

Media Release

The Hon Martin Pakula MP

Attorney-General

Minister for Racing

Wednesday, 11 March, 2015

NEW GRV BOARD TO LEAD CHARGE AGAINST LIVE BAITING

Minister for Racing Martin Pakula today announced three new appointments to the Board of Greyhound Racing Victoria (GRV).

Ray Gunston – former Chief Financial Officer for Tatts Group and former interim Chief Executive Officer of Essendon Football Club – has been appointed Chair.

Mr Gunston will be joined by widely respected former Victoria Police Chief Commissioner Ken Lay and Melbourne barrister Judith Bornstein.

As part of her role as a Commissioner of the Industrial Relations Commission of Victoria, Ms Bornstein was responsible for the conciliation and arbitration of industrial matters arising from the greyhound racing industry.

The former GRV Board this morning tendered its resignation, having resolved to do so last night following receipt of Racing Integrity Commissioner Sal Perna's interim report into allegations of live baiting.

In tendering the Board's resignation, outgoing Chair Michael Harms indicated they were doing so in the best interests of greyhound racing – noting that a new start is needed for the industry.

Mr Perna has indicated he is satisfied that the GRV Board, CEO and senior management did not know about the practice of live baiting.

He has also indicated that while there has been no direct evidence to date of live baiting occurring at any other registered Victorian greyhound racing facility apart from the Tooradin Trial Track, it would be naïve to accept that live baiting is not, and has not, been occurring in Victoria.

Mr Pakula has accepted the one interim recommendation directed to government by Mr Perna and has asked the Department of Justice and Regulation to examine legislative changes required to increase animal welfare compliance powers.

Mr Pakula has also asked the new GRV Board to get straight to work responding to those five interim recommendations directed to the industry and to examine their practical implementation.

The Government's expectation is that the Board will work constructively with Mr Perna and Chief Veterinary Officer Dr Charles Milne, supporting their ongoing investigations and conducting their own analysis of potential changes within GRV to restore confidence in the industry.

The interim report by Dr Milne, also presented to Minister for Agriculture Jaala Pulford yesterday, has identified a number of significant gaps around the enforcement of codes and standards relating to animal welfare in the greyhound racing industry.

The next stage of Dr Milne's review will focus on how to strengthen animal welfare standards, governance and compliance in the industry to ensure the right measures are in place to protect the welfare greyhounds.

Consultation with key stakeholders including the RSPCA, Animals Australia and the Australian Veterinarians Association is already underway.

Mr Perna and Dr Milne's final reports will be delivered to the Government by 30 April 2015.

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Quotes attributable to Minister for Racing, Martin Pakula

“Live baiting has no place in Victorian greyhound racing and action needs to be taken to stamp out the practice for good.”

“Mr Gunston, Mr Lay and Ms Bornstein are three outstanding candidates who I know will provide the leadership needed for GRV to address the serious issues raised by Mr Perna and Dr Milne.”

“I thank the outgoing GRV Board – and in particular, Chair Michael Harms – for their substantial work and progress since 2012, including an increased focus on animal welfare.”

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture, Jaala Pulford

“The Andrews Labor Government is serious about animal welfare – that’s why we took immediate action to address these disgusting acts of cruelty.”

“Preliminary advice from Dr Charles Milne indicates there is a great deal of work to be done to clean up the industry and protect the welfare of greyhounds.”