

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE
REVIEW OF THE RACING AND WAGERING WESTERN
AUSTRALIA ACTS**

**INQUIRY INTO THE RACING AND WAGERING WESTERN AUSTRALIA
ACTS**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE TAKEN
AT PERTH
FRIDAY, 30 APRIL 2010**

SESSION THREE

Members

**Mr John McGrath (Chairman)
Hon Max Trenorden (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm
Mr John Bowler
Hon Alyssa Hayden
Mr Peter Watson**

Hearing commenced at 2.27 pm [2:26:41 PM](#)

CELENZA, MR SAM

President, Western Australian Greyhound Breeders, Owners and Trainers' Association, examined:

KINNISH, MR ALLEN

Committee member, Western Australian Greyhound Breeders, Owners and Trainers' Association, examined:

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on the Review of the Racing and Wagering Western Australia Acts, I thank you for your appearance before us today. The purpose of this hearing is to assist the committee in its inquiry into the Racing and Wagering Western Australia acts. You would have seen a copy of the committee's specific terms of reference, I am sure. For the benefit of Hansard and those observing, I will introduce myself and the other members of the committee present today. My name is John McGrath, I am the chair. On my left is Max Trenorden, MLC, who is the deputy chair; further across is Peter Watson, MLA, member for Albany; John Bowler, MLA, member for Kalgoorlie; and Alyssa Hayden, MLC, will be back in a minute.

This committee is a joint standing committee of the Parliament of Western Australia. This hearing is a formal procedure of Parliament and therefore commands the same respect given to proceedings in the house itself. Even though the committee is not asking witnesses to provide evidence on oath or affirmation, it is important that you understand that any deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as a contempt of Parliament. This is a public hearing and Hansard will be making a transcript of the proceedings for the public record. If you refer to any documents during your evidence, it would assist Hansard if you could provide the full title for the record.

Before we proceed, I also need to ask you a series of questions. Have you completed the "Details of Witness" form?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you understand the notes at the bottom of the form about giving evidence to a parliamentary committee?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Did you receive and read the information for witnesses briefing sheet provided with the "Details of Witness" form today?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you have any questions in relation to being a witness at today's hearing?

The Witnesses: No.

The CHAIRMAN: Would you please state your full name and the capacity in which you appear before the committee today.

Mr Celenza: I am known as Sam and my full name is Leni Salvatore Celenza. I am the president of the owners and trainers of Greyhounds WA.

Mr Kinnish: My name is Allen Kinnish and I am a committee member of the Western Australian Greyhound Breeders, Owners and Trainers' Association.

The CHAIRMAN: First of all, Mr Celenza, could you possibly start by telling us a bit about the WA Greyhound Breeders, Owners and Trainers' Association, its main activities within the industry, possibly how you think the industry is performing at the moment, and any challenges you see ahead for the industry?

Mr Celenza: The owners and trainers are a body that represents all the owners and trainers. If they have a problem, we are the spokespeople for and we are the voice of the industry. The biggest problem we have at the moment is facilities; we have nowhere to train. As an owner-trainer, albeit part-time, I have nowhere to train my dogs. If Cannington disappears, I have to go to Mandurah. An example is tomorrow morning I have to get up at five o'clock to go to Mandurah to run the dogs because I cannot run them down at Cannington. The industry as a whole is annoying the life out of me. What is happening? We do not know what the future holds for Cannington for the greyhounds as a training venue. We need a training venue, we need a city track; otherwise, the greyhounds will die. It is as simple as that.

The CHAIRMAN: Can you just explain to the committee and for Hansard about training a greyhound—the need to go to a track. What do you do on other days?

Mr Celenza: Okay. Do you want the full —

The CHAIRMAN: When you train a greyhound, there is a lot of walking, I gather, but how much requirement is there to go to an actual track?

Mr Celenza: I have just experienced breeding my own litter of pups. From about 10 months old we take them down to the track to watch them go around so that they get the idea. At 12 months old they get broken in. They go to a specialised venue to get broken in. When they come back from the breakers, we then have to follow that up with taking them to the track at least twice a week to trial on the track so they get used to going around the track and chasing the bunny or lure. That means getting up at six o'clock in the morning, five o'clock in the morning or four o'clock, whatever the time may be, to be at the track at a certain time because times are limited and there are so many trainers. At the moment, Mandurah is being closed for renovations or repairs and 124 trials took place last Monday at Cannington, which meant that I did not finish there until 25 minutes past 11, which in Western Australian weather, in heat like that, I took them home and of course now I have two dogs in my kennel that have acidosis because they ran in the heat, I did not get them watered quick enough so now they may not ever race again.

[2.20 pm]

And it is not only me; it is right across the industry. So although there is a lot of walking involved, they need to go to the track at least once or twice a week to get themselves fully aware of what they have got to chase; otherwise, you will get what they call a dog chaser—it chases the other dogs; it does not chase the lure. And of course the stewards are very, very hard. We have the toughest stewards in Australia here. They do a terrific job and they stamped it all out, and as soon as they see a dog slow down and not chase, you get time for it. Therefore, we have to keep those dogs on the track all the time. We get people who come from as far down as Albany and as far as Bunbury, and from Geraldton as well.

The CHAIRMAN: Just to trial?

Mr Celenza: Just to trial, yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Say you get a new track at Cannington and you have got Mandurah, will that be enough for you or will there still be a shortage of a track?

Mr Celenza: It will do but there will still be a shortage. We definitely need a straight track. We have got one at Southern River at the moment where they train, but we need a training track. But, look, beggars cannot be choosers. I am happy and the industry would be happy, as far as I am

aware, to make sure that there is a track at Cannington where we can train our greyhounds. We have to have a city track to train greyhounds.

The CHAIRMAN: Some of the trainers used to have their own tracks, though, did they not—their own straights?

Mr Celenza: I have got my own straights but, Mr McGrath, they do not run on the straight track; they run around a circle, and although I use my training track of 300 metres to get them fit, they still need to go around the circle to chase the lure; otherwise, they will not do it. I actually took two of my greyhounds about a month ago down to Mr Trenorden's area. My daughter is from Lake Grace, so I took them down there and I ran them up and down the paddock there to get them fitter.

The CHAIRMAN: At Lake Grace?

Mr Celenza: At Lake Grace, or Kukerin actually, which I think is the racing minister's electorate.

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: Very close.

The CHAIRMAN: Very close, yes.

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: It is his electorate.

Mr Celenza: My daughter is married to a farmer from Kukerin, so I took them down there to give them a bit of a run because my track was not sufficient, and I could not go to Cannington, so I let them go around chasing the tractor around the circle.

The CHAIRMAN: Mr Kinnish, can you just tell us a little bit about your being a committee member? Do you train greyhounds or what is your involvement?

Mr Kinnish: I have been involved in the greyhound industry for over 30 years. I do not train on my own ground at the moment. I have not owned a greyhound now for approximately the last 18 months because I am very interested to see what direction the industry is going to take. We have a problem with the tenure at Cannington and there is going to be a requirement to have another track there which is on the old trotting track which is immediately behind. The trouble is going to be getting infrastructure funding to do that. Without it, I am afraid the demise of greyhounds is on the cards.

The CHAIRMAN: That is how important it is to have a —

Mr Kinnish: That is how important it is. I mean, at the moment the greyhound industry here goes through a lot because there are only really two facilities here for what they call to break in a greyhound; that is, from a young dog, breaking it in, as Mr Celenza was explaining. But if you have to send them to the professionals in the eastern states, you are up for almost \$1 000 per dog just to get them there and back.

The CHAIRMAN: Do people do that?

Mr Kinnish: People do do it. What they will do is they will send the brood bitch across to the eastern states, have it whelped in the eastern states, keep it there, do the trialling, and then they will have them brought back to them already broken in because there are limited facilities. I think it is only Mr Tony Glenny and one other that does the breaking in of greyhounds in this state at the moment.

The CHAIRMAN: What about the greyhound breeding industry—is that mainly just a domestic or are there professional breeding kennels?

Mr Kinnish: People breed here and there is one veterinary practice that has the facilities to do artificial insemination of the greyhounds. That reduces some of the costs involved because they do not have to send the brood bitch to the eastern states to be mated with the top sires. They can get the straws brought over here and they can have it done here, which helps to reduce the costs. But breeding is a limited situation now because of the costs that are continually increasing, and that is

why, although I myself have bred greyhounds and that, I have sort of now sat on the sidelines a little bit to wait and see what direction they will go, because I do not believe in investing money in something which may just completely fold and I would have lost money.

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: Can I ask you a question about your account structure of your industry? You are currently the only body that is not an independent body. Does that cause you problems? Should it be an independent body? It is under statute at the moment. It is the only code that operates under a state law.

Mr Kinnish: You are talking about WAGRA, I presume.

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: Yes.

Mr Kinnish: There are probably some restrictions that are involved in there. I know there has been talk. The government would like us to become an independent body like they are in the eastern states and like the others are. I can see that there would be some benefits to it and possibly some drawbacks. One of the things by being independent is being able to access infrastructure funding, as at the present moment we cannot get from RWWA. So, yes, there would be benefits but there would also be drawbacks.

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: But there is no real hindrance to you, is there?

Mr Kinnish: I do not think it would be a real hindrance at all. That is my own personal comment.

Mr Celenza: To answer your question, if I may, on the breeding industry, since RWWA's inception and the breeder's bonus that now exists, a lot of owners started breeding their own dogs. To give one prime example, you have all heard of Linda Britton. Linda Britton has been the top trainer in WA for 12, 13 or 14 years, whatever it is. She comes from a well-known family in the eastern seaboard and they just feed her with dogs. Now she has started breeding her own dogs. She has got one of the leading trainers in WA, Garry and Craig Weston. They probably own something like 70 or 80 dogs and they are breeding their own dogs now. I was talking to Linda the other day; she has got 27 litters on the ground racing from three weeks to 15 months or 18 months old and they are all ready to start racing.

[2.40 pm]

Mr P.B. WATSON: How many are in a litter?

Mr Celenza: It can vary. My bitch has had two litters. The first litter had five pups and then she had nine. A litter of 13 pups was born the other day.

Mr P.B. WATSON: How many of them will survive and how many will make it to the racetrack?

Mr Celenza: They all survive. One of the pups out of the litter of nine almost died two days after it was born because it was not sucking from its mother. We raced down to the Ballajura Veterinary Hospital and, luckily for us, the vet was involved with the greyhounds at Sandown Veterinary Clinic and he revived it. My daughter and wife had to get up every two hours to feed it with a tube and it is now one of the best in the litter.

Mr P.B. WATSON: How many of those pups made it to the racetrack?

Mr Celenza: All of them got to the race track. I own eight and sold one. Out of my litter, three have won races and the other five—bar the two that got acidosis; although she won a race, she trialled first up at 31.09 and then she won her first race at 31.29, which is pretty good time for a 20-month old bitch, and then she got acidosis. Now I have to wait for another three or four weeks until I can get her back. Apart from her, the rest of them have been around the track and will be ready to trial in the next three weeks.

Mr P.B. WATSON: I have noticed that in 2006, 125 litters were registered in Western Australia and in 2008 there were only 102 registered litters. Is that because there is a lack of confidence in the industry?

Mr Kinnish: Definitely. That is one of the main things. What you are looking at is the fact that irrespective of whether some litters have just one pup and others have 13 pups, the number of them that eventually race on the track—I assume you are trying to find out what happens to the ones that do not make it. Invariably, a number of young dogs sustain injuries when they are broken in. You cannot do anything about it and they have to be taken to the veterinarian and euthanased. There is no alternative.

Mr P.B. WATSON: It is the same Australia-wide and in New Zealand. Maybe the numbers have stayed the same in New South Wales but there has been no upward movement here.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: Our breeding industry per dollar—the prize money of \$8 million is pretty poor, is it not?

Mr Kinnish: Most people in the industry are reasonably happy with the prize money.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: That is what I am saying, but the breeding does not reflect that.

Mr Kinnish: Their biggest concern is that although that amount of prize money is there and it gives them an incentive to breed, if they cannot see a future in the business, they will get out of it. One of the problems we have had is that RWWA intimated at one time that we would race virtually on two tracks—one at Mandurah and the other at Northam—and that most of the racing was to be done there. If that were the case, I would guess that 75 per cent of people involved in the industry would get out of it because there would be no incentive for them. One of the problems is that when you have a limited number of venues—we have only three—the dogs become stale. In other words, they start tailing off. They will race, but they need a change of venue to keep up their interest. If that does not happen, they suffer the wrath of the stewards and the result is that we are in trouble. People do not want to go through that hassle.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: There was an attempt sometime ago to establish a greyhound track in Kalgoorlie and there was also some talk of establishing a track at Bunbury, but they have never eventuated.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you think that will happen down the track? Will another track open up?

Mr Kinnish: Bunbury could possibly be a venue for another track. There was talk about building a track in Wanneroo. If we can maintain a city track at Cannington, there would be no need for another venue in Wanneroo. You would need to go to the expanding areas, which are down in Bunbury and Busselton.

The CHAIRMAN: We were told that the majority of people who go to Cannington are from a catchment area of 10 or 20 kilometres around the track. They are not coming from a great distance; they are mainly people from the metropolitan area.

Mr Kinnish: To a degree, but they also come from Mandurah and Northam. I have known one or two people who have travelled from Busselton.

Mr P.B. WATSON: When we were in Kalgoorlie, we learned that a large number of people in Kalgoorlie own dogs.

Mr Kinnish: At one stage, I trained greyhounds for some people who lived in Kalgoorlie. I had them for three or four years. I recently sold my property to a person who lived in Kalgoorlie and who has just moved down here. He is involved in the industry, too.

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: I presume that the number one issue you want to tell us about is that you want a brand-new facility.

Mr Kinnish: We need funding for infrastructure. Because of the world economic downturn, the funds are not available. RWWA, even with the best foresight, could not have foreseen what happened. It is hard-pressed for funds and we must try to find alternatives. One of the alternatives is

to ask whether the government can assist and another is to reduce the betting tax to allow more funding to be generated between the codes.

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: Both of those arguments have been put to us and are on our radar.

The CHAIRMAN: To support that argument, can you tell us how many people in the community support racing, how many people it employs and how many people are involved in the industry?

Mr Kinnish: If you were to break it down to the number of people involved and who benefits from it, it includes veterinarians, the food suppliers and even the local mechanics who repair vehicles. You need to ensure that you have a good vehicle to travel to Mandurah or Northam. A lot of people who are not seen to be involved in the industry are involved, including the general public. The track at Cannington is packed during the summer on a Saturday night or at the New Year's Eve celebrations or other main events. Families like to go there and sit on the grass where their kids can run around and enjoy themselves. If the Cannington track disappears, that social event will be missing.

The CHAIRMAN: The point has been made that given the fact that greyhound racing is so prominent on Sky Channel, especially during the late afternoons and early evenings when there is no televised horse racing, the revenue gained from the betting turnover on greyhound racing is increasing all the time. Should that be considered in your favour when you make your request for some assistance to get a new track?

Mr Kinnish: One of the problems is that we have Sky Channel, which means we now have two channels with racing on. There is the main channel and the secondary channel. Unfortunately, apart from a Saturday, we are virtually going to end up on the secondary channel, which will reduce the turnover.

The CHAIRMAN: Is that the local meetings or all greyhound meetings?

Mr Kinnish: That is most of the local greyhound races. Although we generate a lot of TAB turnover from the eastern states' greyhound racing, we benefit much more from our own product. We must rely on that more than anything else. The spin-off that we get from the eastern states into our industry is negligible, even though it is there. You can see the greyhound racing and have a bet on it, but we benefit from the amount of turnover that is generated off-course on our own local meetings and not so much on the eastern states.

The CHAIRMAN: Is our local product comparable to the greyhounds that are produced in the other states? Are they up there with the best?

Mr Kinnish: In recent times we have competed reasonably well with the eastern states. I cannot say that we have bred and produced a greater number of top dogs than have been bred in the eastern states because they have a greater volume of breeders to do it. There is a tendency here to buy the dogs from the eastern states. The problem with that is it reduces the benefit to the owners, trainers and breeders here because we are sourcing the dogs that the eastern states' industry does not want. We end up buying them and running them. The other problem we have is that the money involved for top quality dogs that come over here to race for our feature events ends up going out of state.

[2.50 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: Do the visiting dogs normally win?

Mr Kinnish: I would say that in the greater number of times the eastern states greyhounds pick up the biggest percentage of the top quality prize money.

The CHAIRMAN: I guess that might also happen in other codes.

Mr Kinnish: It is something you cannot stop.

The CHAIRMAN: Over the years the Western Australian greyhound industry has produced some pretty outstanding dogs.

Mr Kinnish: They have indeed. To be quite honest the one dog that would stand out here is Sandi's Me Mum, which has been included in the hall of fame. She is the only greyhound in Australia that has won two premium back-to-back events.

Mr Celenza: I have been in the industry for over 30 years and in that time I have managed probably 26 syndicates ranging from four to 36 people in the syndicates, and they have all gone out of the industry because of the uncertainty. At the moment I have six syndicates going. Two of them are ready to pull the pin because they have been told that greyhounds in Cannington will be stopped. They say, "If I can go to Northam for \$400 and share it with eight people at \$50 a person, go to hell; I'll sell my dog and get out of it." That is the problem. What we are up against—I am not being facetious—is that thoroughbreds have training facilities everywhere and pacing has training facilities everywhere. Greyhounds have got nothing, yet our turnover is better than what pacing produces. We are getting less and less funding. We are getting squeezed out.

The CHAIRMAN: Have any petitions been taken around?

Mr Kinnish: Unfortunately, "petitions" is deemed to be a bad word within our industry because people tend to think, "Oh, anybody can get up a petition for something." I do not think it is taken a great lot of notice of. We have had petitions in the past and what has come out of them has literally been ignored.

The CHAIRMAN: You are making a petition today to our committee.

Mr Kinnish: Exactly. But I would say that we would get a better response from this committee than we would from other areas.

Hon ALYSSA HAYDEN: With training, where would you want to see a training track?

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: As well as a new Cannington?

Mr Kinnish: We talk about a training track. I think to get private enterprise to produce a track for the breaking in and education of young greyhounds is virtually zilch. I would say that died out here about 10 years ago.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: So you need a state-owned facility?

Mr Kinnish: It would be RWWA as a body looking after one similar to what they do at Lark Hill. Lark Hill is a training facility for thoroughbred racing, but we do not have a similar facility.

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: Where would you put that?

Mr Kinnish: The problem we would have is that it would be difficult to evolve Cannington into a new complex because of the limited ground area that is available because we have to go along with what CAHRS dictate, to a degree. To try to buy an area of ground to build a new greyhound track and training facility is almost impossible; it would be too costly. The only thing we can do is what we do at the present moment; that is, break in our dogs at various areas. We either send them over to the eastern states or get locals to do it. Once we have passed that initial stage we use Cannington and Mandurah race tracks virtually as trialling facilities. That is the only alternative. It has worked quite successfully. The only thing is we do not seem to get a great lot of funding for training facilities or training needs.

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: Lark Hill was very significantly assisted by local government. If you were looking at some other facility for training of greyhounds, you could look at crown land; you could look at state land; you could look at local government land; or you could look at private land. Those things are not impossible, particularly if the argument is that it cannot be viable commercially, and it should be, as Lark Hill and Byford are covered by the industry.

Hon ALYSSA HAYDEN: If you had that option, where would be your best area?

Mr Kinnish: One of the problems that arises there comes back to the same old situation. The trots and the galloping animals have approximately 40 facilities throughout the state; we have only two.

Hon ALYSSA HAYDEN: We are now asking: if you had a chance to have one —

Mr Kinnish: We are looking at one group of owners and trainers who operate in the Mandurah area, another one who operates in the Cannington area and another one who operates in the Northam area. In answer to where we could put one centralised training venue, RWWA would have to employ professional people to run it almost, like private industry. In the past, that has not been successful. Those who did it privately got out of it because it was a loss-making situation. I think, unfortunately, the same would occur here.

The CHAIRMAN: How many people would you need to run it?

Mr Kinnish: You would probably need four or five.

Hon ALYSSA HAYDEN: Where are the majority of people in the industry, metro?

Mr Celenza: Metro, yes.

Hon ALYSSA HAYDEN: So you would logically have it metro.

Mr Kinnish: You would try to have it in the metro area.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: Southern River area.

Mr Celenza: Southern River and Wattle Grove.

Mr Kinnish: At one stage they had the facility at Bushmead, which is down by the airport, but because it was commonwealth-owned land, when it changed over it disappeared and it fell over. If we had something similar to Bushmead, a lot of people would probably use it.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: It is probably more a question for the association, but have you used any political clout you may have to go to either the Liberal or Labor Party to say, “You need to support our industry.” Have you been to your local members?

Mr Kinnish: In the past—years ago—yes, I have. I have conversed with them. In recent years, no. But because of the way things are starting to unfold now, I think there is a greater chance that our association will try to make a lot of representation to various members of Parliament to try to achieve something.

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: It would be a useful thing to do, I suggest.

Hon ALYSSA HAYDEN: There are a lot of new members of Parliament.

Mr Kinnish: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Is there anything else you would like to say about the industry?

Mr Kinnish: I would say that since the inception of RWWA and the idea behind it, it has been good because we have one body that is now looking after three codes. We have the stewards and an integrity committee now that makes sure all aspects of the industry are properly run; there are no sneaky things taking place that should not be taking place. I think one of the only things is that we have consultative group meetings every four months. I am on one of those committees, and we meet with RWWA. One of the problems I find is that we go to the meetings and have an agenda, and it seems to be a case of “This is what we’re doing and unfortunately you’re too late to have any input.” A lot of this has occurred with the distribution of stake moneys. On many occasions I have stuck my neck out and voiced my disapproval of what has taken place because it has been a case of, “Well, unfortunately we had to do this.”

The CHAIRMAN: Yes, “Now we’re telling you”.

Mr Kinnish: “Now we’re telling you what’s actually taking place.” This year for the first time we have had a little bit of change around. But this happens in a lot of instances. I believe it is a failing but it can be easily addressed. We tend to be told what is taking place rather than having meaningful discussions and consultation. Unfortunately, shortly after RWWA came into being it did an industry

survey. One of the main things that came out of that survey was stake moneys and consultation and communication. Unfortunately, I think that area needs further attention.

[3.00 pm]

Hon MAX TRENORDEN: We have heard that before.

Mr Kinnish: That is my opinion. But, basically, I would say that they have achieved the objects of what was required when it was first set up.

The CHAIRMAN: We do plan to try to get out to Cannington Central one night for the benefit of some of our members who might not have been there, to have a look to see how the industry is performing. Thanks for your input. I thank you for appearing before the committee today. I need to advise you that a transcript of this hearing will be forwarded to you for correction of minor errors. Any such corrections must be made and the transcript returned within 10 days from the date of the letter attached to the transcript. If the transcript is not returned within this period, it will be deemed to be correct. New material cannot be added via these corrections and the sense of the evidence cannot be altered. Should you wish to provide additional information or elaborate on particular points, please include a supplementary submission for the committee's consideration when you return your corrected transcripts of evidence. Thanks very much for attending, gentlemen.

Mr Kinnish: I would appreciate it if your members, when they do make a visit to Cannington, talk to other industry members while they are there, and I think they will get a good feeling of what is going on.

*mall: It is the greatest industry there is.

Mr Kinnish: Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you for coming.

Hearing concluded at 3.01 pm