let out in the morning in the paddock to run with their brothers and sisters all day. They are put away at night. I can lead them all in by collar, no problems—no problems at all. I can put them away, feed them. They go to the educators. The educator spends two weeks trying to re-educate it that he is not going to hurt them. I do not know. I have found a decline in getting the dogs that I have—whether I am a poor breeder now, I do not know, but I have found a decline in chase in a lot of the dogs now.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: On that point, I want to clarify a few things. Are you saying that it is animal abuse do not let a dog chase?

Mr BOLWELL: No.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Sorry, I am very confused by the animal welfare comment. Are you saying that because a greyhound has a natural instinct to chase prey, not allowing them to do that is cruel?

Mr BOLWELL: I would say it causes anxiety, yes.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: So when I have my dogs at home and they see a brush turkey outside and they really want to eat that brush turkey and I say, "No, you can't eat the brush turkey. Here, have a toy." Is that cruel?

Mr BOLWELL: Was that its natural instinct to chase that?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I am sure it is their instinct. I am sure it is most dogs' instinct to chase birds. They also like to eat flies and all sorts of bizarre things. It is a bit of a strange angle to take, that it is somehow cruel to stop them eating other animals.

Mr BOLWELL: We are talking about—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Why is it strange? It is nature.

The CHAIR: Why is it cruel?

The Hon. LOU AMATO: We are going off topic.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: So you let your dogs do that, do you?

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: My dogs chase birds. They never catch them. What is wrong with that? Why can't dogs be dogs instead of Greens?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Are you in favour of live baiting?

Mr BOLWELL: No. No-one in the industry—there were five people charged when it came in in New South Wales and all of a sudden the whole industry is—live baiting has never been, as far as I am aware, legal in the sport ever.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Okay.

Mr BOLWELL: I have never, ever done it, no, and never would do it, no.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: You can appreciate then that the reason why these reforms were put in in 2017—

Mr BOLWELL: We are talking about a dead piece of meat. I am not talking about a live animal. Excuse me for a minute.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Sure.

Mr BOLWELL: You do not think that a greyhound can decide between a synthetic lure and an animal with true smell?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I think it can. I think it absolutely can.

Mr BOLWELL: That is right. That is my point.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: And if that reduces chase then that is sort of part of the problem, isn't it?

Mr BOLWELL: What I am doing now is I am breeding dogs to rehome for pets.

The CHAIR: That is the point. That is in a nutshell what is happening.

Mr BOLWELL: In a nutshell that is what you are saying you think the sport should be.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: If you want to continue.

The Hon. WES FANG: Point of order: The talking over one another is not helpful for what Hansard has to do in recording the voices. Everybody needs to speak once at a time.

The CHAIR: I will rule on the point of order. Me chairman, you not. That is not a point of order. A point of order is dealing with the procedural parts of it. I think we have a reasonable question-answer process going on and it should continue. If you have questions, Mr Fang, please ask them.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: For the purposes of the inquiry, I think this highlights what has happened here. I will put it as my view and you can say whether or not you agree.

Mr BOLWELL: Yes, that is fair enough.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: We had reforms put in place in 2017 that were based on what some in the community wanted to see but were not necessarily what people in the greyhound industry wanted to see. Do you think that what we have is still that conflict between the reforms that the Government put in place and the basis for those versus the industry wanting to continue to have fast dogs and an exciting industry?

Mr BOLWELL: I do not think it said anything about fast dogs. I think a dog is born fast or slow; I do not think you can make them faster. It is about being able to participate to their full potential. I think that gap is there because I think they are no longer getting a reward. There was never, ever—you go to a race meeting and there was a dead carcass put on the lure and towed around. That was done on a trial day and the dog was allowed to finish on that lure. So when you took it to that same track two weeks after that or whatever and it is chasing a synthetic lure, the dog is not close enough to that lure to know that it is not animal matter on there so it is going to try to its full potential. Now if we finish on to that lure on a trial day, it is a synthetic mould. They are finishing on a lure that is a finishing mould but has no resemblance to what their DNA is—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I understand that, but how do you rehome these dogs if they have that prey drive—if you have trained them to chase meat?

Mr BOLWELL: I just lost one recently, the first one I ever owned in the industry. She died at 13 of natural causes. She was brought up that way. I had her in the backyard as a family pet—no issues whatsoever. As they get older she became a pet, no problem. Very rarely would she get out of the bed to go and chase a bird. I have not got an answer for you but I am telling you from my perspective how we are being handcuffed in the sense that if we are using, and there would be ways to do it, animal matter of some sort—we are not even allowed to use an ugg boot because it is a part of a sheep. That would be animal matter. It has become difficult to get your dogs to chase. When you are a hobbyist—it is the same when I go to the code of practice. The code of practice is—a lot of this stuff from GWIC has been set up for a professional. The hobbyist has been left out.

I go to work. I leave home at five thirty in the morning. My wife goes and lets the dogs out into the paddocks of a morning because she works. There is someone at the place all the time. This is a working nursery. I get home at four thirty in time to make food up and put the dogs away. If I look at the code of practice, hence why I have not bred any pups lately, they want you to stipulate times. I think you have even got a booklet to fill out on each dog on how many times you lead it a day. You do not want to break the rules, but how do you participate in the sport if you are not a professional? Your hobbyist has been forgotten. I think it is sad, really. I do not know of any cruel greyhound breeders. Maybe I am naive. Maybe I am not seeing what you are seeing or hearing.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I have the utmost sympathy for the way that the rules have been put onto the industry. I think participants have suffered in a way that they did not need to. Even though I support the rules, I think there is room for improvement.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Mr Bolwell, thank you for coming. You are a hobbyist. How many greyhounds have you got?

Mr BOLWELL: I have got 10 at home at the moment and I have got, probably, six or seven that are racing. They are with other trainers; they are not at my property.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: The paperwork you are talking about—I am trying to explore here the professional versus hobbyist approach to this. So what you are saying is the amount of paperwork you are talking about would essentially apply to someone who does this full-time and is earning an income out of this as opposed to someone who has got another job who might have half a dozen or 10 racing greyhounds.

Mr BOLWELL: I have got six or something but I only get half of what they earn because, obviously, the trainer gets paid for it, which is fine. At the end of the day, with the hobbyists, I have got two that are still classified as pups; they are 13 months old. They have not been educated yet or sent away for education yet, but they are the last of the pups that I have at home. I have three there to be rehomed, which is probably my own fault—I have not gone and got them desexed yet—but, I mean, they are happy enough at home. They have been at home for 12 months. I have got a couple of old breeders who will probably stay there anyway regardless of whether or not I breed again. That is up to me. But I just find the paperwork side—if I step back before GWIC, we used to have a whiteboard up at the kennel block and I would write everything down. If I worm my dogs, I worm them all on the same day. If we are having a day up there I write "wormed on this day" on the whiteboard. For next month I know and I write it on the board.

Now I have got to keep an individual one for each individual dog. I have got to write down 10 times that I wormed that dog on this day, where before—mate, if that is what they want you to do, that is what you have got to do, but I do not think it is practical. When it comes to their way of thinking on that, they say that you have got to produce that booklet if you sell the dog or whatever so that the next person knows what has happened and all that. If there is a major issue with the dog, I take it to the vet. So the vet has got a record of that dog at the vet. But once the vet has got the record, I have got to take that record and put that record in the book as well. Before it was when they come I can say, "I wormed them on this day. You can see it here. This is when they are due for worming next." And they say, "This dog has been treated. I can get the vet report. I will ring the vet and get the vet report. There you go." But now it is different.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Do you think the way that GWIC is applying the rules and regulations is unfairly impacting upon the hobbyists in the industry?

Mr BOLWELL: Yes, I think it is. Like I said, in the Act there are rules and they are legislated. I understand that they have got to follow those.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: You are not saying do not have rules.

Mr BOLWELL: No, not don't have them. But I am saying that they seem to employ people to make more rules. I do not think if you looked up the thoroughbred industry or the trot industry that they would have 330 pages of paperwork you have got to go through of each thing you have got to do and each time of the day for an animal.

The CHAIR: Mr Bolwell, would you be surprised to know that hobbyists and family breeders account for over 70 per cent of the dogs going round?

Mr BOLWELL: Is that factual now or prior to GWIC?

The CHAIR: Now.

Mr BOLWELL: I am very surprised.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That is sort of the interpretation being applied by GWIC. You are not saying there should not be rules. I gather from your evidence and your submission that your issue is the way in which GWIC goes about their business.

Mr BOLWELL: Yes. I do think that there are strategies there and, as I said in my submission, I am not a conspiracy theorist but it is hard when you find evidence that you are employing people with alternative views and it has been found and proven on social media to be that way and they are in an inspector role—it makes it pretty hard to believe they are not trying to corrupt us.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Let's talk about GWIC itself. There is going to have to be a regulator.

Mr BOLWELL: Yes, 100 per cent.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Is it your view the regulator should be with Greyhound Racing NSW in one body or the regulator should be a separate body?

Mr BOLWELL: I personally would like to see it with Greyhound Racing NSW, but that might not be the consensus of all after I have watched the inquiry unfold.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: It is fair to say there has been a differing range of views, but we are really keen to get your views. The next thing is how it is funded. If you absorb it into Greyhound Racing NSW they are going to say, "Where is the money to help us do this?" So how is it to be funded?

Mr BOLWELL: I think it should be government funded.

The Hon. LOU AMATO: Can I just jump in for a minute. We have heard a lot about GWIC. What is your opinion then about Greyhound Racing NSW?

Mr BOLWELL: I have not had much to deal with them at the moment because it is all done through GWIC; my part is. I do not go to the tracks so I have not had a lot to do with them. I had a little bit to do with them recently because I am trying to get our local trial track up and running.

The Hon. LOU AMATO: Are they easy to deal with? I am just trying to get a better understanding of them.

Mr BOLWELL: I think the people I have been dealing with at Greyhound Racing NSW are, because they have been in the industry a long time. But I am only speaking of one or two people. That is all I have dealt with in this process. I cannot speak on a whole lot of them. I have only met Tony Mestrov once. Like I said, I have not had much to do with them.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: The funding of GWIC is an interesting concept. I think most people are saying that they understand someone has got to police the rules as a regulator. The Government has a number of other regulatory bodies that have regulatory functions. Do you know any that you think would be a preferred model that the Committee could look at? If GWIC is not to be it, then what is the model?

Mr BOLWELL: Like I said before, I would like to bring it back into Greyhound Racing NSW, but I think funding should come from the Government for that process.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Some have suggested from TAB proceeds. You are saying more government funded than that.

Mr BOLWELL: At the moment we are only getting 13 per cent. I think we are generating a lot more than 13 per cent. If we were getting what we were owed then that is a different discussion, isn't it?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That leads me to, I think, a recommendation of 64 from the McHugh report to do with the funding. Do you think that recommendation from the McHugh report might be—

Mr BOLWELL: I do not think anything has happened with it. I could be wrong, but it was definitely in the 122 reform recommendations from the Iemma report and he basically stated in there what I had written down. I copied it straight off it.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: You think there is a potential funding model contained in that.

Mr BOLWELL: Well, it is in the code agreement and the Government does not want to touch it, unfortunately.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Just the last bit, if I could—curators. We had a couple yesterday, a track operator or manager and another fellow was a curator. Can you just explain to me how this works? They look after the tracks themselves but they are registered with GWIC, is that correct?

Mr BOLWELL: I do not know. I could not answer that. As I said, my part of the industry really, at the moment, is with my breeding at home and rearing the pups. As I work five days a week—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: But your frustration is, though—you prepare for race day.

Mr BOLWELL: There is frustration for both me and the trainer. They have put the work into the animal to take it to the track, but they do not find out it is cancelled until they get to the track. Then they have got to go to extra expense because the dog still needs to be exercised or run so it has been built up for that day to race. So he is still going to have to take that dog and trial it at his cost after he has already gone over there and they did not start the meeting so the funds were not distributed to the trainers. If the meeting starts then that is different; the prize money gets distributed to the trainers. But in this case, the meeting did not start so there was no money to the trainers.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: It is all out of pocket.

Mr BOLWELL: Out of pocket. I mean, a simple phone call—they should know prior to the meeting. It never used to happen so I do not know why it is happening now.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I think we are out of time but thanks, Mr Bolwell, for your submission and thank you for your contribution.

Mr BOLWELL: No worries.

The CHAIR: We have run out of time. Thank you very much, Mr Bolwell, for coming today.

Mr BOLWELL: Not a problem.

The CHAIR: I do not think you handed anything up to us that needs to be referred to.

Mr BOLWELL: Only the stat dec, which is all in the submission anyway—the processes I went through to try and find out. Thank you.

(The witness withdrew.)

(Luncheon adjournment)

KEN BURNETT, Greyhound owner, breeder and trainer, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: Welcome, Mr Burnett. Would you like to make a short opening statement?

Mr BURNETT: Yes. I appreciate the opportunity to come here and speak on behalf of the greyhound participants and myself, and the experience I have had with the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission [GWIC] in the past and present. I feel personally that the way that GWIC is treating the participants in particular is that it is an over-regulatory and over-controlled body that is continuing on bullying from stewarding and from over-regulation with the code of practice. The code of practice, I believe, is designed to destroy the sport. I think that government have intruded into an industry that we believe—we would like to have an opportunity to just train greyhounds. At the end of the day, what we do is we train greyhounds, we breed greyhounds and we care for the greyhounds. We look after our greyhounds to the supreme. We have been crucified in many public sectors of the media—social media, in particular, and Government parties, as well—that continue to crucify us and the way they assume that we treat our animals. I can tell this Committee today that the greyhound people care about their dogs and treat them with the utmost respect at all times.

The way that we are being treated at the present time by GWIC in particular—they have got their authoritarian attitude towards us—is disgraceful behaviour. We have got stewarding that is overreaching. Most of them are ex-police. They treat us with contempt. They treat us like we are a criminal element, and all we are doing is training greyhounds. That is all we want to do. The attitude towards us on a racetrack, in particular, from stewards at the present time is disgraceful. I had a short meeting with the new chief steward that has been appointed—his name is Wade Birch—and I thought hopefully somebody might listen to us. I had a long personal conversation with him and he indicated to me that the way stewarding is at the present time is not the way stewarding should be. They are supposed to talk to us and communicate with us on a level that we can communicate back. They are supposed to understand the industry as a whole.

The implementation of these stewards by GWIC has been a situation where what they have done is come into our sport and introduce ex-police that have dealt with criminal elements in society. Greyhound people are not criminals. All we want to do is train our dogs—that is all we want to do. At the end of the day, we are now being treated very harshly by these people and it continues day in, day out. I get so many phone calls from so many participants about the way they are being treated. It is absolutely disgraceful behaviour. This is all implemented by a government that I feel identified five people who were doing the wrong thing. In society, what we do with people who do the wrong thing is we penalise them and remove them from the sport. That is what a good government should do. But what this Government has done is decide with their own agenda to shut the sport. To me, that is overreaching into our way of life and what we do. Government intrusion into people's lives at the moment is not the Australian way at all. That is my opening statement.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Thanks, Mr Burnett, for being here today. You might be aware that at previous hearings I have raised your circumstances directly with GWIC about the dog that bit your grandson in January. Can you give us an outline of what happened here? I have previously mentioned that you did the right thing in reporting it to the very well-regarded Rossmore vet Ted Humphries. He wrote out a certificate to say that the dog was savage, bit the grandson and was likely to be a further danger. The medical euthanasia illness box was ticked off and the dog was put down humanely at the vet clinic. GWIC have charged you. What have they actually charged you with?

Mr BURNETT: They have charged me with a breach of the rehoming program. If you read the rehoming program, it clearly states that if it is an aggressive dog or bad-behaviour dog that this policy does not stand. It is overridden by the policy if there is an aggressive dog. What I did was I rang my vet: "He bit my grandson."

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: The greyhound bit your grandson, not the vet.

Mr BURNETT: The dog did—sorry, yes! The dog bit my grandson.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: We do not want Ted Humphries in trouble.

Mr BURNETT: No, no. I informed him what happened and he indicated to me that if a dog has done that once it will tend to do it again, so we had an issue. It took me two weeks to decide what to do because we thought if we rehomed the dog to somebody else I have got a responsibility in society to protect other people from ever having this happen to their child and/or anybody else. We rang the vet back and he said to me: "The obvious thing that we have got to do, Ken—the sad old thing that we've got to do—is euthanise the dog." That is what we did.

We took the dog up, he euthanised the dog and we formulated all the paperwork from the vet and sent it in to GWIC within two days, which is what they are required to do: to have the information forwarded to them in two days. Three months later I get a phone call from a compliance officer, Fred Hennessey. He asked me all about the situation and said that I am in breach of the rehoming policy. As I said to him, I never even considered the rehoming policy because, as you can appreciate, if I rehome this dog to somebody else and the dog reoffends, how would I feel? How would I feel about giving this dog to somebody else and he bit their grandson?

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: How can GWIC expect you, or anyone, to make an attempt to rehome this dog if a vet has certified that it is savage and likely a further danger?

Mr BURNETT: This is what I mean about the overreaching of responsibility and what they are doing to us. They are making their own rules that we have got to abide by because we are registered participants. They come in and say to us that I have now breached the rehoming policy. As I said to him on the phone, I was never intending to rehome the dog because of what he did.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I just put on the record that Mr Burnett lives in my part of the world there in south-west Sydney and made representations to me. I rang Steve Griffin about this and he said that the rehoming policy had holes in it. He subsequently wrote to me on 14 May saying that the commission was looking into whether changes were required to its rehoming policy. It seems like GWIC has acknowledged that the policy was faulty yet they have still proceeded with charges against you. Did you hear their statement on Friday about the new policy of going to the council pound?

Mr BURNETT: I did hear that statement by Alan Brown and I'll tell you that that has never been said anywhere before or has never been presented to the participants of greyhound racing ever anywhere.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: That was the first you had heard of it.

Mr BURNETT: The first I've heard of it.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Does it seem to you that this bizarre policy of going to the council pound, where we had earlier evidence that it is automatic euthanasia of the dog and no dog comes out of the pound—

Mr BURNETT: That's right.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Does it seem to you this is some weird knee-jerk policy on the run that has been made in response to me raising your case and the atrocious way in which you have been charged, when clearly you have done nothing wrong?

Mr BURNETT: That is exactly right. That is exactly what has happened. He's made a decision on the run, and that is what we are coming to expect from Government at this present time. That is what they do. They make policy on the run and they make changes that we know nothing about. This is what they do.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: On this certificate, you live at Bringelly. That is the Liverpool local government area?

Mr BURNETT: Yes, it is actually in the aerotropolis. Welcome to the aerotropolis, everybody.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I used to have a bit to do with Liverpool council. It is a long way to the council pound, which used to be at Gray Street. I assume it is there.

Mr BURNETT: It is , yeah.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Have you ever had contact with the council pound—

Mr BURNETT: Never.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: —or know of any expertise they have about dogs. My experience with the council pound was what was said earlier, that their job is to put dogs down. They do not rehabilitate dogs, or rehome them or any of that. If there is a dog that has bitten a human, then the dog goes down. That would be your expectation?

Mr BURNETT: Absolutely, that would be it.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Mr Burnett, can I put to you that you are a fairly outspoken person in the industry. You have an instinct, which I admire, to stand up for your rights. Do you feel that you are being targeted here?

Mr BURNETT: Most definitely. The history of this goes on for quite some time. This is not just new to me. I am hearing from participants in particular about this issue I am currently facing with the commission that

one particular person, Brett Hennessey, is trying to encourage people to put evidence against me and he said, "We've got him this time." That is the type of attitude they're talking.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I had a conversation with Mr Griffin. He wrote a letter saying that I got stuck into him. Well, I did. But one of the points I made on the way through was that this matter about the dog that bit your grandchild has only being raised since you got separate charges against you because of an alleged dispute with steward in Nowra. How unfair is it that they are charging you on the dog and the grandson incident on the basis that there are separate charges? They have rolled these two together against you, haven't they?

Mr BURNETT: What they have done is they have collated this evidence to try to make it look bigger than Ben Hur and to put four charges on me when it was only one charge. So what they have done is they have brought in the euthanasia thing. They have obviously gone researching to see if I had euthanised any dogs, which we don't. We normally rehome them. I have got 10 pets at home. But, at the end of the day, what they have done is they have gone and looked for something to make this bigger than Ben Hur; to make the charges look like instead of being one charge, they made it look like four charges. They have created four charges out of one. That is what they have done.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Have you had to employ solicitors?

Mr BURNETT: Yes, I have.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: How much is that going to cost you?

Mr BURNETT: Who knows. I'm not near the end of that yet. It is all just starting.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Was there an earlier case. Can you give us some detail? Because we have heard a lot of evidence about cobalt and vets saying it is not actually a performance enhancer with these greyhounds. It might be with long-distance racehorses but not sprinting greyhounds. What happened there with your cobalt matter, where ultimately you were cleared, weren't you?

Mr BURNETT: Yeah, that's right. At the time I had four charges of cobalt, four charges. I pleaded with the industry to explain to me why this is happening, could they help me. I did scientific research on my diet because the controlling body kept telling me it was something that I was feeding these dogs. I asked them to explain to me what it was that I was feeding; could you help me because I need help. Because I am not a silly person. I wouldn't continue to feed dogs cobalt to continue getting a positive swab. After you have had one, you think, "Well, what's gone wrong here? I don't know what is going on." So then I started ringing. I asked the vet at the time; it was Liz Arndt at the time, she was the vet. She said to me, "It would be something that you are feeding." I have gone through my diet. I sent it all away for scientific evaluation. I engaged with a veterinary scientist to help me go through this. We sent the stuff to Royal North Shore Hospital. Each test cost me \$500 a test. I'll cut it short. In the end it cost me \$53,000.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: And you were cleared.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Sorry, when was that?

The CHAIR: I know it is a bit tough for you, Mr Burnett. But tell us how you ended up spending \$53,000.

Mr BURNETT: On solicitors and barristers.

The CHAIR: You took GWIC to court, didn't you, to overturn their charges against you and the penalty?

Mr BURNETT: What happened was that we had veterinary advice there. We had barristers, solicitors, representation. We had vets there. We put the case forward. When we thought that we were going to arbitrate the case, they said that "we surrender". So when you surrender a case, it doesn't get arbitrated and you are left with the costs. And the costs were \$53,000. I had a barrister come up from Victoria. It cost me \$10,000 for the day. But these are the types of things that these people are doing to us, and when you produce the evidence, they just walk away from it and leave you with the costs. The biggest problem I had was I was representing my partner. The dog was in her name. I was trying to clear her name of any charges because she had never done anything wrong.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Could I just clarify when that particular case was.

Mr BURNETT: That was in 2018. The case was Amanda Brunton. It wasn't Ken Burnett; it was Amanda Brunton and she's my partner.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: The original charges, when were they brought? Were they brought by GWIC or by Greyhound Racing NSW?

Mr BURNETT: Greyhound Racing NSW.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: So it is a Greyhound Racing NSW charge?

Mr BURNETT: Yes.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: At what point did GWIC become involved?

Mr BURNETT: What happened then was it was a changeover of GWIC taking over the regulatory side of the industry. What happened then was I think they were clearing up the last lot of cases with Greyhound Racing NSW and GWIC. It was on the changeover. In saying that, when it was all happening I had a dog that was in a heat of the million-dollar race. What happened was that it was in Amanda's name. We had to move that dog out of that property because of these cobalt charges. The dog was moved to another address and the dog fretted at the other address. The trainer rang me and said, "Could you take this dog home because this dog is under stress." So I took the dog home and Amanda was living at my property—she lives with me, she's my partner—and then I had to ring GWIC to get the authorisation to bring the dog back home. They said it was becoming an animal welfare issue because this dog was barking overnight and stressing out. What happened then was that they said, "You could bring the dog home, but she had to leave."

The CHAIR: Sorry. Your partner had to leave because the dog was coming back to the property?

Mr BURNETT: Yes.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Is that because she was suspended at that point?

Mr BURNETT: Yes.

The CHAIR: But being suspended, why would you have to leave the property?

Mr BURNETT: No, she was not suspended. She was under inquiry.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: She was under investigation.

Mr BURNETT: She was not suspended. She was under investigation. She had not—because we won that case; we beat that case so she was not suspended—she was suspended, sorry, but not disqualified.

The CHAIR: Now GWIC can tell you where you have to leave.

Mr BURNETT: What happened was we had to change her address. She had to leave my property and live at my aunty's place for that week period for that race so the dog could stay at my place. So she had to leave the property and reside at my aunty's place at Yagoona so we could race that dog for the owners.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: But the alternative then would have been that the dog went somewhere else and she stayed.

Mr BURNETT: We tried that. We moved the dog out, and what happened was the dog fretted.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Sure. But GWIC did not say that your partner needed to leave; just that they could not be in the same premises.

Mr BURNETT: Yes, she did. She had to leave the premises. She was not allowed to reside there where that dog was. She had to leave the property and reside somewhere else while ever that dog was being trained at that property.

The CHAIR: What is the practical benefit in doing that?

Mr BURNETT: Because, as a suspended person, you are not allowed to reside on the property.

The CHAIR: That may be the case, but who said that is sensible?

Mr BURNETT: It is not sensible. This is the way we are being treated. It is just over-reaching of regulation. That is what it is.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I understand that you yourself in your name were found—you were suspended, weren't you, for 20 weeks back in 2015, 2016 for prohibitive substances being found? Is that correct?

Mr BURNETT: Paracetamol.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Yes, paracetamol, caffeine, theophylline, paraxanthine and theobromine—which you pled guilty to in June 2015. Cobalt, you pled not guilty to for those two counts but you were still found by Greyhound Racing NSW at the time to be guilty of those. Is that correct?

Mr BURNETT: Yes, that is correct.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: You also had—

Mr BURNETT: No, I pled guilty to those because what happens is, when you do not know where it is coming from, you have got no idea what is happening with the way you do things, the alternative is—what they give you is—a reduction in time. So the obvious thing to do is to plead guilty to it to get a reduction in time.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Sure.

Mr BURNETT: Let us go back to the paracetamol. I have got issues with that, and I can show you off record exactly happened with me with that situation as well. This is why I am being, I believe, because this has been a continuation of—since 2015 when that paracetamol thing happened, this is why I believe—and I know I am outspoken. I do speak out for the industry, and I spoke up for when the ban was on. I spoke to Waleed Aly on Channel Ten, which was a very interesting conversation that I had with him. So I believe that I was a target from then on when I defended the industry.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: In 2014, again under Greyhound Racing NSW, you were suspended for three months for harassing another trainer. Is that correct?

Mr BURNETT: No, this was another thing—that person that they charged me with, they believed that I had gotten in her personal space. That is what they charged me with. She was a person that worked for GRNSW. She worked internally at GRNSW. Her boyfriend was a trainer of greyhounds. We were in the same race together, and there was a disagreement because she reckoned I was standing too close to her, so they put charges on me.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Given that before GWIC—

Mr BURNETT: I do not think I was suspended with that one, was I?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Apparently.

Mr BURNETT: No, I do not think so.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: For three months.

Mr BURNETT: No.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Okay, and fined \$200.

Mr BURNETT: I was fined \$200.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I will take your word for that. I guess the point here is that before GWIC came into existence and the welfare component of the regulation was being dealt with by Greyhound Racing NSW, you had similar experiences to what you are having now. My question to you is: Why are you objecting to GWIC now? How are they different?

Mr BURNETT: I am glad you said that, because what is happening at the present time is that the way they treat us on a racetrack is very abrupt, rude, aggressive. We asked a question. If you do ask a question, they do not like you asking them questions. They are ex-police. They treat you with nil respect. Nil respect. I have always grown up with "You earn respect by giving respect". If somebody is in authority of a position, shouldn't they show us respect as trainers? We are only bringing a dog to a track to race it. That is all we do. We do not need to be treated the way we are at this present time. I have had that many people ring me with complaints about the way stewards treat them and the way they speak to them. It is like a bullying way of treating us.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: We have heard that from other witnesses as well that there is an attitude from GWIC staff that is not necessarily respectful. People feel that maybe they are being spoken down to. There is always going to be an element of suspicion. To what extent do you think that the disrespect is suspicion or goes beyond suspicion and goes towards more of a contempt, I guess?

Mr BURNETT: Well, it is not suspicion. It is happening. It is out there every day when these people go to the track with their dogs. It is happening. I have explained this to the new chief steward that is coming on board, and he explained to me that stewarding is a form of relationship. We need to work together to get the industry right and to make it work. At the end of the day, if we continue down this track where we are having confrontation issues with stewards and they do not consider what we are saying—we offer suggestions to the stewards about things. They do not take that in acceptance. They believe that it is their way and that is the only way. There is no consideration. I will tell you an example of what happened to me personally.

I weigh a dog in, and we are allowed a kilo up or a kilo down between races. This dog, 17 days earlier, had a start at Dapto. I then take him to Nowra—and this is on a digital scale. We go to Nowra and we arrive at Nowra, and Nowra has a butcher scale. You stand the dogs on the scale. So it works completely different to a digital scale and it jumps around as it does. It was 1.2 kilos, the dog. So he was 0.2 kilos up on weight, which is

very—half of this water bottle in weight. So I had a question for the steward, "Would it be possible if I could walk the dog outside and re-empty him, lose some more fluid?" I gave him extra fluid for the travel for the animal welfare issue because I was travelling from Bringelly to Nowra, which is 2½ hours of travel.

I arrive at the track, I empty him and I walk him around. I present him to the stewards to weigh the dog and it was 0.2 kilos up in weight. So I requested to the steward, "Could I walk him back outside? I gave him extra fluid for the travel." We all do that, trainers all do that, and we allow 0.5 kilos in travel. We weigh before we leave and we know what the weight is when we weigh in. He said, "No, you can go home. You're scratched."

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: There was no exercising of discretion.

Mr BURNETT: No. "Under my watch, you don't go out and re-empty him," that is what he said. He was the chairman of the meeting and he said, "You won't be re-emptying that dog." I said, "In past practices, we have done this previously and stewards have allowed us to do it."

He said, "Under my watch, no." So he said, "You can go home." The approach would be, if I was a steward—or any respectful person that was a steward—would be, "Look, Ken, you're a little bit up in weight. See what we can do. If you go out and re-empty the dog, we'll see what happens when you come back in and weigh him." That would be the approach I would take. It is a respectful way to speak to people and the right approach to a participant that is supplying a dog to the track to race.

So then I left the premises and then another trainer rang me and said, "Where are you going?" I said, "I am 0.2 up. They have just scratched me. I'm going home." I only had one dog in. It is a long travel, two and a half hours from Bringelly to Nowra and then it is a two-a-half-hour trip back. He said, "Kenny, they have always allowed us to re-empty our dogs." He said, "Surely you can re-empty the dog." I said, "He won't let me, Tommy." He said, "Yeah, just come back and have a chat with him. Just see if he reconsiders." He wouldn't reconsider. He said, "You're scratched." Mind you, when you get scratched, it is a \$100 fine and you lose the opportunity to race in the race, so that is \$1,500 for an opportunity to win. He was odds-on favourite, the dog. He was drawn in the right box where he wanted to be. Then you get a 10-day suspension—stand down. So you can't race the dog for 10 days, you get a \$100 fine and you lose the opportunity to race on that meeting.

So we get penalised three times; three times for 0.2 of a kilo in weight, which is half a glass of water which you would urinate out. Mind you, at this present time they make us put water in kennels for these dogs to drink. It is so contradictory. You mention this to them and they just say, "They're the rules. You can go home." That dog had an opportunity. He was a derby dog, which is an age classic. He loses the opportunity for that because he was going from Nowra to Wentworth Park, which is \$40,000 prize money. I lose that opportunity as well. They're the types of things that are happening at the present time. If the Committee here believe that is the right way to treat people, then we are in trouble, we are in big trouble in New South Wales.

The CHAIR: You mean the commission?

Mr BURNETT: Let's talk about the commission, GWIC. There are three commissioners there that are on big money. Is that necessary? Is that necessary oversight over this industry? I don't think it is; I really don't. The expensive cost of GWIC, the exuberant cost that it is causing this industry. They have got two arms of the way they run their industry, when it could clearly be under one umbrella, and having an oversight of government looking over it as well. We're not frightened of regulation. We appreciate regulation. But we don't want to be over-regulated in any way, shape or form. That is our concern as participants and trainers. We are currently being so over-regulated it's not funny. You can read the code of practice, what it's doing to us. That tells you exactly how over-regulated we are.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I want to continue on in that vein. You talk about regulations. There are actually two things there: one is the regulation and the second is how GWIC interprets or applies the regulation. You are saying there is too much regulation at this point in time. Is that correct?

Mr BURNETT: Well, not too much. There is a bit of over-regulation there but it is the way they implement the regulation. They have got opportunities now to come off the code of practice, to come to our property and if there are too many holes where a dog has dug a hole, they can come and give us a breach notice. That is a breach notice. Clearly, if they want to target a person, they could come to my property—there are holes in my yard, I will say that now. You fill them up; the dogs will dig them out the next day. But if they turn up, it is a breach notice. This is what we are saying. They can breach notice us with so many things now with the code of practice.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: If you have regulations, someone has to police those regulations. If it is not GWIC, who should it be?

Mr BURNETT: I believe it should be under the Greyhound Racing NSW umbrella. I think it should be under one umbrella. The other two racing codes are working under one umbrella. This GWIC has been implemented by a government that was turned over by a decision they made, which was a bad decision, and they know it. Society identified that it was a bad decision. They proved it with the by-election at Orange. The Orange by-election was held for 75 years. The greyhound industry in the by-election up there was a massive issue. The end result was the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party won that by-election on most of those issues with greyhounds. Clearly in society—I have spoken to many people about the way we have to now train our dogs and they cannot believe what is going on. They cannot believe the way we are being treated.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I just want to talk about this model. Are you suggesting a similar regulatory policing model as, say, the thoroughbreds have got?

Mr BURNETT: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That is the model. Do you see it operating as it did before the changes in 2017-18 or do you see it operating as per the thoroughbreds processes now?

Mr BURNETT: I would say after what has happened with the issue with live baiting, I believe that Greyhound Racing NSW have now grown with a bigger responsibility on what they do. I think they have learnt a lesson; I do. I think that the way it is implemented needs to change, the way they treat us needs to be changed and I think that under one umbrella it can be controlled with a government oversight. The issue would be a successful and sustainable industry going forward. At this present time, the costs that GWIC are costing the industry is just—I think it is overkill. I don't think it is necessary. I think that we could bring it under one umbrella and work together.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Just as a matter of interest, how many dogs have you got?

Mr BURNETT: At the moment at home I have got about 25.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: And you train as well?

Mr BURNETT: I do. But not at this present time because I have been suspended. I have been suspended since 15 January.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Is that because of the issue with the—

Mr BURNETT: That is part of it. That is one of them. The issue was down at Nowra with the steward. I had an issue with a steward and they suspended me straight away. They stood me down. I have been out of action since 15 January. I never got a breach notice from those people or a charge till four months later. I never got nothing from them and I never heard from them for four months and they suspended me. I put an application in to continue training and they denied my opportunity to continue training. They refused that opportunity. So now I have got to wait until they bring on an inquiry.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: How long does that take?

Mr BURNETT: We're talking 15 January. I have engaged a solicitor. Three weeks ago they gave me a charge notice, what they were charging me with.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: What is the charge, Mr Burnett?

Mr BURNETT: The charge was refusing steward's direction because I reweighed the dog when he told me I couldn't use the scale. The other one was that I brushed past a steward to try to get—I don't know if I am allowed to speak about this. Am I allowed to speak about it?

The CHAIR: No, you can speak about it.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: It is not a court case; it is a tribunal.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: You are all right.

Mr BURNETT: I am right to speak about it?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Mr BURNETT: So what happened was when he denied me a chance to reweigh the dog—because I was travelling home with the dog and I wanted to see why he is not losing any weight in travel—he denied me the opportunity. He told me to go home, I'm scratched. I said, "I would just like to reweigh my dog before I leave to know what this dog is doing in travel." I then proceeded towards the scale and he said, "You are not reweighing the dog," and I put the dog in the scale. That is one charge because I refused the steward's direction. The next

charge was—he launched himself on top of the scale and pushed down on it while the dog was in the scale, mind you.

I tried to get past him and there is a table between the scale and we bumped shoulders as I was trying to get past him to get the dog out of the scale because the dog was panicking in the scale. I then took the dog out of the scale and then I abused him and said some words that I should not have said, but at the time I was pretty upset. I said, "You GWIC stewards, all you want to do is close this industry down. You have just destroyed the opportunity for this dog to race. You have destroyed the betting now that TAB has got to pay the third dividend for the race because it is a late scratching." I said, "Do you really believe that you are doing the right thing by this industry?" That is what I said.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: What you are saying there is that the steward jumped on top of the scales—

Mr BURNETT: Yes.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: —to stop you from weighing your dog?

Mr BURNETT: Yes. He launched himself on top of the scale and pushed down on the scale while the dog was in the scale.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: You had a concern for your dog's wellbeing—

Mr BURNETT: Absolutely.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: —because the dog naturally was panicking.

Mr BURNETT: The dog was panicking. He is jumping around looking up.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: You raced in there to try and get the dog out.

Mr BURNETT: Yes.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Has this steward still got his job?

Mr BURNETT: Yes, he has.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Has he been charged with anything, like being an imbecile?

Mr BURNETT: No.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Doing his job.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Mr Burnett, clearly there is a lot that hangs on the weight of the dog and the weighing process. Is there CCTV or is it documented?

Mr BURNETT: No, there is no CCTV there.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Just to clarify, the reason why you are not allowed to just weigh the dog is presumably because the stewards are in charge of the scales so that they do not get tampered with. Is that right?

Mr BURNETT: No, no, no, there is a cage on top of the scales and every dog has got to be weighed prior to racing. They have all got to be weighed. You cannot adjust the scales.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Do you acknowledge that whatever the steward did, you had done something you were not supposed to do?

Mr BURNETT: No, no, no, what he told me was he did not want me to reweigh my dog. He told me I could not put the dog in the scale. I put the dog in the scale.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Yes, which is something he told you not to do.

Mr BURNETT: Yes.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: And you admit that that—

Mr BURNETT: Yes.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: —was not the right thing to do.

Mr BURNETT: Hang on. Hang on. Hang on. It is not—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I just think we need to be careful about then questioning the stewards behaviour.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Point of order: The witness has not admitted it was the wrong thing to do. He has said that he did not follow the steward's instruction. Whether the steward's instruction was right or wrong is an open question. There is no harm in weighing a dog, surely.

The CHAIR: It just seems to me that there could have been a lot more civil approach to your request for a reweighing of the dog. That is really what you are saying.

Mr BURNETT: All it was, was for me to get an idea on why this dog is not losing weight in travel. Dogs do tend to lose weight in travel because they are anxious. They get excited about racing; they know it is race day. What happened was, I wanted to know why this dog was not losing weight in travel. What I did was, I reweighed the dog. I did not adjust the scale or do anything like that.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: But earlier you said, respect is earned, and presumably the job of the steward—

Mr BURNETT: Did you think he gave me respect when he told me to go home?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Presumably the job of the steward though is to give instructions at the race meet and you did not follow them. I just think we need to be careful about then saying the steward has done something wrong when it seems to me that they were just doing their job.

Mr BURNETT: Do you honestly believe that while a dog is in a small cage on a scale that moves around, do you think that the right thing to do for a steward's behaviour is to jump on top of it and push his arms down so the scale would not work?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: The steward is not here to answer that allegation though. I think we need to just be careful.

Mr BURNETT: Yes, right, but I am just asking you as a person, do you think it is the right thing to do?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I do not know, I have never been at a weighing station at a track.

Mr BURNETT: Maybe you should go to a racetrack and see how it all works.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I would rather not.

Mr BURNETT: You would rather not.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I would rather not, thank you.

Mr BURNETT: Why not?

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. WES FANG: It seems that the Hon. Mick Veitch and I were almost on a unity ticket there. We heard yesterday as well that there has been lots of incidents. It is just trying to capture them. There was no CCTV at the track to capture that event. Do they were body cameras and the like?

Mr BURNETT: No, they do not.

The Hon. WES FANG: The inspectors wear body cameras when they come to do an inspection—

Mr BURNETT: To the premises.

The Hon. WES FANG: —on your property.

Mr BURNETT: Yes.

The Hon. WES FANG: But the stewards do not wear them when they are actually on the track.

Mr BURNETT: No, they do not.

The Hon. WES FANG: There were no witnesses or CCTV. There was no documented evidence that can be provided—

Mr BURNETT: That this went on.

The Hon. WES FANG: More that shows the behaviour of the steward.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Or yourself.

Mr BURNETT: There is. There is myself and another person who was in the kennel block at the time.

The Hon. WES FANG: Okay, so it was witnessed.

Mr BURNETT: Yes.

The Hon. WES FANG: It is just getting that corroborating evidence because much of the evidence that we have had so far has been—for want of a better term—he-said, she-said. I have been trying to narrow down and see if there is any footage or any evidence, even body cams or the like, of this sort of behaviour that we can actually document. It is not available and that has been quite difficult for me in particular, but thank you very much Mr Burnett for your—

Mr BURNETT: Just on saying that about cameras in kennels, this has been a long ongoing request by trainers to implement the proper camera systems in kennels to protect our dogs against people doing the wrong thing. We have requested this on numerous occasions through GWIC and through GRNSW; nothing has changed. We have got a camera system down there at Wentworth Park that is absolutely inadequate for what it does; it is hopeless.

The Hon. WES FANG: Have they said anything to you about that issue? Is it that they do not want it recorded?

Mr BURNETT: As I just said, we have requested on numerous occasions about getting correct camera procedures in this locked-up kennel environment because we as trainers are very vulnerable to any type of—

The Hon. LOU AMATO: Interference?

Mr BURNETT: —security breaches. Absolutely we are. We have got a Wentworth Park track that supplies our major race meeting and we have got to empty our dogs out in a public thoroughfare, not in an enclosed environment. We have got issues with that enormously, and I have asked question after question why we cannot open the Wattle Street entrance to allow us into the track so we can empty our dogs in a controlled environment. There are so many issues that we have questioned to the race clubs, to GRNSW and to GWIC to give us a controlled environment to protect our dogs from any environmental contamination which is currently happening as we speak.

The Hon. WES FANG: It just seems amazing to me that we put body cams on the inspectors when we send them to a property, but when they are at the track and where a lot of these issues have been occurring, there is no CCTV. It makes me wonder why we go to all that effort and then we do not have anything captured for regulatory or enforcement issues.

Mr BURNETT: It is like this one too with dogs and they want us to teach dogs to use toys at 13 weeks old and have these dogs socialise at 13 weeks old and then we have got to introduce them to racing. We introduce dogs to toys and things like that—squeaky toys. What do we give our kids? Squeaky toys. What happens if a child is in a pram with a rehomed greyhound walking past and they squeak a toy? Do you think there could be an opportunity for the dog to react to that and aggressively go towards a child? These are the types of things that they are introducing to our industry. There is only one reason for it: to resocialise dogs, and they want to resocialise dogs before they become race dogs because they do not want race dogs at all. This is what this code of practice is doing to us. You can laugh—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I am not laughing.

Mr BURNETT: —but you know exactly what you are trying to achieve and what you are trying to implement. At the end of the day, it is not a laughable thing that we have got to put up with.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Sorry, I will take the opportunity to respond. I was actually laughing at Mr Amato who was pulling a face at me. Just to clarify, it seems extreme to me that you would argue that a squeaky toy in a child's pram would be a threat to the child and not to the squeaky toy. Do you have any evidence to support that?

Mr BURNETT: No, I am just saying to you that this could possibly happen, and if you do not think that could happen then that is your opinion. My opinion is that I believe it could possibly happen.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: With no evidence.

Mr BURNETT: Have you got evidence that you say things all the time? Have you got evidence-based—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I am not the witness.

Mr BURNETT: No, that's right—I am. What I am trying to say is that the code of practice is implementing procedures and things that we have got to do, that have only one thing to do—it is designed to slow down this industry and to gradually regulate us and strangulate us to death so it can no longer survive. That is my belief with the code of practice and the overregulation of what is going on.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Can I clarify with the squeaky toy—the practice is, we are teaching dogs to savage squeaky toys, aren't we? The toys are not for harmless play.

Mr BURNETT: That is right.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: They are for the dog to seize the squeaky toy, shake it, chase it, treat it as something they really want to get stuck into. So the simple point you are making is that a rehomed dog, having been taught these habits, "Here is a squeaky toy in a pram," it may well react the same way.

Mr BURNETT: Exactly.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: It seems perfectly logical.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Could I clarify, then, because there was talk about socialisation with puppies and being given toys as puppies. Now I think what you are talking about is what is used as a substitute for the lure. Or are we talking about—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Yes, that's right. That's how dogs—when they get older, they do not just play with a toy like it's some fluffy thing. They go to savage it.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: But my understanding from the witness was that they were saying that giving the toys to the puppies was what was going to cause later—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: No, no. When they get older and they are taught to savage these squeaky toys—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: So you are fine with giving them toys as a puppy.

Mr BURNETT: We continue doing that all the way through their growing cycle if that is what you want us to do. That is what you are telling us to do. We have to give these dogs—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I'm not telling you anything.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: This is what happens. If you know the industry, this is what happens.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I am asking the question because I think that that was not what the witness was saying. That was talking about socialisation and I am trying to clarify that so that we can understand what is going on.

Mr BURNETT: What I am trying to say is that the socialising of a greyhound should begin after their racing career, not prior to it or before it. That is what I am trying to say. Because what we seem to be doing with these dogs is making them pets before the greyhounds, before they are race dogs. If we want our industry to survive we need to make these dogs race dogs. That is what we do—race our dogs.

The CHAIR: Mr Burnett, thank you very much for your evidence.

Mr BURNETT: Thank you. The other thing I would just like to put on record too is that we as participants are very vulnerable to environmental contamination. As we have mentioned before about positive swabs, with cocaine in this present time with one particular dog. What I would like to say is that I know that if you walk onto a building site now under the CFMEU, you have to have a drug test before you enter that building site. We have got people that work in kennels that touch our dogs—sorry, not touch our dogs. What we do is we put them on the vet table. They are touched by the vet. That dog then is touched again by the same vet to another dog. There are kennel staff that work in the kennels. They are not being tested for any illegal substance use. As trainers, we are so vulnerable to this environmental contamination.

We are so vulnerable. And all we are asking is if there could be a threshold level created for the industry, because it has become such a dangerous—they have improved the testing equipment now to such a minute finding. Our safe environment where we train now, or where we present our dogs, is not subject to the same scrutiny. For example, we empty our dogs after they have raced at Wentworth Park. We have then got to get them locked up in a kennel environment—in the same kennel environment where the thoroughfare is, where everybody is walking in and out. We have to lock them up in a kennel bay. We then have to walk them out to the outside at Wentworth Park at the back of the kennel block, which is open to the public. It is all marked off and says, "This is the swabbing area." So it is identified as the swabbing area. We could easily have people that do not like greyhound racing—it is out there, some people do not like greyhound racing. They could easily contaminate that area.

We are that vulnerable, a dog could just walk across it, could sniff it, could do anything—because they are trying to get urine out of these dogs for a sample—and then be charged with an illegal substance. We need a controlled environment where we do our emptying and swabbing. It needs to be under a scrutiny that is up to the

level of what they do with the testing equipment. It is that minute. As a trainer, we get charged with the presentation rule. We present the dog to the track. Under that rule, you have got no avenue or any way of saying that you never gave that to that dog, other than trying to show that you have not given it to the dog. I know with the cobalt charges that I have had that there is no way that we gave that dog cobalt knowingly. I do not think I will elaborate on this but when we did the testing on my property, we found that 30 grams of dirt on my property would give that dog a positive to cobalt—30 grams.

You get 30 grams of dirt and put it on a scale and see what it is. It is very minimal. But the evidence was produced, scientifically evaluated and 30 grams of dirt—and dogs eat dirt. They look for minerals in the ground. They might not be looking for cobalt but they are looking for a micromineral in the ground. And I have been charged. I pleaded with the industry to help me through this because I was continuing to get positive swabs for cobalt and I never knew where it was coming from. I had no idea where it was coming from because all they were saying to me was—and Michelle Ledger was another one. She told me it that was in the egg yolk that I was giving the dog prior to racing, because cobalt is very high in egg yolk. That was another confusion for me then, so I take the egg yolk out.

Where this cobalt was coming from was clearly not known to even the authorities that were running the industry and making the decisions. They did not know where it was coming from. When we produced the evidence to show them where it was coming from, what did they do? They surrendered. They said, "We cannot defend this." Karamatic was the vet that they were using to run their case on cobalt. Karamatic was in South-East Asia and was not contactable. They could not contact him. He was in South-East Asia and they said, "We surrender. We drop all charges against Amanda Brunton." That is my partner. That is all.

The CHAIR: Mr Burnett, thank you very much, mate.

Mr BURNETT: Thanks for your time.

(The witness withdrew.)

PETER DAVIS, Freelance journalist, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: What is the capacity in which you appear?

Mr DAVIS: I am a freelance journalist and I have had a lifetime of experience in the greyhound industry—former owner/trainer and I would also like to put on the record that I was a former Greyhound Racing NSW [GRNSW] board member for nine months prior to its sacking and the fact that also, in the sense of disclosure, I do contributing work to Greyhound Welfare Integrity Commission [GWIC], GRNSW and *The Greyhound Recorder*.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Would you like to make a short opening statement?

Mr DAVIS: Yes, thank you. Mr Borsak, I have been involved in the greyhound industry all my life. My grandfather had greyhounds in the 1930s and 1940s, lived at Cootamundra and raced primarily in the Riverina. He moved to Auburn in Sydney before I was born and my first recollection of a greyhound was at two or three years of age, when I was put on one of his brood bitch's backs. I did not get involved in greyhound racing again until I was about 20 or 21 years of age and I bought my first greyhound. I have been actively involved ever since. My wife and I live in the Southern Highlands. We have 23 pups, seven retired dogs, six brood bitches, seven dogs that are getting ready for racing, three that have been repatriated after minor injuries to go back to racing, and two border collies. We love our greyhounds. We are passionate about the game. It was like a death in the family when Mike Baird said in the middle of 2016 that greyhound racing was going to cease. We did not know where to turn.

We understood the vast evidence that the *Four Corners* program showed. Everyone who I know in greyhound racing abhors live baiting. It is something that was systemic, to a degree, but not to the extent that everyone did it—but everyone was punished. I understand that I was asked to resign by then-Minister Troy Grant; I did that. Greyhound racing was in the morgue, on the slab. The door had not quite been closed and somehow we survived. Greyhound racing has made massive improvements since, yet the formation of the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission and the need for that separation of powers from GRNSW, as recommended by McHugh and Iemma, has been problematic—absolutely problematic. But I do not blame the individuals at the coalface for that; it is moreover what the Government put in place, and the structure and the nature of how hurried it was, and the funding. We go back to the circa 1996 privatisation of the TAB and the inter-code agreement through the Cameron report.

Mr Borsak, I know in 2013 and 2014 you argued very heavily for its overturning, but no political power in that interim period of some 25 years has had the courage or the will to do too much about it. So we are stuck with this funding model where—let's call it a family where the husband and wife are fighting over whether they want to buy food or they want to go out partying. One aspect of this industry is having to fund the other and it is completely improper. We lose \$26 million a year through wastage, for want of a term, of money going to the other two codes for the improper inter-code agreement, which pegs revenue at 13 per cent of TAB turnover. We have had some, obviously, assistance with point of consumption tax, with tax parity and also with race fields legislation money. It has been a godsend to the greyhound racing industry, but I do not think for one minute we would have been in this position had it been properly funded from its inception.

The fight that goes on at the moment between participants and GWIC, and participants and GRNSW—whether it is grading—is really sad and it should not be going on. The structure is completely wrong. There were missteps at GWIC and it is my view that the Act is even improper, that it does not allow people with industry experience to be working at GWIC. I am firmly of the view that they should be having even a commissioner who has some, for want of a term, skin in the game. The inter-code agreement—as I said, we are not getting that turned over, but there should be someone looking at that to have a review process. That may harm harness racing and it may harm gallop racing, but it is the only fair thing to do. There were rules put in place at GWIC where inspectors arrived at my property—I can talk specifically—and we passed with flying colours. But we were told by an inspector according to the rules that she was working from—and I have no issue with the individual—that the dogs that were digging holes and sleeping in them at night had to be filled in every day.

Now, I have got a dedicated whelping area that is air-conditioned. I have got closed-circuit TV to that whelping area that—I can watch one of my brood bitches here now having pups, right today. We have closed-circuit TV on the whole property. Those dogs that sleep in a hole of a night in the middle of winter when we have frost have a kennel with water and a bed, and it is insulated, and they choose to sleep in the holes. But it was not good enough for the particular inspector on that day for me to say, "What can I do about it?" The same girl, Sarah—she is eight years old now. She has produced us a group one winner. She was a very good race dog. Her teeth aren't flash, by any means, yet her brother Pepe, who is next door—he is eight years old, obviously. His

teeth are beautiful. She won't eat bones; he will. I was told to brush her teeth every day—a completely impractical solution, as far as I am concerned, given the number of dogs we have got.

The CHAIR: Brush her teeth every day?

Mr DAVIS: The dog's teeth, every day.

The CHAIR: You can only but laugh at that, sir.

Mr DAVIS: We were told, Mr Borsak, how to look after our dogs by someone who had, in effect, no knowledge of how we do things. Hopefully that has changed; we have not had an inspection since. But my kennels we measured the other day—we have just spent \$3,000 upgrading them—are 2.9 metres square, brand new kennels. In the new code of practice they are required to be three square metres, which is fine. I have got a 10-year time to correct that and in 10 years time I will not be there. The point being: I do not know how my greyhounds that are in there would know the difference between 2.9 and three metres, 10 square centimetres of difference. The point being: The rules were the rules and they were going to enforce them, as far as I was concerned. There was no flexibility and no practical common sense. Maybe that has changed now—I am not saying it hasn't—but that was, at its outset, the way it was put across to us.

These people were employed in haste. I believe the funding was modelled in haste and there has been no review. Even at its start, the commission was set up and it was funded by GRNSW. No-one wants to hand over money to somebody else and they have got no control of how they spend it. That is why there are instruments within government, if this is a government facility, for Treasury or the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal or whatever department it is to fully assess the funding if it is coming from government, and it must come from government. We need this industry to be the best it can be and while other people might not agree with me, it needs to be a separation of powers. The best practice across the world is that the commercial entity does not impose its will on the integrity or the regulatory side of things. You have only got to look at the Opal Tower situation that happened in 2018. They were opened in August and they were closed in December, all because someone building the facility did not care enough about the structure of the facility.

That may not be a good example as compared for greyhound racing, but it does go to the funding that—we need the people who are at GRNSW, who are doing a really good job. They need to not have to worry about someone tapping them on the shoulder and saying, "I want more." It would be a horrible situation that they have budgets and they have expectations of the industry. They have prize money to pay out. They have animal welfare to look after, to a degree—they have rehoming, is what I mean. I will go to that point. When I was on the board, Mr Borsak—I cannot give up the confidentiality of some of those board matters but, in principle, every welfare thing that we discussed was voted against and recorded by one particular board member. We bought the Wyee property, which was a very good decision, but she voted against that. They are the fights that we had in a commercial sense five years ago. That cannot happen again.

I would fear that if GRNSW got that back—I mean, the two people on the GRNSW board who are industry participants are really good people. They understand the game. They have got skin in the game. They get it. And we are heading in the right direction. With the right structure here, Greyhound Racing NSW will not be the best in the country, it will be the best in the world. But it needs that separation of powers. It needs to be funded properly, whether it is through point of consumption tax, and I understand there is talk with Treasury that that may happen, but I am not privy to a time line.

But, as it turns out, we have got national rules. People have spoken about thresholds of drugs, and I fully support that. It is completely improper that a pilot, or nurse, or doctor, or ambulance officer would have a threshold for their work practice. Some of these people, this is their livelihood and it is taken away from them for an indiscretion that was not of their doing. And if someone had, heaven forbid, given a dog cocaine, it would not return two to the power of minus nine on a test; it would blow the machine apart. The problem is not with GWIC, it is the national rules with Greyhounds Australasia [GA], and I have great issue with GA. They are a law unto themselves, and as a representative body they say, "I can't do anything. It is up to the States." You go to the States and they say, "I can't do anything. It is up to the national body." It is this roundabout of decision-making that never comes to a conclusion. That needs to stop.

GRNSW and GWIC are presently funding GA by a proportion of their representation. It is a little bit like an upper House seat or a Senate seat; it is proportionate representation. If there are more greyhounds in New South Wales and more in Victoria, if there is a commonsense voice in South Australia, they will not be heard because of the numbers. I am firmly of the view that GA, via GRNSW and GWIC, needs to be wound down. The rules that we run by need to have thresholds, they need to protect people. They also need to prosecute the guilty. This cannot be a lawless land, and we do not want it to be a lawless land. Without rules, we have anarchy. I am not going to drive down the main street of Goulburn at 120 kilometres an hour and think I can get away with it.

Everyone needs to know there needs to be fair rules, and there needs to be fair penalties. There needs to be due process to appeal those penalties.

If I get back to the inspection process. I have here a couple of products which are over-the-counter products and they are only for demonstration purposes. You have a photo of them. This product here is DMSO, which is a liniment sort of thing that you rub on. This one is a bone radiol, the same sort of thing. But I combine them together and put it on with a toothbrush. Unfortunately, with that not being in that container I am breaking the rules. It is a complete outrage. They would take that off me: \$200 a litre, \$100 a litre. Here is a bag, a drip, sodium chloride. We have it at home as an emergency situation. With that sodium chloride, if it is 45 degrees on a Sunday afternoon, and we live rurally, and a dog is in distress and needs to have that treatment, we will do that.

But I was at a skills impact meeting some 18 months ago. I was one of three people in the greyhound industry invited to attend this to have a registered training organisation, so that the TAFE course certificate IV could be introduced into greyhound racing. That is a very good thing. People have got a conduit to become educated. There were only three people there from greyhound racing, there were six vets and there were government boffins, the rest of them. The skills impact for people was terrific. But one vet, I asked about this process that we have. That vet said to me, "Is that best practice? Or best price?" My wife nearly jumped across the table and got violent. Because we have had situations where we have had to treat a dog and it would have died otherwise. I see nothing wrong with having a \$6.95 bag of sodium chloride with the proper training for a non-veterinary procedure that a nurse does, to do that. But they want to stop us doing it because it might impact on their profitability. That is appalling. I have got concepts for you. I do not want to come here and shoot bullets and just gun people down. There are ways to fix this, ways to make it better, but it needs to be properly funded.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you very much for a very interesting and useful opening statement. I think you have brought us back to where we began at the first regional hearing, when we heard about the rules being necessary, but it is the attitude and the way of their implementation that seems to be at issue. When you first started talking, you spoke about live baiting and that it was systemic to a degree, but not universal. Do you mean by that that everybody knew it was a problem within the industry? What do you mean by systemic to a degree?

Mr DAVIS: I think the convention was that it was going on from the year dot. It was just something that people did not recognise as—people might have thought it was necessary, and it is not, Ms Boyd, it is absolutely not. That culture, is what I am saying, needed to change. It has got that wake-up call and there have been no live baiting issues. What we saw on *Four Corners* was not manufactured. It was real vision. But, I travelled—and I have given you some documents—to Ba Ria in Vietnam and that vision was manufactured. I have got a government document there that said that this dog was euthanised basically by a Dr Ngo who was paid by an Australian organisation to go there—he was a Vietnam national—to do this. I travelled there three times. I saw the plot, but the vision showed that this dog was poisoned to death, and that is common practice.

It was also purported they were Australian dogs. They were sent to Vietnam 25 years ago. They were Vietnamese-bred greyhounds. It is no different to you being held accountable, maybe some kaiser in Germany, for a German shepherd that is mistreated here. That is the relevance. But unfortunately the *Four Corners* program went forward and blamed every greyhound person for exporting a dog overseas, and this is what happens to it. And it was a lie. The same situation. I have been to Beijing. I have seen greyhounds exported from Australia to Beijing. And they crucified people for exporting dogs for big amounts of money and they said they were going to meat markets. A farce. If you were going to export a greyhound and it weights, let us say 26 kilograms, you would not be doing it to eat it. There is not enough money in it—if that is as cruel as it wants to sound. But the point was that they stopped it. There was no culture of investigating what is going on in China.

Fortunately, a good organisation called Greyhound Data have formulated a stud book in China and they are doing great things to make it better over there. But we cannot impose our will on any foreign government. So we have just got to make it the best we can be. I have been to Ireland, I have been to England, I have been to New Zealand. I have seen it all. I am lucky, I have travelled the world with greyhound racing. And this is the best place in the world animal welfare wise, it is best prize money wise, it is best practice wise, and unfortunately there are people who want to tear this down—whether it is within government, as the situation with the Baird Administration back in 2015-16. No-one expected it would be closed. I do not necessarily agree with everything that Barnaby Joyce says. But he came on television not long after the ban was announced and said, "You don't throw things out. You fix them." And this can be fixed, and it has been fixed, and GRNSW have done a great job, and GWIC are getting there.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I think the evidence shows very clearly that there are these sorts of systemic issues in GWIC that the participants have issues with. We have heard very clearly and convincingly that the industry does not feel like it has been included and taken along with GWIC on this kind of reform that it is doing.

What do you think GWIC needs to do now, other than getting independent funding, to reduce the conflict with the industry and to, I guess, go forward?

Mr DAVIS: Fortunately, they have recently inducted a panel called the Greyhound Racing Industry Advisory Panel of sorts. I do not know the acronym that they use specifically, but I know some people on that and they speak very highly of what has gone on. Steve Griffin has instituted that. What I understand—and I have dealt closely with Steve on a few issues, I have dealt closely with Michelle Ledger, I have dealt closely with Matthew Tutt, and Wade Birch more recently, the new chief steward. I do not do a lot of work for them. But one document I provided to the members was an assessment I did of all whelpings of 2016-17. I also provided you a document from Greyhounds Australasia, which is on the record the smoking gun that was McHugh and the 17,000 dogs that died in his report. It was a complete and utter fabrication. It is on the record. It is in the special commission report. It was not redacted and it needs to be.

McHugh got that document up by means of the email that I have supplied to you today that has notes on it. Those notes say, "Where the bloody hell did you get these numbers from? They are a fabrication." The then CEO of GA says, "Oh, it is just a shot across the bow," like ho, ho, ho. And look what happened, it went nuclear. That document is real, Ms Boyd. It is what was the start of this whole mess. As it turns out, the Excel document I provided you was the analysis of breeding for the whole year for one year across the country of every dog that raced. There were 1,161 litters whelped. The metrics on the Excel document show that, I think, roughly 77 per cent of all the greyhounds whelped in that year—and I will stand corrected on that—won races. Not raced, they actually won races.

That is an amazing statistic. From 1,161 litters at an average of 6 ½, my year 12 Ms Rose Bush mathematics makes it something like 7,200 pups. I do not know how we ever got to 17,000 dogs dying a year. That is further evidence towards the harm that McHugh did to greyhound racing. I have a personal view of his appointment that I will share with you later. I would not want to put it on the record now. How he even got there troubles me, but that is completely another story. We have a responsibility to community to rebuild their trust. I would like to think that is done. When you come to the code of conduct and the code of practice I cannot legitimately, by the rules at the moment, kick a leather soccer ball in my backyard with my pups because that is live baiting. I cannot walk into the straight track of my house, which is 300 metres long, eating a chicken wing or a lamb cutlet and give it to the dog because that is live baiting.

The rules are the rules, and I understand that they have got to enforce them, but the rules are wrong. GRNSW and GWIC need to apply some common sense to everything they do. There is not a lot of common sense in some of the rules we are bound to abide by. Over the last couple of days of hearings I have listened to, people have been aggrieved because they have broken rules. I feel sorry for them, I really do. I do not know whether they are innocent or guilty; I make no comment on that. The threshold situation with the dog with the feature race now we are standing by has probably happened many times. But because of this dog's stature, his notoriety, it has now become an issue and it should not have got to that.

The unfortunate part about GA is that they are steadfastly refusing to have any threshold for a permanently banned substance. When the community expectation is that a pilot, a policeman, a politician or whoever the case may be can go to a kebab shop and buy a \$10 kebab and get change and that there be a drug on that that is illegal, I cannot be held responsible for that. I have not got the answer, but the discussion needs to be had. I feel GWIC is important—maybe GWIC is not important. Whoever the separation of powers is—and that is what we need—they need to be the best they can be.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Mr Davis, can I clarify: What is your relationship with GWIC?

Mr DAVIS: I do some contract work for GWIC, I do some contract work for GRNSW and I write for *The Greyhound Recorder*.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: What is the nature of the contract work?

Mr DAVIS: It is ad hoc. I have not done something for a few months now. I have done one thing this year, that is all.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: No, I mean writing things for them—promotional things. You are listed as a journalist on our hearing schedule.

Mr DAVIS: I have worked for Fairfax media for 23 years. I finished there in September 2019. Before that I was the editor of the form guides for New South Wales for 12 years. At that stage there were tracks from Albury to Broken Hill to Narrabri to Tweed Heads. A lot of those are closed now, as you are probably aware. I do analysis of that breeding thing. I do not formulate policy. They just ask me, "What do you think of this?" and I put together some concepts. I have written a paper about a mobile veterinary clinic that I think we need to have. If

you are living, let's say, rurally and you have a problem with a dog or you want some immunisation, the mobile vet clinic from GWIC will come at an affordable price at an appropriate time. Just different aspects of my engagement in the game. They call on me for ideas, I suppose. That is about it.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Every now and again GWIC will ring you up and say, "Can you write us a briefing note on a mobile vet clinic idea?"

Mr DAVIS: They asked me at the time. The genesis of that was how can we do this better? I gave them a number of—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: But GWIC has all these vets, all these highly paid executives. Why are they ringing you up to do this work? Have they not got the capacity internally without paying you?

Mr DAVIS: I would say that is a fair call, they have not got the capacity internally. That is the problem with the structure.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: They have a chief vet there, who I imagine is on hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, and other vets and they have asked you to write a paper about a mobile vet clinic.

Mr DAVIS: That was just a concept I came up with. They did not ask me to write about that.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: But they paid you for writing about a mobile vet clinic and they have vets galore.

Mr DAVIS: Yes. It was just an idea.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: How does this work? You have an idea and you submit them a paper and then they say, "That's good, we'll pay you some money."

Mr DAVIS: No, no. It was just—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: What is your relationship with GWIC? Are you on a retainer for bright ideas?

Mr DAVIS: No.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: How does it work?

Mr DAVIS: I did one previously about the capacity of stewards and the viewing of races. If you look at a race as a layperson, you would probably see something different to what I would.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I am sorry, Mr Davis, that is not answering my question. I am trying to establish what your financial relationship with GWIC is. Is it contract?

Mr DAVIS: No.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Is it ad hoc? Is it a retainer?

Mr DAVIS: It is ad hoc.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: How does that work? You ring them up and say, "I've got this idea I'd like to submit," and then they pay you for it? Is that what GWIC does?

Mr DAVIS: No, they do not do that whatsoever.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: How does it work?

Mr DAVIS: It is an ad hoc situation. It might be through a meeting, it might be through a conversation, it might be through an incident, I do not know. It is completely random.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: You submit something and then they pay you for it?

Mr DAVIS: No. We discuss it first and then concepts are—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Right. Who do you discuss this with?

Mr DAVIS: Whoever the relevant department would be, whether it be Matt Tutt, who was the integrity—

The CHAIR: I am going to have to interrupt because we have run out of time. Thank you very much, Mr Davis, for coming.

Mr DAVIS: Okay. Could I just add something? I must say, the last speaker went 20 minutes over. I do not know whether I have got—

The CHAIR: I have the next one coming at three o'clock and we were supposed to have a break six or seven minutes ago. We actually started early on the other one. If you have any more you want to submit to the Committee, you are welcome to submit it in writing if you want.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Can I suggest we do that? Can I suggest that we get Mr Davis to put a written submission for the stuff that is missing?

The CHAIR: Yes, that is fine.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: He can take that on notice.

The CHAIR: You can take that on notice if you want.

(The witness withdrew.)

(Short adjournment)

DEREK MAJOR, Veterinary Consultant, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Thank you very much for coming, Dr Major. Would you like to make a short opening statement?

Dr MAJOR: Yes, Mr Chair. A little bit of background about myself: I have been a veterinary practitioner for a little more than 40 years. Initially my practice included some greyhound work, but more recently I have specialised in equine veterinary practice. I have been fairly embedded in the subject of cobalt in racing since 2014. At this point I am the co-author and research publisher for three peer reviewed published scientific papers on cobalt in horses. I have done excretion studies and so on in preparing these papers. I am also the co-worker in a PhD project, which has been accepted by my colleague Dr Ross Wenzel—or about to be Dr Ross Wenzel—who is a trace metal specialist at Royal North Shore Hospital. I should say I have no particularly strong feelings either way about greyhound racing. I am not an active participant in the industry. I have never been to a dog race. I am not a gambler at all. I cannot even remember when I last had a sweep on a Melbourne Cup, so that is my background. I am a scientist. I am very passionate about the issue of drugs in all sports.

The CHAIR: I am a little bit worried about you if you do not actually get into a sweep on Melbourne Cup day.

Dr MAJOR: A sweep? Too busy. Sitting on the sideline of this, obviously probably the reason everybody is here today is to patch up from the fact that the greyhound industry has some bad eggs. I abhor any animal cruelty. I do not want any thought that I support any form of animal cruelty. I will say that the greyhound fraternity to which I have been exposed are very nice, caring people. I love the greyhound dogs. They are lovely dogs. We see more and more of them rehomed and so on. I loved working with them as a veterinarian. They are lovely dogs.

It is often alluded to as poor man's racing. It clearly provides a lot of social fabric for a segment of our community. They love greyhound racing and they do a good job of it, in my observation. My comments are very much directed at cobalt. That is, in fact, why I was asked to appear here. Ken Burnett, who presented this morning, was one of the catalysts for me being here. I listened to his evidence and he outlines a passion that I have had all my career and which I have been able to work on a little more intensively since I have retired from my practice, and that is I do feel the trainer is often left very unsupported and I feel often times a trainer has gone by the wayside through no fault of their own, simply because they cannot defend their position.

I do not want you to think that I am keeping murderers out of jail. The people that I work alongside of are people that I genuinely believe have got a valid case. Ken is a good example. I have only known Ken through cobalt, obviously. Other misdemeanours probably reflect his frustration, but that is not my expertise. Ken has had four positives to cobalt in his greyhound dogs over time—himself and his partner. He came to me in tears, literally, out of frustration about his last one. He thought, "I have done everything I know about. I know you have been working with the horses and a few greyhound cases. Can you help me?" I think he painted a picture of a case that had his partner move out of home and so on and his livelihood was completely disrupted for a significant period of time and he ended up with a no contest at the Racing Appeals Tribunal, which I attended.

Some people think trainers do silly things. I do not know of any trainer in my 40 years of experience that has repeated the same stupid mistake four times. In general in the industry once a substance is declared to be prohibited—be it caffeine or whatever—its use rapidly diminishes. This does not happen in cobalt. Since the first cases arrived in Australia in 2013, they have been appearing all over Australia in all codes ever since. That to me rings an alarm bell that something is wrong. Trainers are not that silly as to keep infringing even if they were infringing. Do not forget prohibited substances in horses is a movable feast; it is not all amphetamines and so on. But certainly once a substance is declared to be prohibited and there is clearly testing available—with the exception of cobalt—the experience is that usage rapidly diminishes.

Harness Racing New South Wales is where the problem surfaced in Australia. Clearly some trainers were very ill advised and stupid apart from being illegal. They experimented with cobalt, particularly in North America in harness racing, and Harness Racing New South Wales was the first jurisdiction in the world to regulate cobalt. I believe they went in a little ahead of the game and without good science behind them and I think, importantly, with no significant stakeholder consultation. This has been raised earlier today. They just went and did it. I really think the racing industry and I think the greyhound industry has been trying to dig itself out of the cobalt issue ever since. I do not know—and I may not be party to it—what provoked concern in the greyhound industry about cobalt regulation. It just seemed to closely follow on the heels of regulation in the horse industry and perhaps people thought it was a good idea. I question this. I think the greyhound is such a different organism from a horse. It is a carnivore.

Cobalt, for those who do not know, is an essential trace element. You die without cobalt. It is a form of the vitamin B-12. It is not some crazy substance. I was nearly going to write my fourth publication on kryptonite and cobalt and the horse industry. It has acquired mystical proportions. It is simply an essential trace element just like selenium, zinc, copper and iron. It is in Vegemite, it is in cornflakes and it is in the ground. It is nothing that special, but it has certainly gained mystical proportions in the racing industries. My understanding is that Greyhound Racing NSW commissioned an early survey. This in itself raises my eyebrows. They tested 762 greyhounds and in these the highest recorded level—this is when there was no regulation. There was nothing. Nobody said anything about cobalt, so you could give cobalt. The highest urine level among those 762 was 620. Now, that really does not rate for a urinary cobalt—620 is microgram per litre, but it is actually not very much.

It is a different picture in harness racing where clearly there were people contravening the rules. They had some massive levels. I think a guy called Darren Smith had up to 6,000 in some of his horses. I do not think it helped his horses but nevertheless he is facing a 15-year ban from racing. At the time they did the survey, Dr Karamatic did an administration study where he actually gave label doses of a registered preparation of a vitamins and minerals [VAM] tonic to dogs. He reported—it is in the public domain—that one single dose of VAM can give a level in the urine of 6,523. If you can get that just following the directions, and the highest level they found in a survey of 762 greyhounds racing was 620, that does not say to me that there is much illicit cobalt administration.

Professor Hibbert is a very well-esteemed scientific consultant at the University of New South Wales. He is an OBE and so on. He is always pointed out as being the reference point. He analysed the survey and he actually noted in his report that the only sure way of obtaining unambiguous statistics is to know from the administration history of sample animals and to provide data from a clean population. I do not know how you get a clean population when it is in cornflakes, Vegemite and soil. But all Professor Hibbert really found was that some dogs had lower cobalts and some had middle sized cobalts and some had high cobalts.

He specifically said with greyhounds in his curve there is no real break that it could indicate two populations—in other words, a cheating one from the norm. It is for that reason that I do not quite know why it was deemed necessarily appropriate to put in that threshold of 100. Having said that, I think urine is completely the wrong test medium for testing for cobalt abuse in horses and dogs. Blood is the correct test medium because that is testing actual exposure to cobalt. Urine is just what has fallen into the urine on the day you test. That is a bigger topic. You can read my papers on that if you like. It is the wrong medium.

A trainer that I have worked for in Queensland, Mr Neil Scott, and I have assembled a database of cobalt positives around Australia. As of the beginning of this year, we have actually documented around Australia 287 trainers, 396 animals across the codes, 125 greyhound trainers and 151 animals with cobalt positives. Every single one of those trainers has had their lives turned upside down. My contention is that the very vast majority of them have done nothing wrong. My overwhelming experience—and this has just become something of a passion of mine.

I have no vested interest in this. Most of the people I do not even charge money to talk to them. I do not know how many trainers, both horse trainers and greyhound trainers, have rung me, because I have become a bit of a go-to person, and from every single one I get the same impression—they are broken. I have been a veterinarian for 40 years. I am not naive to drug infringements, but the cobalt experience is something different again. Every single one of them is trying to impress upon me that they have done nothing wrong. They are broken by it, they are mystified and most of them do not even know how to spell cobalt. That is different from most other drug issues I have faced in my career.

Welfare is thrown up as one of the reasons to regulate cobalt. I have to say that we are not talking welfare when we are talking about dogs that might have 100, 200 or 300 micrograms per litre of cobalt in their urine, apart from the fact I say that it is the wrong test and if you want to know how much they have had you should be looking at blood, not urine. There are now some studies out there in horses. I do not know that there are any published studies in dogs. In horses there are now four published studies at least, which demonstrate that even at quite extreme levels, the proposed effects of cobalt do not happen. That says erythropoietin, red cell count, markers of oxidative stress, these things just do not happen. In one of those studies they even achieved cobalt levels in the urine of 96,000—a little bit different from 100; and plasma levels of 300—the international thresholds for horses in plasma is 25. Even at very, very high levels the proposed effects do not happen.

In fact, in some of the cases the research upon which the cobalt regulation in dogs has been proposed was done in 1937 by a gentleman called Davis. There is also another paper in 1937 which disagreed with his results—they were uncontrolled trials and they were poorly measured. There is really, to my knowledge, very little scientific support for the fact that cobalt does anything. I heard it mentioned earlier today that it might help long-distance horses. I know where that came from; I think that is even a little bit of an extrapolation. I do not

believe that cobalt has the effects that were proposed. Nevertheless, trainers did try to use it. I am not disputing that it had to be regulated. I just think we have got the wrong test and I suspect that a lot of innocent trainers have had their livelihoods turned upside down.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Could I just interrupt you there to ask questions to try and break this down? At the moment we have cobalt as a prohibited substance because it is in the Greyhounds Australasia rules, is that correct? Or is that set by—

Dr MAJOR: It is in the Greyhounds Australasia rules. I think they changed that. At one point it used to say that cobalt is exempted if it was under 100. That was a Greyhounds Australasia rule.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Yes.

Dr MAJOR: Do not forget, I am not particularly across the greyhound industry. I am sure that is in the rule. I think they have swivelled that around now to say that cobalt over 100 is a prohibited substance.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: They set the threshold as well?

Dr MAJOR: It has got a threshold.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Okay. I have got two questions out of that. The first is: If there had to be a threshold, what do you think it should be?

Dr MAJOR: Having said that I think it is the wrong test medium, I do not think there is an appropriate threshold at all. I guess, being pragmatic about it, having gone to where we have gone I would probably say, "Let's look at dogs that have got over 100 in their urine and flag them for further investigation." I do not think I would take the trainer's livelihood away and let him fight to get it back again. It might be preferable to go and look at their husbandry and so on, given that it is not a welfare issue and it is not a performance issue. These are the two key things about a drug testing program: welfare is number one, and number two is that it either improves or diminishes their performance. Seeing as though it is none of those things in the ballpark we are talking about, you could leave it there just to make sure people did not do silly things—because nothing interests people more than banning something—but do not take away their livelihoods on it.

Two dogs could actually have had the same exposure to cobalt, for example, and one could be 10 and one could be 100 simply on the basis of how concentrated their urine was—that means, whether they have had a drink of water or not. They proposed a human threshold nearly 10 years ago. I do not believe they have implemented it yet and I do not believe there is any suggestion that they will. But one of the key points about that—and there is a paper by Krug in 2014 saying, "If we did it, we would have to correct it for urine concentration." That would be a starting point. But it is not a good reflection about the amount of cobalt the dog has been exposed to. It is just what was in the dog, not what is in the dog. If you want to know whether someone has dosed it with cobalt you need to measure blood. It accumulates in blood, and once it is in blood it stays there for the life of the red cell, which is 120 days.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: When that is then implemented—when the swabs are taken at the tracks—is there a difference in the approach of GWIC versus what happens in Victoria, or because they are subject to the same threshold from Greyhounds Australasia do you know if they just apply it the same?

Dr MAJOR: You would have to ask somebody else that question.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Right, okay.

Dr MAJOR: I think we have got the same threshold across Australia, I think it is 100 and I think it is applied the same way. Just by way of contrast, in North America they have gone with a blood threshold of 25 and the problem is gone. The problem has disappeared. The urine threshold just has not really helped us in Australia. I think it is the wrong—in horseracing there is either/or. My observation is when someone has had a blood over the threshold they have given them too much cobalt.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: From what you are saying, say they did the 100 based on the urine and, as you say, that should be a warning or a flag: Would you then do a blood test? Is that what you would recommend?

Dr MAJOR: Mr Burnett is behind me. When we examined his dogs—unfortunately, the way the regulatory process works these positives very often get called way after the event when the trail has gone cold. That is a source of great frustration to me. But when I looked at Mr Burnett's dogs they had blood cobalts that were half, one, two—they were not dogs that had been doped with cobalt. They were dogs that on the day produced urine over the threshold. The illusion is that nearly every dog has got a cobalt level of 10, and so if you get one that is 200 then, "Oh, he must have cheated." But, in fact, if you look at the population studies they are all exponential curves, so they are log-normal. In fact, there is no clear break; there is a whole bunch, and wherever

you set the threshold there is going to be a certain number pop over the threshold. I think that threshold is a perfect storm of exposure to cobalt from all sources—environmental, feed, supplements—plus the dog's individual metabolism, plus the urine concentration on the day. If you add all those things up together you get a high level.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: One final question before other members have a go: For the purposes of our records, is it your opinion that there is absolutely no evidence that cobalt increases the performance or improves the performance of greyhounds?

Dr MAJOR: No evidence.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Thank you, Dr Major, for your evidence here today. It is an interesting question because GWIC obviously has two functions: the animal welfare side and then the policing integrity side for the industry. Generally, how much cheating do you think there is in the greyhound industry?

Dr MAJOR: I am not in a position to comment. I am not embedded in the industry enough to know. I do quite a lot of medication control; I was Australia's Fédération Equestre Internationale [FEI] head veterinarian at one stage. I do a lot of medication control work. I do not think I am alone in saying that nearly all the infringements are small infringements of therapeutic drugs. They are not things like, for example, you might remember years ago that "elephant juice" was used. There is no doubt about it: It is illicit. There is no good reason to have elephant juice or—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: In racehorses.

Dr MAJOR: —M99 etorphine in a racehorse.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: But not on greyhounds.

The Hon. LOU AMATO: Sorry, what is "elephant juice"?

Dr MAJOR: But they are very, very unusual findings. They are very unusual.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: You do not think there is any systemic—

Dr MAJOR: In the world I live in, in general, trace positives—that has been alluded to through today. We use the word "threshold" but I would suggest "reporting limit" is probably a better word. Thoroughbred racing and harness racing are following them; I am not sure the greyhounds are. They have got screening limits for a small package of therapeutic drugs which, it is acknowledged, are useful and necessary for welfare and which will not be called a positive if they are less than a certain amount. This is absolutely necessary in this current day and age where they have got millions of times the sensitivity in picking up small amounts of drugs.

They can pick up picograms. A picogram is one-thousandth of a nanogram, which is one-thousandth of a milligram, which is one-thousandth of a microgram. They are picking up tiny amounts of drugs. I think the earlier mention of cocaine was very valid. I have been involved with one horse case and one dog case where they are finding in the order of one nanogram per millilitre in urine and I think it is probably dropping out of the air. It is of no consequence as far as welfare, performance or anything. I have looked up a research paper where something like 60 per cent of American dollar bills have got cocaine in them. That is just environmental.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Sure. But in your memory, then, greyhounds have not had the systemic doping patterns that, say, horseracing has had?

Dr MAJOR: I am not sufficiently across the spectrum of—and I do not know whether it is widely published. I would like to know. I think one of the things that I would recommend and would like to see is more transparency in all these things. For example, the Greyhound Breeders, Owners and Trainers Association asked me to address them a while ago because they were concerned about this. My recommendation was to have the then 17,000 samples which Greyhounds Australasia analysed and found the threshold to be correct—I would have liked to have had an independent statistician examine that.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: The other in-built integrity measure for greyhounds is, unlike jockeys in horseracing and drivers in the trots, there is nothing on the back of the greyhounds so it is always going to be an honestly run event, as opposed to horseracing where, when you do your money—

Dr MAJOR: You have got to ask the punters that.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: —every jockey has done the crooked thing and on go the allegations.

Dr MAJOR: That is right.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: So it seems to me at least the running on the track is honest because there is no-one on their back. There is no human involved. I have backed many losers, as you all know.

Dr MAJOR: I think a lot of the analysts—and I have been to a lot of inquiries—seem to think it is analysts versus trainers all the time and I just do not think it is. I think the analysts are very good at doing what they are doing and I just do not think there is a whole lot of—I am a veterinarian. I do not know anything in my repertoire that makes them run faster.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: There is a saying in sport that if it looks too good to be true, it probably is.

Dr MAJOR: It probably is, yes.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: You see this with athlete doping and so forth. In horseracing there was a classic example of a trainer at Ballarat, Darren Weir, who was your average provincial trainer there at Ballarat year after year. Then all of a sudden, springing out of the ground, he is training group one winners after group one winners at Flemington and everyone is thinking, "Wow, you'd better get on the Darren Weir horse." Then inevitably, of course, years later he comes a cropper with a whole series of integrity charges and now he is out of the industry. Has there ever been anything like that with greyhound trainers? I cannot think of a greyhound trainer who all of a sudden went from training winners at Nowra to group one winners at Wentworth Park?

Dr MAJOR: You are asking the wrong person that because I have not got the numbers and I do not follow the sport enough. I would be surprised if there was.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: No, I do not know of one.

Dr MAJOR: I think that if there was any pharmaceutical that would do that, the analysts are very much across it. Doping in animals is just an interesting anecdote. It started centuries ago when they used to inject a bit of horse urine under a mouse's skin and if the mouse's tail went up in the air it had opiates. It is a real test. But they are much more sophisticated than that now. I just do not believe that there are pharmaceuticals around that escape the analysts these days.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: It is probably true that greyhounds are the cleanest of the three racing codes but the most policed. That seems to be the case.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: As a layman, and as a busted up old shearer, can you just explain to me, what happens if—you said cobalt is a bit like vitamin B. It comes out of the soil—vegemite. What happens if you have too much cobalt in your system?

Dr MAJOR: As I alluded to earlier on, it has got to be a lot before it is too much. The trials they did in horses to determine basically the acute toxicity if you like—they were giving up to 2,000 milligrams per horse of cobalt chloride. Dr Karamatic was giving about a tenth of a milligram. So that is 20,000 times as much. That is a whole lot. It is still not very much. If you read the reports, the horses were dizzy and uncomfortable and so on when they gave it, which happens when you give just about everything at that extreme over-dosage. But there has been no post-mortem lesions or syndrome reported from cobalt toxicity. Cobalt is in the form of cyanocobalamin. It is another name for vitamin B12. It is essential to life; you have to have it. Vitamin B12 is just regarded as being non-toxic. Once you have got enough B12, it is a cofactor in some chemical reactions. You need trace amounts. More is not better. You cannot give more and more, and make more and more red cells. It does its job and then that is all it does.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: You are citing Dr Karamatic.

Dr MAJOR: I believe he is a leading authority greyhound regulatory veterinary authority. I think he works for Racing Victoria and probably consults to greyhound Australia, I think.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: My last line of questioning is actually about the testing regime that is put in place by Greyhound Racing NSW. I think in response to Abigail's questions, you said that if there is a positive test from a urine sample, a better way of doing this would be a flag and then a subsequent blood test within a period of time to ascertain levels.

Dr MAJOR: In horses I would say abandon the urine test for cobalt. It is the wrong medium. I can understand with greyhound dogs it is a little trickier getting blood tests. It is not so routine to do. But I think you have got to acknowledge that, first of all, it does not do anything and, secondly, it is not a welfare issue. You have to just keep your eye on it. We have set this in place now. I do not think you can throw it away. I think that, in fact, the way we react generally to positives needs some review. I do feel for the poor trainer that basically as soon as there is a positive—this is the way the rules are structured rather than anything else. The rules say, and I have read the greyhound Australia rules, if the animal is reported positive—so it is very much in the lap of the analyst what they call a positive and at what level. If they call a positive, they tell the stewards. The stewards must take

the race off and must hold an inquiry. The inquiry is, in effect, a prosecution with very, very rare exceptions. Stewards do not ever say no case to answer.

What I have always advocated was a scientific review panel, something that can sit between a positive and a conviction that just has a good look and reports to the stewards about whether this is a significant finding and so on, because the current structure does not allow for that. Time and again I hear stewards and, in fact, tribunal Chairs and so on saying, "The rules don't give me scope to consider quantity." The rules do not talk about that sort of thing. They do not tell you how to test. They are just rules of racing. But that is always the retort: "The rules do not give us the scope to consider level." Trainers are, first of all, losing the race, which as Mr Burnett said might be a \$100,000 race but, secondly, their livelihood. Ridiculously, they can be picogram levels now.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: The integrity around that testing process is interesting. I gather you have had more experience with the thoroughbreds—with horses in the equine area—than you have had with the dogs.

Dr MAJOR: That is right. I am only just a helper in the greyhound industry; I am not a participant.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: But even with the information you have garnered from working on Mr Burnett's case, do you think there needs to be enhanced integrity around the process that is undertaken at the greyhounds with regards to testing?

Dr MAJOR: Integrity around the process?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes.

Dr MAJOR: It depends. What is integrity? I think the chain of custody and the collection—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes, all that.

Dr MAJOR: I think they are done well because they are under pretty close scrutiny during inquiries. I have seen lots of inquiries. I think, again, Mr Burnett mentioned and it has been put to me by others as well but, if they have got to go out and collect pee from a greyhound that has been in a public area and they are going to find one nanogram per mil of cocaine in the urine pot—I think there are two cases I know where I think the cocaine fell out of the environment. It was never in the dog. One was a dog; one was a horse.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That is essentially what I am asking—that process.

Dr MAJOR: CCTV—somebody mentioned that. I think that is pretty much a must in this day and age with the sort of litigation and regulation we have got. You need to have some visual record of what is happening and, at the high level horse events, that happens. But that does not make any difference. If they are in a country meeting and they infringe, they are still in just as much trouble and they do not have CCTV there. I think the actual collection process is fairly robust but I think the way that it is managed and interpreted and dealt with needs to be seen a bit differently. My advice to the greyhound industry would be that you have put this threshold here now. Do not just suddenly take it away or let the cat among the pigeons, but just think a bit differently about how you manage it and manage the trainers.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: That is why I was asking about how Victoria does it, because I like your idea of having that interim body and it ties in with one of the first witnesses that we heard that was saying that it really depends on the weight of the dog and whatever to work out whether or not there is actually a problem here.

Dr MAJOR: It is a sensible finding.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Could I just check with you, I asked you before if cobalt could enhance performance. Can too much cobalt decrease performance or slow a dog down?

Dr MAJOR: That was thrown up at one inquiry and I thought, "Oh, really?" Yes, but I have even compared cobalt, saltwater and beer. You could use any of them in the same role. But you would have to put a lot of cobalt in.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: It would have to be a lot.

Dr MAJOR: You would have to intoxicate the horse with cobalt. Even that is arguable. My colleague Ross Wenzel measures cobalt in people mainly for two reasons. One is people have got cobalt and cobalt hip implants because that is an issue. The other is people that work in cobalt mines and cobalt factories and so on for occupational exposure. You have got to have a lot of cobalt. There is an argument about what is a toxic level of cobalt. They have only ever described, to my knowledge, one really convincing cobalt toxicity study and that was called "beer-drinkers' cardiomyopathy". That was where they were putting cobalt into beer to make it frothy. I think the jury is still out about whether they died of the alcohol or the cobalt. But really there is very little documented toxicity for cobalt. Cobalt chloride, sodium chloride, potassium chloride—it is just a canine. It is an

essential trace element. A lot of the mystique and aura around cobalt you could equally well put on zinc or selenium. Selenium is a lot more toxic, for example, than cobalt and there is no regulation of selenium in the racing industry. I should not say that because they will probably think of it now.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Yes, good tip.

The Hon. LOU AMATO: Just one question: What is elephant juice?

Dr MAJOR: M99. It is etorphine. It is an extremely potent narcotic like heroin. It is called elephant juice because it is so potent they use it to anaesthetise elephants, because a very small amount goes in a needle. Narcotics were definitely shown to be performance enhancing. They are one of the few substances that ever have, but they are readily detected by modern medical methods. Historically, they were one of the first things—this is going back to about the eighteenth century—that they used to dope racehorses, apparently.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you very much, Dr Major. That has been very informative. You did not take anything on notice and we had no documents handed up. Nothing like that. You are free to go.

Dr MAJOR: I have one little concluding remark. I think I have covered most of what I wanted to say in that regard, but the idea of a scientific review panel—I have not got a well-developed model here, but I work in a lot of horse sports, not just the two racing codes but showjumping, eventing, dressage and show horse and all sorts of things. Every single one of them—and even racing—the different States have got different jurisdictions and different ways of managing it. So it does my head in every time I get one of these matters trying to think under what rules, and also they change over time.

I am sure you will be aware that in humans there is a thing called the World Anti-Doping Agency and there is the Australian Sports Drugs Agency. Now, they are the same people that come in to my horse riders in equestrian as do the rugby league and the swimming and so on, and they are at arm's length of the body. This was alluded to a little bit this morning. The way it is now, it is very adversarial. As soon as there is a positive, there is a team over there trying to rub the trainer out and the trainer fighting for their life. Most of them just do not have the knowledge, the finances, the means to fight it. As I say, I am not trying to keep murderers out of jail. But I just think there is a lot of innocent people fall by the wayside simply because they are not adequately empowered to defend themselves and there is no place for evaluation of the validity of a positive finding from the analysts.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you. We hear you and we have had a lot of evidence along those lines. Thank you very much.

(The witness withdrew.)

KERRY DRYNAN, Greyhound Owner, Breeder and Trainer, affirmed and examined

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Would you like to make an opening statement, if you can keep it to a few minutes.

Ms DRYNAN: I shall. I am going to read it, if that is okay.

The CHAIR: Absolutely.

Ms DRYNAN: I am a greyhound owner, trainer and breeder. I have been associated with greyhounds and the industry for over 50 years. I am here today to share with you a couple of my experiences in the last few years relating to issues I have had with GWIC. Firstly, I would like to tell you about an incident that happened to me in July 2020 relating to something that happened to me at Wentworth Park, our premier track, on a trial session night. I will give you a brief explanation and then, if you do not mind, I will just read an email. I took several dogs to the track on this particular night to trial. It happens every Tuesday at Wentworth Park, and they can have up to 20 or 30 trials on that evening.

I trialed most of my dogs and then, on my last trial, my dog at the time was meant to do a full lap of the circuit and finish on back to where I was standing. He actually left the boxes and got to me, had only done like a third of the track, where the mechanical lure mechanism fell off the rail. He then collided with that mechanism, fell to the ground, yelping. It was the most horrendous thing I have ever experienced after so many years in the sport. Consequently, it was pretty horrible. I will read you the email. I made a phone call to the chief vet at GWIC several weeks later because I felt compelled to do something about it. During that phone call, the chief vet initially said to me that she had heard vaguely something about this incident but was not really that informed of it. So we had a discussion about it, but at the end of that discussion I just was not satisfied, so I felt compelled to write an email. I addressed the email to the acting chief steward at the time, to the chief vet at GWIC and to the CEO of Greyhound Racing NSW:

To all,

After my recent telephone conversation with ... chief vet at GWIC I felt it necessary to reiterate my concerns expressed during that telephone call via an email.

On 14 July 2020 I attended trials at Wentworth Park. After trialling several of my dogs I then trialed Whiskey Throttle from the 720 meter boxes with the intention to give him a full lap with a finish on in the back straight pulling up around the 500 meter boxes. This run was to be his lead up prior to starting him on the Saturday night which I had already nominated him for.

After leaving the boxes the dog made it to the 500 meter boxes at which time the entire carriage and arm fell off the rail onto the track and my dog ran into it falling yelping eventually getting up with no mobility in his near side front leg. He was also bleeding from the neck of which at the time I was quite distraught about. As you can imagine in a situation like that where you have no Vet on track to assist it is quite a traumatic experience.

The staff on track at the time assisted as best they could by advising me of where the nearest vet was. It took some time to get the dog there and it was quite a traumatic experience on the way to the vet and of course when I arrived you can't help but feel like the bad guy presenting a dog in this state.

As I stated to—

the chief vet at GWIC—

during our conversation I understand that it takes time to look into these matters and conduct whatever investigations need to occur which I hope will occur as a matter of urgency, however in the interim I would like something to be done to ensure that our trial meetings have a vet on course.

This is unacceptable that the trainers should have to go through this not to mention the expense, stress and ongoing treatment for the greyhound.

There are no excuses for not having a vet in attendance on trial nights. GWIC's lack of decisive action on this matter is portraying a very negative image of our industry.

I trust I will hear from somebody soon with a decisive and prompt course of action.

The only person I got a response from response was the CEO at GRNSW. To date, we still do not have vets on track after meetings, and that goes for after the last race at most tracks. Once the last race is run, the vets then leave the course and we could have up to 20 or 30 trials proceeding in that meeting. The fact that GWIC are there for integrity and to ensure the best practices in animal welfare, I cannot accept the fact that we are not being heard. In fact, it is the complete opposite. They do not want to listen to our concerns nor do anything to improve animal welfare from our perspective. Years ago, the greyhound industry was run predominantly by people who were passionate about our sport, understood what was required to make sure it was safe for the dogs and the participants.

In recent years, we have been treated like criminals. All experienced people with good knowledge of the industry have been let go and replaced with people who have little to no knowledge of our industry. This has been

incredibly frustrating for us, extremely stressful for some and increasingly detrimental for our industry. Whilst we understand it is important in this current climate to have an integrity department, we also feel they are far from getting right. An example of this is the situation with veterinarians. For decades, we have had experienced vets—vets that you had confidence in. Pre-GWIC, in somebody's wisdom, the decision was made by GRNSW to let these vets go due to, in their opinion, a conflict of interest due to the fact that they had their own practices. This was a huge mistake as it left us with vets that, whilst they were qualified vets, they had no greyhound experience. It is still that way today and nothing has been done to right this. There has been no effort to recruit a qualified greyhound vet to train the vets in the finer points. There is no training program at all.

Furthermore, there is a feeling of disapproval if you even question a vet's decision, which in many occasions for me personally have been wrong. In fact, on one occasion at Wentworth Park, the chief vet of GWIC was in attendance, checked my dog after the race, took ages doing so and when I gave my opinion of his performance and his history, it fell upon deaf ears. Not only did this vet get the diagnosis wrong, she also neglected to tell me that she had given my dog a penalty of seven days. I only found this out by accident when reading through the steward's report. This same chief vet was responsible for the abandonment of a meeting at one of our provincial tracks last year due to no vet being in attendance. This was appalling, as many people had travelled for hours to race at the meeting. To my knowledge, nobody was held accountable. That is my first point.

My second point is about positive swabs. Obviously, there has been a lot of talk about that, but this is just my own personal situation currently. I have recently received a positive swab for what is called 4-hydroxy xylazine. It is a sedation for horses and cattle. This was an email I had never thought I would ever be receiving. After I got over the initial shock, I called the number in the email to find out what it was. The person in the legal department of GWIC advised me that it was a sedative which could be found in pet meat. I was incredibly upset, as I pride myself in my practices and my integrity to do the right thing. I had never had a positive swab for anything in the past. When I questioned this person as to why I am being penalised for something I did not do, I was told that they did not set the rules, they just implement them. When I then said that I thought GWIC was there to assist our industry, to maintain integrity as well as ensure its sustainability, I was then almost dismissed with disdain. The swabbing today is so sophisticated that it is picking up the most minor contamination, and innocent people are being penalised and also victimised by social media.

There is currently a young lady, which obviously everyone is aware of, that this is happening to. She has done nothing wrong. This young lady has a story—sorry, I am getting a bit emotional. Although she is unable to confront those who have inflicted this on her, I would like to share her story. A couple of years ago, after being in the industry for some time, this young lady bred a litter with her stepfather. Before these pups made it to the track, her stepfather passed away. Like for anyone, it is incredibly sad to lose a loved one. But as often as it happens, something good comes out of something bad. Something all greyhound owner trainers and breeders strive for is that champion dog and, incredibly, she had one. As I am sure you all are aware by now, this joy has been taken away from her due to contamination to cocaine. This has to change because there is no way that we should be penalised for something out of our control.

There are so many contaminants out there, and cocaine is probably the most prevalent in society these days. A lot of groups that are encouraged to attend our meetings are young partygoers, and it has been witnessed at several of our tracks—young people in bathrooms doing drugs. Along with this, we as trainers have no protection from contamination at tracks, whether it be in the kennel block, catching pen or around the grassed areas outside the tracks. I believe that GWIC have a duty of care to people as well as dogs. I think by not setting levels, especially for cocaine, which is widespread in the environment and can be absorbed easily through the skin, the authorities have breached their duty of care to the participants who are subjected to mental and financial stress from adverse swabbings. I wonder what would happen if a participant took their life due to the stress caused by this current practice.

The Hon. WES FANG: Thank you for your testimony, Ms Drynan. The point that you have just raised is the one that I think I am most concerned about on a personal level: the draconian way with which people who have a dog that has got a positive test feel that they are being treated by GWIC and the emotional and psychological toll that it places on them. Obviously, that is something that you have experienced now, and you have just shared somebody else's experience. We have also heard testimony from people about that emotional toll. Can you provide some further information about what that does to participants in the industry and how it affects you on a daily basis and how you think it might affect others as well? What do you think could be done to still enforce rules to make sure that we have a level playing field but not adversely affect people's mental health?

Ms DRYNAN: I think what Dr Major just went over was perfect—to have that panel in between that can sit and adjudicate, and sit down and decide whether or not they feel it is something worth penalising. In my case, I fed my dog and I got a positive. The worst part about it is I lose the \$5,000. I am GST registered. This is my income and my livelihood. I sometimes get a fine. I do not know if I will at this point. And I can get time.

I can have my licence taken away for a period of time, which takes my income away. But the worst part for me is to have that black mark on my name. You go into their website and you have got all these people's names with charges. I guarantee 95 per cent of them have done nothing wrong. It could be somebody's heart medication or it could be anything. This has been going on for several years. It really has to stop. I think there are a lot of people out there. I have heard stories of people being almost suicidal over it. They have done nothing wrong. In my case, I have been exposed to enough of it. I have got small children, and I am not going to allow it to destroy me. But I am not happy about it. It is just the wrong thing to be happening. It is just criminal.

The Hon. WES FANG: So you think that that would be a reasonable response, for a regulator to have an intermediary body that would look at the evidence and make a determination as to—

Ms DRYNAN: Absolutely. If it is determined that it is not administered by you to gain an advancement, then you should not be penalised.

The Hon. WES FANG: Do you think some threshold levels for testing would be—

Ms DRYNAN: Absolutely. Yes. Of course.

The Hon. WES FANG: Do you have any other advice or guidance where you think that the implementation of the rules could be done in a way that is more sympathetic to people's wellbeing and mental health?

Ms DRYNAN: Do I have any?

The Hon. WES FANG: Yes.

Ms DRYNAN: Not really. I have not really thought that far into it.

The Hon. WES FANG: Do you have a thought about what would be a better outcome for the regulation of the industry—whether a separate regulator like GWIC, either in its current form or in another form, or perhaps the industry returning to, say, a self-regulation model where Greyhound Racing NSW was to oversee the regulation within the industry? Do you think there would be some risks returning to that or can you see positives?

Ms DRYNAN: I am not really looking at that side of things. None of us mind having this regulator. We do not mind. We just think that they need to get right.

The Hon. WES FANG: I think some people might, but that is okay. I appreciate what you are saying.

Ms DRYNAN: I am happy, and I have always thought—because I am a layman, I do not know. But I believe in honesty; I believe in integrity. I think that we all need to follow the rules. I think the rules just need to be fine-tuned and they need to be reasonable and I would love to see one body because I feel like we have two bodies and they are not really working together. If we had a smaller integrity department that was government funded that was run slightly separate but under the banner of GRNSW, that would suit because then somewhere there could be a mediator that could make them work together for the betterment of our industry.

The Hon. WES FANG: I believe you have tendered these documents. The photo that I am holding up here was the last of the photos that you tendered.

Ms DRYNAN: This is what that dog looks like today.

The Hon. WES FANG: I was going to ask you that. After the injury, which was I am guessing about—

Ms DRYNAN: You see he has no chest muscle.

The Hon. WES FANG: —10 months ago.

Ms DRYNAN: Last July.

The Hon. WES FANG: The muscle wastage on the—

Ms DRYNAN: You should have seen it earlier on. We have worked with him with muscle stimulator machines—everything. We got a lot of the shoulder muscle here back but the chest is finished.

The Hon. WES FANG: You have submitted this—

Ms DRYNAN: It was just the hospital report from the uni vet.

The Hon. WES FANG: But it has also got some invoicing which—

Ms DRYNAN: Which I paid. I have not claimed at this point. But with that dog I have lost potentially \$60,000 as a very conservative figure.

The Hon. WES FANG: That is where I was sort of leading to. Despite the high cost of maintaining that dog, you still have the dog, you still—

Ms DRYNAN: I have to look at him every day at what happened to that dog. I might add, that particular incident happened and this is what upsets me as well. We are controlled and we have all these regulations as participants, but there is no regulations to go out there and address that track manager and say, "Why are these things happening?" and investigate and just make them accountable. In 50 years, I have never seen a carriage come off a rail. That did not happen to me once; it happened to me twice in a three-month period. I actually put a dog in a race and it happened on the first race at a meeting and it happened two other times. That was incompetence as far as I am concerned. They eventually—well, there is a lot more to it. They eventually found out what the problem was but after four occasions. That is what I am saying. If they are going to regulate the participants, then regulate the industry as a whole. Go out and make everybody accountable for what is going on.

The Hon. WES FANG: On that issue, when there is an issue that you have with a determination or a ruling that is made, do you have the opportunity where you feel you can address it and raise it and seek a re-determination or a review and that that review will be independent and looked at with an appropriate level of importance?

Ms DRYNAN: What are we referring to?

The Hon. WES FANG: Anything. If you have, for example, a ruling about a track or a scratching, do you feel like you can actually raise a protest?

Ms DRYNAN: I can raise it but usually I get no feedback; nothing comes back.

The Hon. WES FANG: That is where I guess I was leading to. The mechanisms with which you are able to raise issues does not necessarily provide you the feedback and the feeling that it is being addressed.

Ms DRYNAN: The resolve.

The Hon. WES FANG: The feeling that it is actually being addressed and not just glossed over.

Ms DRYNAN: Yes, I do not get anything—nothing.

The Hon. WES FANG: Thank you very much. I appreciate the integrity and the honesty with which you have answered today.

Ms DRYNAN: No worries.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Just to follow up, what was the problem identified with the carriage falling off?

Ms DRYNAN: To be honest, I do not know exactly. I think some things were slightly covered up to a point. Initially I was told it had to do with the bearings. Then I heard along the lines that there are some screws on the carriage that need to be tightened which can maintain it to stay on the rail. Then I heard there was a section of the rail that was slightly out of plum. I do not really know exactly what it was, but I do know that when the current CEO took over at the Greyhound Breeders, Owners & Trainers Association—who is obviously at Wentworth Park—he got rid of a lot of staff and the curators were some of them and there were new fellas that came in, and from my experience, they were learning on the go. That is what upsets me more than anything, because back in the day everybody that ran our tracks they really cared about our sport and people knew what they were doing. These days, nobody knows.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: You are saying the newbie curators were there the night the carriage fell off. Okay. Had they raced earlier that night at Wentworth Park?

Ms DRYNAN: No, it was a trial session.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: So it was the first time the carriage had been used on the evening.

Ms DRYNAN: No, no, no, it was midway through the trial session.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: How many previous trials?

Ms DRYNAN: I do not even know to be honest how many. I had about four.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: There might have been ten trials before the carriage fell off.

Ms DRYNAN: Could have been, yes.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much for coming, Ms Drynan. Thanks indeed for your evidence.

Ms DRYNAN: No worries.

(The witness withdrew.)

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, Ms Ellie Robertson.

ELLIE ROBERTSON, having been sworn: My name is Ellie Robertson and I serve on the Australian Local Government Women's Association executive board. I am on three Liverpool council committees and the spinal muscular atrophy committee. I am also running as an Independent candidate for the 2021 Liverpool council election. I have worked in the Federal and State public service. I wish to raise the New South Wales industry's own statistics, which cannot be disputed, and every statistic reflects an individual greyhound. I do not believe we can ever justify the suffering or death of any animal when we have the choice to prevent such suffering and death.

This Committee plays an important role with these choices. During 2020, 48 greyhounds were killed and 2,821 were injured on New South Wales tracks. Three of these deaths and 234 of these injuries occurred here in Goulburn, including the last greyhound death for 2020, on 31 December, when a greyhound named Dana Candy ran last and broke down after the finish post. She suffered a fractured hock and was killed. If you compare year-on-year statistics for 2020 and 2021, this reflects a 35 per cent increase in New South Wales deaths for this period, with New South Wales being the only State or Territory to record an increased number of deaths over the last year.

For Goulburn, this equates to an injury every 2.7 races. Greyhounds do have an extraordinary ability to run at phenomenal speeds. As members of the canine family, I consider them first and foremost companion animals, with the same ability to feel joy, enjoy social connections and experience pain and fear as any other dog, which I am sure most of you have. They love to run, as all dogs do. However, there is a clear difference between running for pleasure and being forced to run on a congested, overcrowded oval track with sharp turns and into a catching net or gambling prize. The industry's own statistics highlight the inherent dangers of greyhounds forced to run at high speeds in conditions which commonly result in fractures, broken necks, fractured spines, internal haemorrhages, cardiac arrests and ruptured backs. What is less transparent are the many greyhounds who are injured, removed from tracks and never return.

If greyhound racing was really a family-friendly activity, why is the vision of many fatal incidents removed from video replays? Noting from 2020 data, the common age for track-related deaths is two years of age. The public have not been given access to the industry's track safety standards nor any explanation about why the industry's own commissioned report and recommendations still have not been implemented. Reforms including straight, not oval, tracks; six- rather than eight-dog races; a central positioning of the lure; and removal of catching nets would eliminate many greyhound injuries and deaths. Outlawing the euthanasia of greyhounds suffering treatable injuries and those not performing will also substantially improve animal welfare.

If Dogs NSW's conformation or agility event resulted in an annual toll of 48 deaths and 2,821 injuries, I am certain the Government would take immediate action. These greyhounds must be given equal standards of welfare and legal protections. Greyhound Racing NSW has had more than three years to reform the industry and history demonstrates that they consistently fail. There is an urgent need to track all New South Wales greyhounds from birth to death, including those who never make it to the track and those who are exported either interstate or overseas. The endorsed Greyhound Welfare Code of Practice is based on minimum, not maximum, animal welfare standards. This sends a message to the New South Wales public that the Government and the industry consider minimum standards of animal welfare acceptable while claiming at the same time that animal welfare is a priority. Minimum standards do not, and can never, reflect a priority towards animal welfare.

The New South Wales Government must honour its public undertakings to reform the industry by retaining GWIC as the independent regulator and the body which much be allowed to do its job. Any weakening of GWIC or its core objectives surrounding animal welfare and integrity would be a betrayal of the New South

Wales Government's commitment to the New South Wales public. The GWIC funding model should be amended to allow government funding, with the Government recouping this funding from GRNSW and the gambling industry through taxation.

I was pleased to attend this public forum. However, the need to travel was not a preference but rather a necessity to ensure that I was able to participate. Remote access by video or phone, including for those disabled, was not offered. Because this is important to me, I have travelled from Sydney and I will stay overnight in a hotel at my own personal cost. We cannot return to the past in a regime which allowed a commercial body to regulate its own animal welfare and integrity responsibilities. This Committee is seeking meaningful reforms to strengthen GWIC's powers and resources and ensure their funding is independent rather than a handout from the very industry GWIC is tasked with regulating. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Robertson. For the record, I allowed you to run nearly twice the amount of time everyone else is allocated. Thank you very much for your statement.

Ms ROBERTSON: I appreciate that. Thank you very much.

The CHAIR: For the record also, we are actually having an inquiry at Wentworth Park in Sydney coming up, I think, in July. And we are also going to have, through Webex, remote statements and contributions from other people as well. We do appreciate you coming.

(The witness withdrew.)

The Committee adjourned at 16:16.