



AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Members present:

Mr LP Power MP (Acting Chair)
Mr SA Bennett MP
Mrs J Gilbert MP
Mr EJ Sorensen MP

Staff present:

Mr R Hansen (Research Director)
Dr M Lilith (Principal Research Officer)

PUBLIC BRIEFING—EXAMINATION OF THE RACING INTEGRITY BILL 2015

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

FRIDAY, 11 DECEMBER 2015

Brisbane

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Committee met at 8.34 am

ACTING CHAIR: Welcome, ladies and gentlemen. Before we start, can all phones be switched off or on silent? I declare this meeting of the Agriculture and Environment Committee open. Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which this meeting is taking place at Parliament House today—the Turrbal people.

I am Linus Power, the member for the state electorate of Logan. I have been appointed to act as chair of the committee in the absence of the regular chair, Jennifer Howard, the member for Ipswich. Jennifer has given notice of her intention to resign from the committee due to her appointment earlier this week as Assistant Minister for Local Government. The other members with me today are: Julieanne Gilbert, the member for Mackay; and, on the phone, Stephen Bennett, the member for Burnett and deputy chair, and Ted Sorensen, the member for Hervey Bay. Robbie Katter, the member for Mount Isa, is an apology for this meeting.

I advise all participants that these proceedings are being transcribed by our parliamentary reporters and broadcast live on the Parliament of Queensland's website. Welcome to everyone who is watching the proceedings here today.

The purpose of this meeting is to assist the committee in our examination of the Racing Integrity Bill 2015. The bill was introduced into the parliament last week by the Hon. Bill Byrne MP, while Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, and subsequently referred to the committee. We are hoping that today's briefing will give a general overview of the bill and help to explain how it relates to the recommendations from the Queensland Greyhound Racing Industry Commission of Inquiry and how it would affect governance arrangements for Queensland's racing industry.

The committee is due to report to parliament on the bill by 1 March 2016. The committee's report will help the parliament when it considers whether the bill should be passed. I remind everyone that the bill is not law until it has been passed by the parliament. Today the committee will be briefed by officers from the Department of National Parks, Sports and Racing.

COCSETTI, Mr Michael, Principal Policy Officer, Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing

JAMESON, Ms Erin, Senior Policy Officer, Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing

OESTREICH, Mr Wade, Senior Executive Director, Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing

ACTING CHAIR: I welcome the officers of the department. To begin proceedings, would you care to make a brief opening statement before we move to questions?

Mr Oestreich: I will read from a short opening statement. The Queensland government is currently undertaking a number of reforms to the racing industry in Queensland. These reforms are targeted at repairing Racing Queensland's financial position through the Tracking to Sustainability Plan, as well as restoring integrity and public confidence through the implementation of the recommendations of the Queensland Greyhound Racing Industry Commission of Inquiry.

The primary purpose of the Racing Integrity Bill 2015, which is currently before the House, is to implement the recommendations 1 to 3 of the commission of inquiry final report. This will improve integrity standards and further safeguard the welfare of licensed animals participating in the racing industry. Although the commission of inquiry focused on the greyhound racing industry, it has been deemed appropriate to apply the new integrity and animal welfare standards across the entire racing industry.

Whilst the changes to the legislation and regulatory structure may have an impact on the ongoing financial position of the industry, the bill does not directly relate to the Tracking to Sustainability Plan or any of the matters currently associated with country race meetings. These matters relate to various administrative, financial and operational matters which are not envisaged to be dealt with by legislation at this time.

In a short summary, the bill will establish the new Queensland Racing Integrity Commission. It will amend functions and responsibilities of control bodies to manage commercial and operational elements for its code of racing under the Racing Act and establish comprehensive corporate governance measures for the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission, or QRIC, as I will refer to it from this point forward, under the Racing Integrity Act and the control bodies under the Racing Act. It will provide a new seven-member Racing Queensland Board where there are currently five members. It will dissolve the specific code control boards, the Racing Animal Welfare and Integrity Board and the Racing Disciplinary Board. It will standardise and consolidate the powers of authorised officers under the Racing Integrity Act and it will bring them into line with those of inspectors under the Animal Care and Protection Act.

It will establish a new internal review process for administrative decisions made under the Racing Act and the proposed or future Racing Integrity Act. It will remove redundant provisions in the Racing Act relating to accredited facilities and processes for dealing with samples following race meets. Other consequential amendments to the Bail Act, Criminal Organisation Act, Interactive Gambling (Player Protection) Act and a number of other acts will also be made.

The bill provides for a new act, the proposed Racing Integrity Act, and it substantially amends the Racing Act 2002. These amendments are aimed at increasing integrity in animal welfare standards and restoring public confidence in the racing industry.

ACTING CHAIR: We will now move to questions. We are obviously transitioning between one structure and QRIC. How will the process of transition and also the transition of existing staff from the Office of Racing work?

Mr Oestreich: That process is currently being mapped through at the moment. The new Queensland Racing Integrity Commission will be made up of staff drawn principally from Racing Queensland. There will be the integrity staff that are currently within Racing Queensland—so the stewards and all of those in charge of race day operations as well as investigating offences under the rules of racing. They will be taken from Racing Queensland, as well as a number of staff from the existing Office of Racing. Staff from the Racing Science Centre, which is a component of the Office of Racing—they are the Queensland government laboratory that is responsible for the testing of samples following races—as well as some policy staff from the Office of Racing will also transition to form the new Queensland Racing Integrity Commission.

Those processes are being mapped through at the moment. Work has started on developing organisational charts and mapping people to future positions. We have a process of engagement underway with the relevant unions involved in the transition principally together, but there are some others that also have member coverage that we have been engaging with. In the new year we are projecting commencement of a more in-depth, one-on-one type of approach with staff to consult with them on where they will be in the new arrangement.

It is a little difficult, and I certainly understand that staff are quite concerned about what change might mean, especially when the details have not been settled yet. We are certainly working on those factors that we can then talk with staff about that will make them feel as comfortable as possible. Things like identifying where the new accommodation for the QRIC will be—all of those sorts of matters are all high priority on our list. The anticipated commencement date for QRIC is 1 April. Obviously early in the new year we will need to get those engagement processes underway so that we can settle something and have people ready to start work on 1 April.

ACTING CHAIR: QRIC is aimed at bringing greater integrity to the industry. Can you give us an outline of the additional integrity measures that are being established through QRIC?

Mr Oestreich: First and foremost, the greatest benefit that the new QRIC will deliver is the physical and organisational separation of integrity and welfare compliance from the commercial arm of the industry. Alan MacSporran QC, the Commissioner of the Queensland Greyhound Racing Industry Commission of Inquiry, identified this fundamental conflict of interest as a core concern: this idea that an organisation like Racing Queensland has two arms to its business. It has the commercial arm, which is about running the racing industry and making money from that industry, but it also has responsibility for making sure that integrity and welfare standards are upheld, and sometimes those things come into conflict. Commissioner MacSporran identified that that fundamental conflict of interest underpinned everything. So the structural separation of the two arms in terms of creating a new statutory body, which will be QRIC, that is separate from the organisation that runs the racing is the single biggest element.

There are a number of other changes that are proposed to be introduced through the bill. These are around strengthening the powers of authorised officers under the future Racing Integrity Act to give them powers of search and investigation, as well as to give welfare directions to people to do

certain things with licensed animals that are necessary to improve the welfare of that animal. These powers are not there to that degree at the moment under the Racing Act. There will also be the ongoing work of the four-person police task force that will continue to be a part of the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission. The commissioner itself will be a statutory appointment and will have certain independence measures enshrined in law as a result of this bill should it pass through parliament. I might ask my colleague Michael if there is anything further that should be added.

Mr Coccetti: There are a few other elements that have been introduced into the bill, as Mr Oestreich has said. Essentially, those powers of authorised officers have come across from the current Racing Act. They have been in there since the Racing Act 2002. They have been standardised and improved, and some powers are mirrored from the Animal Care and Protection Act. There is a part which is transferred and a part which has been improved and standardised to be more modern in terms of a legislative approach.

There were also some corporate governance arrangements which previously have not been mentioned in the legislation which will require the QRIC to have ongoing reporting requirements which also fall in line with other statutory authorities such as the Queensland Rail Transit Authority. They will have to have an operational and strategic plan which will be approved by the minister. Then there will be three-monthly reporting or quarterly reporting against those operational and strategic plans. Those particular reporting requirements have not existed in the past. However, they will be a statutory requirement—

ACTING CHAIR: Is that just a product of history? It was a statutory body before those types of things were built into reporting.

Mr Coccetti: The All Codes Racing Industry Board became a statutory body in 2013. The Racing Act, with its particular plans and reporting requirements, was developed in 2002. Those reporting requirements, for whatever reason in the previous balance of time, were not amended at that time.

Mr Oestreich: They were not updated.

Mr Coccetti: For whatever reason; my apologies, but I am not privy to those discussions. In light of that, that was a corporate governance measure which will not only improve on-the-ground authorised officers but also improve reporting to the minister on operational plans and strategic plans. They are the things that come to mind.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Burnett, did you want to do any follow-up on that question, or do you have any other questions?

Mr BENNETT: Good morning, everyone, and thank you very much for your time. Following on, can the department advise whether the arrangement which currently exists with the interim chair being the only member of the board and the appointment of the interim CEO for longer than three months is currently lawful under the act? Have we sought legal advice in relation to that?

ACTING CHAIR: Is that question clear?

Mr Oestreich: Yes, that question is clear. The question is out of scope of the discussion, but I am happy to answer it. The answer is yes on both counts. We have sought legal advice and, yes, it is legal.

ACTING CHAIR: So it is not necessarily part of the act. Member for Burnett, do you have any more questions?

Mr BENNETT: Could the officers advise what level of consultation will be undertaken with owners, jockeys, clubs, bookmakers and other associated stakeholders and entities as part of the rollout of these changes up until April 2016?

ACTING CHAIR: I might add that there was a consultation process through the commission of inquiry. Was that taken into account when drafting the act?

Mr Oestreich: It was. The act very closely follows the outcomes of the commission of inquiry. The act deals with very much the things that the commission of inquiry said needed to be dealt with. The commission of inquiry had an extensive consultation process around it. The matters contained in the bill have been very well consulted on to this point.

In terms of rollout of the legislation and the changes that are happening, there will be communication with industry leading up to the 1 April switch-on date. There will be a need obviously so that industry participants understand how these changes are flowing through. I think one of the important things to understand is that in terms of the requirements or the rules under which industry participants will operate there are not changes as a result of this. The rules that the industry

participants operate under will remain broadly the same. The major changes are about the ability for the compliance organisation to ensure that those rules are upheld—in other words, it is improving the compliance and investigation capacity of the compliance body rather than changing the rules for the industry participants. The industry participants will see very little change on a day-to-day basis.

Mr BENNETT: Would the legislation before the House envisage that the continuation of the Queensland country racing association is an ex officio affiliate to the board to provide advice about issues involved in country racing?

Mr Oestreich: I will check with my colleague Michael, but I do not believe the legislation deals with that matter. No, the legislation does not deal with that matter.

Mr BENNETT: Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR: Clauses 175 through 179 and clauses 37 and 96 expand the powers of authorised officers and further enhance the ability to gather evidence. Can you give us some information about how they were derived and what powers would be given to them under the act?

Mr Oestreich: Sure. I might ask Michael to talk to the detail of that.

Mr Coccetti: Essentially, the MacSporran report in terms of recommendation 3 proposed that there be a standardisation of powers between authorised officers under our racing scheme and the Racing Act and the Animal Care and Protection Act. Similarly, there was reference to police officers under the PPRA. As the review took place of the differences between the Racing Act and the ACPA, it was seen that there were not so much gaps but enhanced powers that ACPA officers had which would assist Racing Act inspectors or, under the Racing Integrity Bill, racing integrity officers. So in the proposed new act the ACPA officers' powers have essentially been mirrored. For instance, clauses 176, 177, 178 and 179 which you referred to are mirror provisions of the ACPA. In that development it was more of a standardisation of approach than—

Mr Oestreich: Inventing something.

Mr Coccetti: Yes, reinventing a term. On the basis of recommendation 3, we mirrored those provisions in the Racing Act so that racing integrity officers under our legislation will have similar powers to authorised officers or inspectors under the ACPA. In that approach it was more standardisation than it was coming up with new or excessive powers. Does that answer the question?

ACTING CHAIR: It does. When they have these powers they are no longer answering to a board that has dual goals—commercial growth of the industry and integrity. Is that likely to result in different results without the tension between those two things?

Mr Oestreich: Certainly that was the view of the commissioner. Mr MacSporran was quite clear in his report as well as in his statements that that conflict of interest created a less than ideal situation. I suppose the philosophy that underpins this is that, by creating two organisations which each has a clear focus rather than a clouded and obscured one or one that is potentially in conflict with itself, you create two more effective organisations than having one that is internally conflicted. It is a principle that it is a good idea, certainly in circumstances like this, for the regulator and the regulated to be two different bodies because it creates a clarity of relationship between those two elements.

Mrs GILBERT: With respect to the proposed structure of the board, can the department advise whether the model of seven members—four of whom are independent—is taken from any other jurisdictions?

ACTING CHAIR: How does it compare to other jurisdictions as well?

Mr Oestreich: Sure. I will ask Michael to talk about other jurisdictions in a moment, if he has that information available. The recommendation was a direct translation of the findings of the commission of inquiry. Mr MacSporran considered that expansion of the board from five to seven by including additional independents was important for creating the appropriate level of independence and oversight for Racing Queensland to make sure that it was not either in practice or by perception captured by interests in the racing industry so that the board could provide the level of good corporate governance that was required.

By adding extra members, what it effectively did was change the balance of power on the board. The way that the Racing Act is set out, there are three representatives from the racing industry—one from each particular code of racing: greyhounds, harness and thoroughbred—and there are two independent members. Mr MacSporran recommended that an additional two members be added so that there be four independents and there be three representatives from the racing industry. If you look at the blocks, the independents are the greater proportion of the board. I might ask Michael to comment on other jurisdictions.

Mr Coccetti: We do not have that information on other jurisdictions at this time, but I am more than happy to provide it.

ACTING CHAIR: We will formally take that on notice. Member for Burnett, is there anything else you would like to ask?

Mr BENNETT: Thanks for taking that on notice. To follow on looking at models, we have heard some criticism since the bill was introduced that those with industry knowledge may be outweighed by those without industry knowledge. Can the department when looking at the models consider that perspective as well in your response?

Mr Oestreich: Mr Bennett, could I clarify your question? Was your question when we come back to you with information on other jurisdictions that we provide some comparison of models—

Mr BENNETT: Various levels perhaps, if that would be appropriate.

Mr Oestreich: We can certainly do that.

Mr BENNETT: Thank you. The explanatory notes of the bill do not outline a specific cost for the establishment of QRIC. Could the department kindly advise whether it has any anticipated costs at this stage or a draft budget?

Mr Oestreich: A draft budget has not yet been finalised. However, I can say that the existing resources that are part of the Office of Racing and the Racing Queensland organisation will form the core of the new Queensland Racing Integrity Commission.

Mr BENNETT: Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Burnett, do you want to continue? I know you have made it clear that you have quite a few questions that you want to put to the witnesses so we will give you that opportunity.

Mr BENNETT: Thank you. I did hear something about transitioning staffing arrangements—I do apologise, being on the phone. Can I ask for clarification on how many of these staff will be transitioned over to QRIC?

ACTING CHAIR: We heard earlier that you were in the process of mapping that out. Given that this is not law and the transition is still some time away, do you have a clear indication of the numbers of staff?

Mr Oestreich: Not at this stage.

Mr BENNETT: Clause 13 provides the ability for the minister to provide written directions to QRIC. Is it the requirement that these directions are either tabled in the parliament or made publicly available by other means, such as being in the *Government Gazette*?

Mr Oestreich: I will ask Michael to respond to that question.

Mr Coccetti: Thank you for the question. In relation to ministerial directions, the minister has previously, under the Racing Act, been able to give directions for similar purposes. That will continue under the Racing Act for matters which relate to control bodies. In the Racing Act, there are certain things to do with, for instance, cancellation of a licence or things like that that the minister is not able to give a direction about. Those particular provisions now have come across to the proposed Racing Integrity Act, and therefore the minister will not be able to give directions in relation to those particular issues.

To answer your specific question about tabling, it is not proposed that it is tabled. However, the current way that ministerial directions are dealt with is that it is to be included in the annual report of both the commission and the control bodies—well, in this particular instance, it is the Racing Queensland board—and it is under their requirements to have an annual report for the Financial Accountability Act 2009. So those ministerial directions are not tabled as such, but they are included in the annual report for the financial year, which I believe is tabled.

Mr Oestreich: Yes.

ACTING CHAIR: We heard earlier about quarterly reports. What is the process, if they are given to the minister? We have heard that the annual report will be tabled. Is that the same case in quarterly reports?

Mr Oestreich: Correct me, if I am wrong, Michael, but my understanding is—

ACTING CHAIR: Also, further, is that in line with other statutory bodies in the standardised reporting criteria?

Mr Oestreich: I can say that the reporting criteria that are being set around both QRIC and Racing Queensland are in line with other statutory bodies' reporting requirements. It has been very much modelled on the reporting requirements for other statutory bodies. There is no legislative requirement for the quarterly reports themselves to be tabled in parliament. However, the annual report, which is very much reflective of the content of the quarterly reports, will be tabled in parliament.

ACTING CHAIR: I want to turn to bookmakers. I have not got the sections here, but I noticed the act makes provisions regarding the licensing of bookmakers and specifically also about the checking of criminal histories and the temporary taking of fingerprints. Can you comment on any changes to the process that come through this act in relation to the licensing of bookmakers?

Mr Oestreich: I will ask Michael to address that question.

Mr Coccetti: The process relating to bookmakers and the licensing of bookmakers remains unchanged from the current Racing Act. So chapter 6 of the Racing Act was reflected in chapter 4 of the proposed Racing Integrity Act. The only real change to the process will be that licensing will no longer be done by the control body; it will be done by the integrity commission as one single licensing unit. In relation to that, there will be reference changes and there may be some minor reworks in terms of wording so that the legislation makes sense, but apart from that it is not envisaged at this time. Essentially, it was just picked up and supplanted.

ACTING CHAIR: So it is not intended in the drafting of the act to have any substantive changes, other than of course that they are answerable to a board that is solely responsible for integrity, rather than the dual roles of commercial growth and integrity.

Mr Coccetti: The way that the system will work is that they will get eligibility certificates, which is all of your criminal history checking by the gaming executive, who is the chief executive of the Wagering Act. Once they have that eligibility certificate, they will be able to be licensed by the commission. So all of the probity and the collection of fingerprints will be done by the gaming executive, and then licensing is done by the commissioner, to certify that they are okay with the racing industry. It is not so much related to the probity element; that will be done by the gaming executive.

Mr Oestreich: So in summary, Mr Acting Chair, your view was correct: it is a process change—well, it is not a process change, it is really a shift from the existing requirements that instead of being dealt with by the control body, it will be dealt with by the commission.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Burnett, do you have any follow-up on that question or do you have any other questions?

Mr BENNETT: Thank you. Though not specifically mentioned, I have a question to the department about the funding of the establishment and ongoing operation of QRIC, and considering the interests of taxpayers and Queenslanders and particularly an interest in country racing.

Mr Oestreich: Given that those matters are outside the scope of this legislation, I would suggest that that question be directed to the minister.

Mr BENNETT: If I could elaborate a little bit further. When committees are considering pieces of legislation, the issues of funding and viability certainly have to have a regulatory impact or an impact on budget. So I would just say that I think the question is about funding and the ongoing operations of QRIC, which I think is an important question, with all due respect.

ACTING CHAIR: If I phrase the question differently—on page 3 of the explanatory notes, there is a section entitled 'Estimated cost for government implementation'. So with regards to the funds for establishment and ongoing operation, would you be able to give us some more information about how QRIC would be funded and the process going forward? Member for Burnett, I am not changing your question, am I?

Mr BENNETT: No, Acting Chair.

Mr Oestreich: In terms of the funding of the QRIC, the QRIC will principally be funded by the control bodies. The exact process for how that happens is still being discussed with particularly Queensland Treasury, and that will be dealt with as part of the budget process for 2016-17. There is, however, in the legislation an ability for the chief executive of the department administering the Integrity Act to require a control body to contribute to the reasonable costs of the Racing Integrity Commission. It is envisaged that those provisions would be used in situations where an emergent situation has occurred that has not been considered as part of the annual budget for the QRIC. It is not envisaged that that particular methodology would be used to fund the QRIC on an ongoing basis.

ACTING CHAIR: I do not know quite how to phrase this. A perceived failure of integrity has done considerable damage to the greyhound industry, and by proxy other racing industries. The costs certainly would help preserve the integrity of the industry and keep it on a commercial strong footing, knowing that integrity was being governed through this method of governance. Would that be fair to say? That is the intent of the act, isn't it?

Mr Oestreich: Certainly. It is all about integrity. It is really a case that the government has identified these less than ideal situations that have given rise to matters that we have all seen on television. So certainly the structures are in place in this legislation to allow QRIC to be funded and to be funded appropriately to do its job. The matter of the actual quantum of funding that goes to QRIC is outside the scope of what I can discuss of course. They are matters for CBRC and for government more broadly.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Burnett, we have made some reference to the Racing Science Centre before in our question to Mr Oestreich. Do you have any questions on that or some further matter?

Mr BENNETT: I would just like to clarify then about what we perceive the Racing Science Centre will end up like as part of these proposed changes. Can I ask for an elaboration please?

Mr Oestreich: I do not understand the question.

ACTING CHAIR: You made reference to the fact that the Racing Science Centre, which does much of the testing of animals after races, would be incorporated into QRIC. If I am understanding the question correctly, member for Burnett, you are asking whether there is anything to be added to what was previously said about the Racing Science Centre and its role in QRIC.

Mr Oestreich: I do not think there is really anything additional to add. The Racing Science Centre will continue in its role as the principal testing agency for racing in Queensland under the new structural arrangements.

ACTING CHAIR: So its governance would be different but the role would be similar if not identical?

Mr Oestreich: Yes.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Burnett?

Mr BENNETT: I am very happy with that, thank you. Clause 14—which again is about publication of correspondence—provides for the ability of QRIC to provide written directions to licensed clubs. Will these proposed written directions be published—for example, on the QRIC website?

ACTING CHAIR: In reference to licensed clubs, are you making reference to the racing clubs?

Mr BENNETT: Yes, absolutely.

Mr Oestreich: There is no legislative requirement for those written directions to be made public. That would be a decision I believe for the minister of the day.

Mr BENNETT: I note that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General was consulted. Was this in relation to the new role of QCAT in the appeals process? If so, what was the feedback provided by QCAT as part of the new process? As an example, does it require additional resourcing for them as well to manage the process?

Mr Oestreich: We did consult with the Department of Justice and Attorney-General on QCAT and a range of other measures in terms of the way that the legislation operates more broadly. The department had indicated that they were supportive of the move to abolish the racing disciplinary board and have QCAT as the key appeal mechanism. I think it is important to understand that a way of conceiving of this is that at the moment there are no internal review mechanisms available to applicants or people who are subject to decisions of the control body. There is no mechanism for them to have those decisions reviewed internally before appeal. Internal review mechanisms are standard across government. It is common practice; it is standard practice in fact for all modern compliance agencies.

The way that the Racing Act works is that, instead of an internal review process, the avenue of appeal is to the Racing Disciplinary Board before going to QCAT. The proposed legislation effectively removes the Racing Disciplinary Board and replaces it with an internal review mechanism where the application or the decision is reviewed by another party within the organisation. If they are still unsatisfied with that decision, then they have other avenues of appeal—the principal one being QCAT. At the moment, if people are unsatisfied with the decision of the Racing Disciplinary Board,

QCAT is the next port of call. So, effectively, QCAT's role in the hierarchy of appeals is remaining quite similar. The key difference is around replacing the Racing Disciplinary Board with an internal review mechanism.

ACTING CHAIR: The need for a new Racing Integrity Bill was of course related to failures of animal welfare that were really a threat to the industry and the ongoing success of the industry. Clause 283 gives power to disclose information relating to animal welfare matters. Can you give us some insight into why this was needed and how this will strengthen the act?

Mr Oestreich: These are the information sharing provisions?

ACTING CHAIR: That is right, with the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001.

Mr Oestreich: I might ask Michael to address the detail of that question.

Mr Coccetti: In relation to 282 and 283, in implementing this it was seen that information sharing powers between the agency were necessary to essentially improve collaboration between agencies—in 283—and principally also to allow, in 282, for the public to share information without the threat of civil liability or criminal liability for giving that information. Therefore, that would encourage the public to essentially share information that they have of particular issues. Matters that may help with an investigation of an animal welfare offence is a more appropriate way of describing that.

In relation to 283, these powers will also exist in the Animal Care and Protection Act, which will essentially allow for an authorised officer, under the Racing Integrity Bill, that has information that may assist an Animal Care and Protection Act matter for that authorised officer to share that information with the authorised officer under the ACPA for further action or whatever they would like to do for that particular agency. That is why those provisions were inserted into the act to allow for the agencies to collaborate with each other.

ACTING CHAIR: The aim of that section of the bill is to give the public greater confidence that animal welfare matters are being shared amongst departments and better investigated and the animals within the industry are protected in that manner?

Mr Coccetti: Yes.

Mr Oestreich: It certainly allows Animal Care and Protection Act inspectors, the authorised officers under the future racing integrity act, and police to work more seamlessly together. It deals with any concerns that might exist around confidentiality of information—those kinds of things—and use of information for the purpose for which it was collected. This allows that information that might be collected by the RSPCA or DAF to then be shared in total with racing integrity act authorised officers or Queensland Police without concerns around—

ACTING CHAIR: Legal.

Mr Oestreich:—without legal concerns around the sharing of that information.

ACTING CHAIR: Which is pretty vital.

Mr Oestreich: Yes.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Burnett, do you have any final questions to put?

Mr BENNETT: Thank you. In relation to this integrity bill, does the department have an idea of the level of remuneration that will be paid to the commissioner and the deputy commissioners? I understand they are usually linked to Public Service level entitlements.

Mr Oestreich: While it is somewhat outside the scope of this legislation, I can say that certainly the salaries for the commissioner, the deputy commissioners and all the staff who work for the commission will be benchmarked using the standard scoring mechanisms of government. So the salary will be calculated based on the standard approach by government for determining salaries of its employees.

ACTING CHAIR: The aim of this bill is to further strengthen the integrity of the industry, especially in relation to animal welfare. The key recommendation of the racing commission was to look at separation between those checking on the welfare of animals and the integrity of the industry. Does this act fulfil the criteria of the racing commission?

Mr Oestreich: Yes, it does in the sense that it addresses all of the matters that were raised in recommendations 1 to 3 of the commission of inquiry final report. Recommendations 1 to 3 deal with the legislative and organisational frameworks around the application of integrity in the racing industry. There was also recommendation 9, I believe, for the sake of completeness and that was the information sharing or was it the standardisation of powers?

Mr Coccetti: No, that was recommendation 3.

Mr Oestreich: Three, sorry. So recommendations 1, 2, 3 and 9 all deal with these matters around the structural elements of integrity compliance as well as the powers of those who are involved in it. I can say that this bill reflects in total the requirements of the commission of inquiry.

Mr Coccetti: Could I add recommendation 9 of the commission of inquiry was considered in detail. For the sake of completeness, it was something that was viewed as not being dealt with under the legislation. However, the recommendation did relate to changes to the Racing Act. During the review process it was not considered at this time to be considered or amended. It spoke about the introduction of an animal care fund to deal with greyhounds and transfer of ownership. At this time it is not proposed to be dealt with via legislation. It will be reviewed by QRIC once established.

ACTING CHAIR: Certainly there are a lot of aspects to deal with animal welfare. If there are no further questions to be put—

Mr BENNETT: If I could just ask one more indulgence, question 14 on my list, which you have in front of you, was about the funding of QRIC. I understand that this was a bit outside the bill and the department was reluctant to answer. I was wondering if it is appropriate to ask about the cost of QRIC before the committee report. Would that be an appropriate question to pose?

ACTING CHAIR: You are suggesting that they take question 14 on notice—

Mr BENNETT: So that we have a better idea of the costs of QRIC before our committee has to make our recommendations to the parliament.

ACTING CHAIR: The member for Burnett is suggesting that you take on notice the question, before we report back to parliament: where will the funds come from for the establishment and ongoing operation of QRIC? Is that correct, member for Burnett?

Mr BENNETT: Yes, thank you.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Burnett, before we conclude, are there any other questions that you wish to put on notice for further follow-up?

Mr BENNETT: I do alert that during the proceedings questions 7 and 8 were taken on notice about the department's undertaking to have a look at the structure of the board and the modelling of other jurisdictions.

ACTING CHAIR: That is right. We agreed to take on notice the comparison of the model of the board with other jurisdictions. I am not sure how to phrase question 8.

Mr BENNETT: It was about the make-up of those boards, about industry expertise.

ACTING CHAIR: It is the same question: did the department look at other models in other jurisdictions—or further to the same question.

Mr BENNETT: I am happy with 7 to be the question on notice for the interests of the inquiry.

ACTING CHAIR: We have taken those questions on notice. Departmental officers, we will need the answers to those questions taken on notice by the close of business on Friday, 18 December. Finally, I remind everyone with an interest in this bill—those of you who are watching on the web or in the audience—that the closing date for lodging written submissions is Wednesday, 27 January. With that, I would like to now declare this meeting closed.

Committee adjourned at 9.23 am