

**REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE**

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

**CORRECTED**

**At Macquarie Room, Parliament House, Sydney on Wednesday 26 May 2021**

**The Committee met at 4:00.**

**PRESENT**

The Hon. Robert Borsak (Chair)

The Hon. Lou Amato  
Ms Abigail Boyd (Deputy Chair)  
The Hon. Anthony D'Adam  
The Hon. Wes Fang  
The Hon. Sam Farraway  
The Hon. Mark Latham  
The Hon. Mark Pearson  
The Hon. Walt Secord



**The CHAIR:** Welcome to the first hearing of the select inquiry into the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission. This inquiry is established to examine the operation of the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission, in particular its policies, procedures, mechanisms and overarching principles in relation to industry participants. The inquiry will also look at issues such as the appropriateness of disciplinary action and options for appeal, the relationship between the commission and Greyhound Racing NSW and industry participants, current funding arrangements and the commission's role in improving the welfare of greyhounds. Before I commence, I acknowledge the Gadigal people, who are the traditional custodians of this land. I also pay respect to the Elders past, present and emerging of the Eora nation and extend that respect to other Aboriginal people present. Today we will be hearing from the former chief steward of Greyhound Welfare and Integrity, who will be appearing via videoconference. Before we commence I will make some brief comments about the procedures for today's hearing. Today's hearing is being broadcast live via the Parliament's website. A transcript of today's hearing will be placed on the Committee's website when it becomes available.

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

All witnesses have a right to procedural fairness according to the procedural fairness resolution adopted by the House in 2018. If witnesses are unable to answer a question today and want more time to respond, they can take a question on notice. Written answers to questions on notice are to be provided within 21 days. In terms of audibility for today's hearing, I remind both Committee members and witnesses to speak clearly and into the microphones. Those with hearing difficulties who are present in the room today, please note that the room is fitted with induction loops compatible with hearing aid systems that have telecoil receivers. Finally, I ask that everyone turn mobile phones to silent for the duration of the hearing.

**GAIL THORSBY**, Former Chief Steward, Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** Would you like to start by making a short statement? Perhaps keep it to a few minutes.

**Ms THORSBY:** My name is Gail Thorsby, former chief steward of Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission [GWIC]. I was in that position from November 2018 until July 2020. I was a steward for 21 years. My submission to the Committee was to provide my version of what took place internally and to provide factuals of incidents that took place that I believe was of a bullying behaviour. When I tendered my resignation, I made no mention of the real reasons of my departure, as I wanted to leave without conflict. I referred to Mr Tutt in this email, thanking him for his support.

It was only after that email that the Australian Workers' Union [AWU] had a meeting with Mr Griffin and Mr Tutt. They had asked why I was resigning, as they believed it was a result of Ms Lind and Ms Ledger bullying. Both denied knowing anything about any issues. The AWU asked I be interviewed, which both Mr Griffin and Mr Tutt agreed to arrange. It was in this meeting I requested prior could I have a support person. It was suggested by Mr Tutt that be GWIC's HR manager, in which I agreed. I sought other advice, in which I was advised perhaps another support person, of my choice, be involved. As the AWU had offered to assist—I might like to add I am not in any union—I took up that offer. It was approved. That meeting took place on 25 June, by Skype.

It was in this meeting that I become quite emotional for me, having to relay what I believed to be bullying behaviour. I provided incidents that had occurred where I had no rights to question decisions vets had made—that I was challenging their professionalism. I was told my questioning would not be tolerated, yet I wanted a simple explanation. A decision to euthanise a dog was what I was trying to get to the bottom of. Humiliation is in front of senior leaders to be told stewards will not attend trial sessions—yet was another by the McHugh report, which said we need to gain confidence within the greyhound industry. Yet I was told that stewards would not be able to attend trial sessions. I explained numerous reasons where the stewards need to be supported and recognised. Stewards were approached by vets to change race reports, phoned, emailed, asked on track about their reasonings to have a dog vetted or asked why not vetted. All the issues of concern was relayed on that day for them to understand the undermining of myself, the decision-maker for the stewards panel. That meeting was not about me wanting redemption. It was the need to speak up what I endured. Changes were a must.

Supporting the stewards panel was my focus. One of those focuses came to light in a stewards conference, which led to Ms Lind attending a race meeting to understand the task that they face at race meetings for her to understand exactly what we have to endure. I had to constantly justify why three stewards were required at a race meeting. This led to three reports undertaking, one by Ray Murrphy. I was reminded on a regular basis casual stewards are costing the commission too much, yet our race meetings were increasing. I note Commissioner Brown spoke on the Ray Hadley show, stating I had three exit interviews. That was not an exit interview. If you refer to the notes taken from the AWU representative—I would also like to mention Commissioner Brown had asked Mr Griffin and Mr Tutt had my interview been recorded, in which they explained no. My meeting with Commissioner Brown outlined my dealings with Ms Lind and Ms Ledger. It was agreed further discussions would take place with Ms Lind, Ms Ledger, Mr Tutt and commissioners. Unfortunately, that did not take place, as Commissioner Brown was unwell. I provided Mr Brown with a few emails that pertained to my concerns. I will reiterate there was no exit interview.

Mr Tutt was fully aware of the emails and demeaning comments thrust upon me. In fact, there was one particular day I will not forget, 30 January 2020, where I received emails from Ms Lind and Ms Ledger. My "comments would fuel anti-greyhound-racing fire" and "I simply will not tolerate this sort of behaviour." This was all over me wanting a better understanding why a dog had been euthanised on track when the stewards officiating at that race meeting were surprised and bewildered why. Mr Tutt had actually sent an email to Ms Lind in support of myself, "This has been blown out of proportion." What followed shortly after those emails was news my brother had passed away. I felt so vulnerable that day. I told Mr Tutt I had had enough of this ridicule and ambiguity, that I was quitting. Mr Tutt said, "No, no, you're not", and I deserved an apology. I never did receive an apology.

The rest is history. I did resign, giving GWIC plenty of notice to find a replacement. I read the responses of my submission as assumption, as I was never contacted by Commissioner Wheeler to give my evidence of events. The panel were told via teleconference by Commissioner Brown and Commissioner Wheeler there was no bullying, that I wanted to retire as my husband was requesting I join him in retirement. That is a summary to the best of my ability.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Thank you very much for attending. You are no doubt aware that we have received responses in relation to the statements you have made.

**Ms THORSBY:** Yes.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** What is your response to those responses disputing what you are saying?

**Ms THORSBY:** The facts are there. There were emails to support my concern. I had actually sent one to HR. They went through a couple of HR managers and said, "Am I reading too much into this?" I have spoken to many panel members in regards to that, but the answers saying I am a disgruntled employee were fairly hurtful. As I said, this is not about redemption. It is not about me; it has happened.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** From our perspective, I hear what you are saying and it sounds like you have had a bad time. I am appreciating that and not trying to take away from that. But we also have the other side of things, which I guess is opposed to what you are saying. As a Committee, our job is to look at the policy and processes of GWIC to work out if we have recommendations as to how they might do things better. Without getting into the personal nitty-gritty of your particular story, are there recommendations that you suggest we should make in relation to the way that GWIC operates?

**Ms THORSBY:** Definitely. I made those suggestions in that interview with Mr Tutt and Mr Griffin where I said that there needs to be a lot more understanding of what the stewards' duties are. It was unfortunate that, yes, GWIC was new and it was a learning curve that was repeated many times and experience was lacking. In the Bathurst office I was the only one who actually had any greyhound experience. These things came to the fore many, many times when I would make suggestions about licensing. These things all need a good overhaul. We are lacking in New South Wales; we are so far behind other States. I attended the national stewards' conference and I came back with a few ideas, because they had already set in place life tracking and they had already set a new licence system. All these things were lacking with us. The stewards were on the bottom of the rack—as simple as that.

**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** I want to continue on with what my colleague Ms Boyd said. To make recommendations to the Government, we have to have evidence before us and we have to be able to refer to that. What are the tangible recommendations? You mentioned the stewards and that you were the only one who had experience with greyhounds, so what do you think should occur in this area? We need to have tangible recommendations—things that we can put to the Government to say, "This is a path forward." How do we overcome the lack of experience? What do you think should occur involving the stewards? We need suggestions.

**Ms THORSBY:** Definitely more training. What I found was a bit ironic was that there were courses you could do but we only did one in almost three years. There needs to be a better understanding of what they face every day. And being able to deal with the industry, being able to gain respect. Respect was a big thing with me; that was my biggest forefront. We need respect. They need the support, as well, to understand what they face. We had an incident that occurred that really did come to a point where that particular person did not know how to deal with it because he had not been trained in that. The training needs to be—whether you send a steward interstate to learn their ways. A cadet program was actually started, with modules. They need someone to start from the bottom, to come through and have new ideas with the vetting. They have put a vetting supervisor on now; that was something that we had asked for from the very start. I guess that is probably what I am trying to say. The stewards were the ones that were facing the industry first up, yet there was not any planning put into the stewards' panel. There was not any expertise. This is what we need: We need resources. It was all to do with the other policies.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** That is really useful, that feedback of requiring more training and support and expertise. I notice that in your submission you talk about there being not enough stewards and not being able to have as many as was originally planned—and also not having those cadets to come in at that base level and be trained up. Was that an issue of resourcing for GWIC? Is there a funding—

**Ms THORSBY:** Yes, that is what we were told and that is what I have repeatedly been told—that it was resources. We finally got across the line but to this day it still has not started. We have set up the modules. Myself and a senior steward chose the modules that they should be training under, but to this day it still has not occurred.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** One of the recommendations we could potentially make, then, is for greater amounts of funding for GWIC?

**Ms THORSBY:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** In your submission you talk about, first of all, the relative position of you as chief steward and the stewards vis-a-vis the vets—the chief vet and the other vets that were employed by GWIC. Do you want to make some comment on that?

**Ms THORSBY:** It was quite common knowledge that the chief vet when I arrived in Bathurst was in charge of a lot more things than I had ever seen before: choosing the swabbing, whereas usually a chief steward would have that intel on track. What we faced with the vets—I am not taking anything away from their professionalism. There are some great vets out there, but having the greyhound experience was a huge issue. I was told by—I will not mention. I was told that the commission did not want any vets with any greyhound experience.

**The CHAIR:** That was where I was going with the questioning. Why would it be relevant to have vets with no relevant experience in greyhounds trying to deal with greyhounds? Do you have a view on that?

**Ms THORSBY:** Misdiagnosis. There are so many cases of misdiagnosis. There are many facts out there where dogs would have a broken leg and then they were sent home with another injury, and their actual hocks were broken. These things were faced. Stitching. There was one particular dog that the vet did not want to stitch on the night. The trainer begged, "Look, this is just bleeding out." The dog was stitched and then the next day they had to go to another vet because the vet was not confident in stitching, for a start, and did not have the expertise on how to actually stitch between the—greyhounds quite often do what they call webbing, which requires stitching. It is a bit of a unique job on its own.

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** In your submission you mention:

It is an accepted principle throughout other jurisdictions within Australia that both the Chief Vet & Chief Steward are of an equal authority within the regulatory body.

I do not know a lot about greyhound racing. What exactly is the role of the steward and exactly what qualifications do stewards have to possess? I am trying to work out between the vets' qualifications—I know what they are and what they do. I am just trying to look at it in comparison to a steward.

**Ms THORSBY:** If you want a start, I can give you an example of myself.

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** You mentioned earlier about the training, too, that it was inadequate.

**Ms THORSBY:** I was chief steward in Queensland when I came down to take the position in the Northern Rivers. I was senior steward there. When I started out to become a steward I did every course—everything I could do in investigating skills and anything that would enhance my way of understanding how the industry works. That was something that we did quite often in Queensland—we would go and do all the courses. You can go and do a managerial course but to understand the racing you really need to be there to understand the rules. There is a rule book you can read once but you still will not understand it. I became a senior steward in Queensland and then I became the deputy chief steward and then I became the chief steward—the first lady chief steward at the time. I worked my way through. You have to understand inquiries because we did a lot of inquiries up there for drugs and different offences, whether they be disciplinary—they could be simple things.

But that experience is something you have to get and you want to get it, but you have to go through the hoops to get it. You cannot just become a senior steward or a chief steward unless you have a background of going through the hoops to get to that stage. You are dealing with and making decisions that affect people's livelihoods in a lot of ways. It is no different than horses. You have got trainers, that's their livelihood. If you are dealing with a drug issue have to take all that into account. So they are just some of the things that you do as a steward. On race day that integrity is a huge focus to be able to have—people need to have faith in the industry for it to prosper. The stewards have a big part in that because if they are not doing their job people are going to be saying, "Why have we got greyhound racing? The stewards aren't doing their job. They're not checking on welfare. They're not checking on if these greyhounds have been drugged." They are all the things you have got to learn on your way.

**The Hon. MARK PEARSON:** I am from the Animal Justice Party. Could you just tell me, what is the ideal working relationship between a steward and a vet?

**Ms THORSBY:** It should be on an equal basis. The stewards are running the race day functions so they are advising the vet after a race if they would like a greyhound examined. The decision-making is the stewards on race day.

**The Hon. MARK PEARSON:** Okay, so as a steward you would see every dog that is about to race or be trained on that day?

**Ms THORSBY:** Yes.

**The Hon. MARK PEARSON:** If you saw that there might have been a problem or you had to select one or two dogs to be drug tested, would you then bring the vet in in order to do that or to treat the animal or to assess the animal? Would that be your call or the vet's call?

**Ms THORSBY:** Yes, it is our call. With the drug taking they have swab officials that do that and that is your pre-race work to determine who you would be swabbing on the day. You have done your forms, so you

have a fair idea and you are watching the betting market. In relation to the swabbing, no, the vets would not be—unless it was something that had come through or there was something untoward you felt. But the actual vetting of the dogs is done prior to the race, meaning they check the dogs are fit to race on the day. After, you are making the decision who you send to them to be vetted.

**The Hon. MARK PEARSON:** So if you both were looking at a dog and the veterinarian saw that there was an injury and wanted to treat it and thought it was more serious than the steward or the other way round—the steward thought the injury or the condition was very serious but the veterinarian did not—who has the final call as to what happens?

**Ms THORSBY:** Anything veterinarian is the vet.

**The Hon. MARK PEARSON:** Can you tell me a little bit about what happened at The Gardens track that in your submission you said was very disturbing to see that it took so long for a dog to be euthanised? Is this the dog that got caught in the—what do you call it?

**Ms THORSBY:** The lure.

**The Hon. MARK PEARSON:** Yes, the lure. Is that correct?

**Ms THORSBY:** Yes, it is.

**The Hon. MARK PEARSON:** Can you just describe what happened?

**Ms THORSBY:** I got a phone call that night from the stewards in charge to inform me what had taken place—that a greyhound had been stuck under the rail.

**The Hon. MARK PEARSON:** What rail was that?

**Ms THORSBY:** That is the rail that goes around the track. There is a cable that connects to that rail. The greyhound was wedged and had been pushed into the rail by the other dogs. It was wedged under there so they had to retrieve that greyhound and it was pretty much split in half. It was dragged off the track.

**The Hon. MARK PEARSON:** By whom?

**Ms THORSBY:** By one of the attendants. It was the delay that had everybody upset on that particular night. The delay was—seeing so much blood on the track. You had licensees and you had track staff. They were all deeply, deeply upset.

**The Hon. MARK PEARSON:** What caused the delay? And when you say delay, do you mean the delay for the vet to get there and euthanise?

**Ms THORSBY:** Yes.

**The Hon. MARK PEARSON:** What was the delay?

**Ms THORSBY:** The delay was that he did not have his medical equipment with him. He had to go back—he was on the track and he went back to get his veterinary bag. What he was doing was more or less bandaging the dog. Time and time went over and the trainer was deeply upset. I think the consensus was that the dog should have been euthanised immediately. Unfortunately, that did not occur. Since that incident they have made changes to the policy.

**The Hon. MARK PEARSON:** What is the critical change that has been made to the policy because of that?

**Ms THORSBY:** All the vets now have to carry their bag out with them, so it is a more quicker response. It was just bad judgement on that night.

**The Hon. MARK PEARSON:** When the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission was established, what was your understanding as to why it was established? Did you think the principle of its establishment was a good thing or a risky thing?

**Ms THORSBY:** No, I was 100 per cent behind it to start with.

**The Hon. MARK PEARSON:** Why?

**Ms THORSBY:** Changes needed to be made to get the confidence back in the industry. If those had not been made at the time—but, in saying that, we are nearly three years. We may have gained a little bit but I think if the right people had been put in there to start with we would have been a lot further ahead.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Thank you, Ms Thorsby. I wanted to go back to some questioning I think my colleague Ms Abigail Boyd put to you regarding training. You spoke very broadly about more training being needed in GWIC, but you were not very specific about what sort of training in what sort of area. Are you talking about more greyhound experience or more compliance experience? What training do you think is needed internally in the organisation to make it a better regulator or a better organisation?

**Ms THORSBY:** I think—obviously, this is all my opinion—more emphasis needs to be put on the stewards being able to understand what conflict is in the workplace, being able deal with conflict and having an answer when they get a disgruntled person face them. That is just one little part. They need to understand the anatomy of greyhounds as well. There was a couple of us who actually did a course which went from puppies to adulthood and different traits that greyhounds have. You covered the whole welfare side of things between temperature checking, taking the pulse. That was one of the courses that we actually did with Greyhound Racing NSW, which was very beneficial. Stewards also need to be able to understand the betting trends. We had asked about the betting trends. We needed to be privy to be able to know straight after a race if a lot of money had been put on and the greyhound had no form. That never happened. I believe they have got a betting supervisor now. Those things needed to happen.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Ms Thorsby, it sounds like there is a lot of internal stuff, especially around the people within the organisation and how they deal with stakeholders. Just moving on to another point around funding, whilst I respect your contribution to today's hearing, even in my short time in Parliament it is easy to say government needs to resource a regulator or a government agency more. That is probably the easy option. What I would pose to you, from your experience, is internally in GWIC is there a way that expenditure can be spent more efficiently rather than just trying to over-resource it with more money? I tie this in with the part of your submission around the restructure, obviously around the amount of stewards that are at grounds.

I will pose a view to you, and I am interested in your submission and what you have got to further contribute, especially around this bunker-type system for stewards. I have spent a fair bit of time at tracks over the last few months and spoken to a lot of people in the industry. I must say, I find that there is the perception of wastage with three stewards, when I know you have a report that states that two is unworkable. But from what I have seen on the ground, there appears to be fairly widespread support that having two is efficient, workable, and that if you did have the bunker-type system it is actually working in place at the moment. Obviously you have a contrary view to that, but do you not think that three stewards to every race meet is probably a little bit excessive?

**Ms THORSBY:** No, I do not. The amount of work that New South Wales stewards do compared to other States—and I did a full investigation into that and provided all that information from every State: how many stewards are on track and what they do. New South Wales greyhounds do 50 per cent more than other States. They have to do their own reports. In other States they have a receptionist there typing up those reports for them. New South Wales is the only State that do their own reports. It is the only State that inputs their swabs into the system and their injuries into the system. In other States, someone else is doing it for you. The stewards should be there. They should be reading the race and doing the race meeting. They should be all over the betting. But you are doing all this other input into the system, which takes you away from the actual race meeting. You are not out amongst it. You should be out there amongst it. You should have your eyes on everything that is going on. So, no.

The bunker system at the moment I totally oppose. We had to use the bunker system with COVID. But it would be like me saying, "Alright, I am the bunker for the football tonight", watching it from my lounge room. It is not what it was before. Before, you would have your cameras. You could bring your licensees in and do an inquiry. They could see you, you could see them. There was not anything untoward. Having two stewards on a track to do an inquiry about something, basically you have got 15 to 20 minutes between races. You would have to do it after the meeting. You just could not possibly do all that that way. But a bunker? That bunker is only as good as a TV.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Thorsby, my understanding of the role of a steward, certainly in relation to thoroughbred racing—you tell me if it is different in greyhound racing—is that once the race is about to start and the meeting is getting started that the stewards, certainly the chief steward, is in absolute control of that process. Is that right? Does that work with GWIC?

**Ms THORSBY:** What do you mean? The chief steward where?

**The CHAIR:** I am talking about on race day. I am quoting this from your submission:

CEO Judy Lind made it perfectly clear that I was to be answerable to both her—

which is fine; she is the CEO—

and the Chief Vet Michelle Ledger.

...

"You will do what we (Michelle Ledger) want you to do".

Based on your evidence in the last half-hour or so, what you are basically saying is that the chief vet is in charge of the race day—is in charge of the processes. Is that a correct interpretation?

**Ms THORSBY:** The chief vet, when I first went to Bathurst, was in charge of a lot of things. I believe some of that has changed. The steward on the day, depending on what you are calling a "chief steward"—the chief steward is not there for every race meeting.

**The CHAIR:** Sorry, I may be using the wrong terminology. I am talking about the steward or stewards on the day. Please continue.

**Ms THORSBY:** At a race meeting you will have one chair steward. That person makes the decisions. They converse with each other, jump off each other. If there is a decision to be made the chair has the last say, but it has got to be an equal decision. Three of them have got to agree if they were putting an offence on a greyhound. Getting back to what I was saying, I had an incident where I was put number three and that is the way that it was pretty much run.

**The CHAIR:** Again, quoting from your submission, under "Authority and treatment of stewards" you say:

... effectively Vets have an ability to override Steward's decisions relating to a Steward's role.

**Ms THORSBY:** That was what was occurring on a common meeting. I have got stewards that received emails from vets. They received phone calls. There is evidence to support that, where they had asked about changing the report to reflect on another incident. They were meddling into what stewards should have been doing. But in all fairness, the stewards are the ones that should be in charge of the race meetings. This is probably my point. I have never seen anything like this ever before in 21 years where the vets were having so much say and wanting to override the stewards.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Could I just jump in on that please, Mr Thorsby? This privileged position of the vets, can it be attributed in any way to the personal relationship between the chief vet, Michelle Ledger, and the now CEO, Steve Griffin?

**Ms THORSBY:** Possibly so. I believe the new chief steward now is on equal par. But, yes, it is quite a possibility.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** I come to that point about bullying and intimidation that you raised. When Alan Brown told the Ray Hadley program he had no knowledge of any bullying or intimidation against you or claims thereof, what you are saying to the Committee is that that evidence was clear to Mr Brown at that stage?

**Ms THORSBY:** Yes, it was clear.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Could I just ask about the question of efficiency and spending that Mr Faraway raised? I do not know if you have seen the Greyhound Racing NSW submission, but they really go to town on GWIC as a bloated and inefficient organisation. I have done some accessing of financial data. If you look at the staff entitlement, office expenses, travel, senior and board management allowances and consultancies, it adds up to 68 per cent of the budget.

**Ms THORSBY:** Yes.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Do you believe that Greyhound Racing NSW have made a valid criticism there that the outfit is a bit top heavy?

**Ms THORSBY:** Very valid. You have got policyholders that were in there that, as I reiterated earlier, it has taken nearly three years and they still have not got the licensing correct. I had many arguments with them. I wanted to have input into the licensing. It could have been so simple. You had three investigators who did not get their bums off the seat in Bathurst. How are you going to be an investigator if you cannot get out there? All nine-to-five jobs. Try being a steward and doing something there. That is a big point too. When they employed us we had to apply for our positions and we were put under an award that allowed 35 hours a week. Well, stewards were doing 50, 60 hours a week. You are only getting three days out of a steward, so this 35 hours is not workable. The benefits, yes, the benefits that the stewards get—and I did read about the wages. Some of it is not quite right. But the vets would not earn \$135,000 in their own practice, I would not think. So, again, it is just the whole set-up. You have got so many people in Bathurst now not needed.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** That 35 hours a week, is that still the practice? Is that your understanding?

**Ms THORSBY:** Yes.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** It seems quite ridiculous, does it not, because the stewards work well into the night? If you know greyhound racing, you know they have a lot of issues and loose ends to tie up before the meeting is formally closed in terms of their responsibilities.

**Ms THORSBY:** Definitely. You have got your prep work to do and your travel. You take your prep work and your travel into that and it is going to eat into those 35 hours. As I said, you get three shifts a week out of a steward.

**The CHAIR:** Can I ask one question before you leave that please, Mark?

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Sorry, Chair, yes.

**The CHAIR:** Locating in Bathurst, is that the right place for it?

**Ms THORSBY:** No.

**The CHAIR:** Where would you suggest it should be?

**Ms THORSBY:** Somewhere like Richmond, somewhere like that where you have got accessibility. Our stewards have not got accessibility to Bathurst. I do know that Ms Lind said about sending the emails to myself. We all did it. We have never been told we could not. We do because we need to print off race books, we need to print off information. We cannot do that from the Bathurst office. The swabs is another big issue. You have to send your swabs to Bathurst. Bathurst sends it to Melbourne—a huge, huge cost.

**The CHAIR:** Also very inefficient.

**Ms THORSBY:** It could have been simplified and went to the Sydney lab. It would have been a much, much cheaper option.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Ms Thorsby, could I get your view on the GWIC power to suspend participants before any finding of guilt—this interim suspension power—which seems to me to be quite like a star chamber or kangaroo court. Natural justice is denied and you are out, suspended, before there is even a guilty finding.

**Ms THORSBY:** I think they have come undone on one of them that they have actually done that to. The second sample came back negative. I was always taught you had to have natural justice. You are not guilty until proven. It is very, very tough. As I explained earlier, you are dealing with people's livelihood.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** This causes a fair bit of resentment, does it, among participants?

**Ms THORSBY:** Yes.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Obviously those who have been wrongly suspended.

**Ms THORSBY:** Yes, definitely. I guess being around for a fair while, I do know a lot of the participants, and you get to know the good and the bad. I have found that a lot of them find that is the most difficult thing to understand: why they are so gung-ho to give people those sort of interim suspensions when they have not been proven guilty. That is another unfortunate—I am glad you have touched on that actually, Mr Latham, the amount of time these inquiries are taking. One that was finally finalised here only a week ago was 12 months old. These were the reports that come through—we knew that Greyhound Racing NSW were not getting their inquiries done in sufficient time. Nothing has changed, only it has got worse, that these things are not dealt with in a timely manner.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Can I ask about what happened with your successor, Brett Day, because there is speculation as to whether or not it was really true. It seems a bit unbelievable that he sold up in Victoria, he moved to regional New South Wales, there were no medical services there for a family member, and he lasted only a month as your successor as chief steward. If you are moving from Victoria, you would obviously check whether medical services were there in the first place rather than just go there and ask about it subsequently. Is it true that the bigger problem was conflicts of interest?

**Ms THORSBY:** No. The picture I was aware of—yes, he had conflict of interest, but the bigger issue was that he had huge arguments with Ms Ledger and Mr Griffin, and he hightailed it back. If you had to have medical treatment, you would be aware—if there was something that serious, you would be doing your homework before you moved from Victoria to Bathurst. I was told he was told to be quiet.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Is it true that in that situation and others, no-one at GWIC survives if they challenge or cross the Griffin-Ledger partnership?

**Ms THORSBY:** Yes. Yes, I have been told that.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Thorsby, going back to your comments about natural justice. I hear it quite a lot from participants who are being accused of something or other, that they should do a plea deal and get out of it that way? In other words, plead guilty, otherwise they may end up in a worse situation. Have you heard that before?

**Ms THORSBY:** Yes. I do not agree with that. I do not agree with that at all. With a lot of their inquiries, it is all paperwork. It is not a proper inquiry where you get people in and you can challenge, "Joey said this." Well, you get Joey in and sit him down. That was the way I was taught to do inquiries. Doing it in paperwork and being told, "If you admit you are guilty, you will get off lighter", and yet you might be innocent, does not seem fair one bit.

**The CHAIR:** So the process is not a proper process in your view?

**Ms THORSBY:** No. No, they have chosen their own process. Prior to me resigning, I was asked by Mr Tutt, could I do a summary of what I thought was fair penalties. I did not do that.

**The CHAIR:** Is this the way it is done in other jurisdictions in Australia?

**Ms THORSBY:** No. No, definitely not.

**The CHAIR:** Just describe to us, if you would please, how it is done. Do the stewards have carriage of the review process in other jurisdictions?

**Ms THORSBY:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Who has the jurisdiction control in New South Wales under GWIC? Who does it in GWIC?

**Ms THORSBY:** It would be Mr Tutt at the moment. He has been overseeing that side of things as far as the inquiries are concerned—the legal director.

**The CHAIR:** As chief steward, were you involved in any of those inquiries?

**Ms THORSBY:** I did do a couple. They were in-house. They were at Bathurst. We did one on animal welfare, and that was done in the proper process. Another one I assisted; I have been to a couple of the appeals with Armati. Another one I assisted was in Sydney. Again, the trainer presented himself and gave his version of events. That is the proper process.

**The CHAIR:** How many of those sorts of inquiries would you estimate would happen in a year, for example, that Mr Tutt would deal with?

**Ms THORSBY:** There are not too many of those. They are all paperwork.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, that is right. What you are saying is that the majority of them are basically paper reviews. How many of those do you think there would be in a year? One, 10, 50, 100?

**Ms THORSBY:** No. We did have statistics. You are asking me something a bit down the track now.

**The CHAIR:** That is okay. Do you want to take it on notice and think about it?

**Ms THORSBY:** I would say 30.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, that is fine. I am not asking for an audit of it, I am just interested in the process.

**Ms THORSBY:** It varies because you have behaviour issues, you have drug issues. There could be simple ones and there could be harder ones.

**The CHAIR:** Paper reviews in some cases might be appropriate, but having your day in court—

**Ms THORSBY:** For something very minor but the majority—you should get out there amongst it, though, and understand. They have the inspectors now and if any positive swabs come, they are doing the kennel inspections. Again, knowledge is a big thing to know what they are looking for.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I want to rewind and jump in from my colleague Mark Latham's questioning with Mr Day. Obviously there is some commentary in your submission about Mr Day. I notice that when Mr Latham asked you the question, you said, "I've heard." Have you ever met or spoken with Mr Day about anything GWIC-related?

**Ms THORSBY:** No.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Is it fair to say from reading your submission and the commentary you have on Mr Day's departure, that is only an assumption because you do not know because you never actually spoke to him?

**Ms THORSBY:** No. That information was given by his uncle, who runs the Goulburn track.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** It certainly did not come from Mr Day? You never met or spoke with Mr Day?

**Ms THORSBY:** No. That was from his uncle to one of our stewards.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I think you referred to him as running a bit of a dictatorship or something. Is that correct?

**Ms THORSBY:** Yes.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** You are using the view of Mr Day running a dictatorship as the view of his uncle?

**Ms THORSBY:** Yes.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** If I could pick up on something you said earlier about the reviews taking a really long time. Why do you think they are taking a long time? Is that a lack of resourcing? What is going on there?

**Ms THORSBY:** The inquiries are taking a long time?

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Sorry, I do not know if you said the reviews or the inquiries, but you said that they are taking a really long time and that one took a year.

**Ms THORSBY:** The inquiries.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Yes. Why do you think that is?

**Ms THORSBY:** That is a good question. Is it a lack of resources? There were three lawyers employed by GWIC. There are investigators to do the groundwork for them. What is it? I do not think it is resources, I just think it is lazy.

**The CHAIR:** Do you have a view on why there is no appeal process in any of these decisions? Why do people have to go to court to get this done?

**Ms THORSBY:** There is an appeal process with Armati. There have been a couple. They have to pay a \$250 fine to have an appeal, whether that is a reason why they do not. There is a rule that is called a presentation rule and that presentation rule is that there is no out for the licensees. If they have presented the greyhound to the race, they are guilty then. There could be circumstances but those circumstances do not appear to be taken in for that rule. A presentation rule means that you have presented that greyhound to race and that greyhound has come back with a positive swab to say theobromine, which is good old chocolate. They may get fined three months and whatever. They could give you evidence, but because of the presentation rule it seems to be a no-win situation for them.

**The CHAIR:** In effect they have no ability to challenge that. Is that what you are saying?

**Ms THORSBY:** Absolutely.

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** Earlier on you were talking about the need for two stewards due to the excess of workload and swabs and paperwork. Why do you think GWIC has not streamlined such data entry and how do you think it could be done better?

**Ms THORSBY:** The data entry has been a—since hen we first started, we have had a couple of new systems put in place. We have had computer issues. There have been so many incidents that have occurred. With the data entry, it ended up a double entry. It was continual and the double entry had to stop because we started using a new system called OneGov. We had the OzChase system, which was very simplified. The OneGov is not. It is very complicated. It takes time. That is where there have been a lot of resources put into OneGov, but why? We could have just stuck with OzChase, which was simple. Having to go into those, there is a resource that could have been saved. The same as the resource for the swabs; it could have been saved.

**The CHAIR:** Was that new system fully functional when you left?

**Ms THORSBY:** No.

**The CHAIR:** Do you know if it is fully functional now?

**Ms THORSBY:** I am not 100 per cent. The system still has flaws in it. Every State other than Victoria put their own system in place, but every other State worked off OzChase.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Ms Thorsby, for attending and giving us your evidence. I do not think in the end you took any questions on notice. On that basis, we will close the hearing.

**(The witness withdrew.)**

**The Committee adjourned at 16:58.**