

**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, 26 FEBRUARY 2010**

**SESSION FOUR**

**Members**

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

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**Hearing commenced at 2.00 pm****ROBERTS, MR MARK RUSSELL****President, Western Australian Country Harness Racing Association,  
examined:****PAGANONI, MR ALFRED****Past President, Western Australian Country Harness Racing Association,  
examined:**

**The CHAIRMAN:** On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on the Review of the Racing and Wagering Western Australia Acts, I would like to thank you for your attendance 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. For the benefit of Hansard and those observing, I would like to introduce myself and the other members of the committee present today. I am John McGrath. To my left is John Bowler, member for Kalgoorlie; Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm, MLC; and Hon Alyssa Hayden, MLC.

The committee is a joint standing committee of the Parliament of Western Australia. This hearing is a formal procedure of the 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 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:** Thank you for your submission to this inquiry. Together with the information you provide today, your submission will form part of the evidence to this inquiry and may be made public. Are there any amendments that you would like to make to your submission that we have received?

**Mr Paganoni:** A couple of spelling errors!

**The CHAIRMAN:** We have a series of questions to ask you today. Before we do that, do you wish to provide the committee with any additional information or make an opening statement to the hearing?

**Mr Roberts:** We probably can make an opening statement.

**The CHAIRMAN:** If you could just explain a bit about your association.

**Mr Roberts:** The Country Harness Racing Association started in the 1960s. We effectively tried to support country harness. In the old days the WATA and the country were at loggerheads. Going back to the Turner report—which would be the late 1980s, was it, Alf?

**Mr Paganoni:** The late 1990s.

**Mr Roberts:** We saw a need for a RWWA-type organisation to oversee particularly our sport. We did not see that as encompassing dogs and gallops as well. We saw a need for a RWWA-type organisation. It has probably come a bit bigger than what we expected at the time. It sort of got out of our grasp. As I say, we support RWWA and we support how they came about. We have a few little issues about how they run. I do not know whether you wish me to —

**The CHAIRMAN:** Yes. You can elaborate on those, please.

**Mr Roberts:** For instance, Bunbury was having trouble getting horses. The RWWA board decided to put an extra \$150 per race of stake money into Bunbury against other country clubs. We felt that they should have come to us and asked us why Bunbury was not getting horses. Instead of that, they just made a decision. They still are not getting horses—the reason being that Bunbury do not treat the people who go there very nicely so people do not go back. Had they come to an organisation like us, or even BOTRA, they would have got a different view from what they did by going to Bunbury direct. Part of their draft is that they are supposed to consult with industry bodies, but to some extent we have not been given any —

**The CHAIRMAN:** Consultation.

**Mr Roberts:** Yes—we have consultation but not in that sort of way. We could have made that process a little bit different. The other issue is a longer term thing. One of RWWA's aims is long-term viability of both codes or all three codes. One of the things that could have done that is the redevelopment of Gloucester Park and selling off some of the assets. That could have set the industry up for the next 20 to 50 years. RWWA did not take any active interest in that at all and yet it was actually part of their charter that they should do that. They did not do that. I think they could have taken that and run with it. I think a little bit the same with the gallops with the development of Belmont Park. RWWA could take a very active interest in that. That would set the gallops code up for a long period of time too.

**The CHAIRMAN:** In what regard; by giving a bit of direction to the clubs as they move towards those big developments?

**Mr Roberts:** They have a much better conduit into the parliamentary process or into government. In the case of the Gloucester Park development, I would have thought that RWWA could have taken an interest in it and gone to government and said, "Because of the global financial crisis, we need some projects. Here is a \$50 million project." We could get it going tomorrow; get it done. You could actually pay the \$50 million back at the end of it. There is no cost lost to the government at all. Somebody could have sold that to the government, or at least in some form; otherwise, you would be a pretty poor salesman I would have thought.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I think you make a good point. You see that as part of RWWA's role to look after all facets of the industry going forward and assisting —

**Mr Roberts:** Part of their charter is the long-term viability of the industry. I would have thought, both for the gallops and the trots, that those projects are part of long-term viability for those particular industries.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Do you have a view on that, Alf?

**Mr Paganoni:** I believe, and I have always believed, that country harness racing had some proprietorship in that we actually paid the interest bills that came through as part of the distribution process. We have never exercised that right. To hear Mark say that, it is just another step on from that. I would like it recorded that we do have some proprietorship —

**The CHAIRMAN:** Of Gloucester Park?

**Mr Paganoni:** We believe country harness racing did have some proprietorship. If RWWA wants to go down that track, I would like to put it on record that —

**Mr Roberts:** Some of that money should go back to the country.

**Mr Paganoni:** We have never exercised that.

**The CHAIRMAN:** You say that is owned by the industry?

**Mr Paganoni:** I firmly believe it is not owned by —

**The CHAIRMAN:** It is an industry asset?

**Mr Paganoni:** It is an industry asset; not owned by the members.

**Mr Roberts:** I think in the redevelopment, part of the discussions that could have gone through was how much money is going to go either way. To some extent I think it was an opportunity lost. Similarly, as you say, with the development of Belmont Park with the gallops, I think it is an opportunity lost that we may not get back in the next five or 10 years.

**Mr Paganoni:** Can I present this? This is the regulatory model of harness racing as we see it.

**Mr J.J.M. BOWLER:** Mark, your submission mentions that you would like to see the position of a manager, country clubs operations to provide a link between RWWA and the country clubs. Is there such a person doing that for country racing?

[2.10 pm]

**Mr Roberts:** I do not have knowledge of that.

**Mr J.J.M. BOWLER:** If there is not, could that person be shared?

**Mr Roberts:** I would think so.

**Mr J.J.M. BOWLER:** In other words, to look after country clubs, whether they are the trots or racing.

**Mr Roberts:** Yes, I would think so. I mean there are 17-odd country clubs, trotting clubs, and there are probably a similar amount in the gallops. I would have thought the same person would be able to cope with both of that.

**The CHAIRMAN:** So what is your representation on the board of RWWA? Would that person you are talking about be actually on the board or be in between the board and the industry?

**Mr J.J.M. BOWLER:** A staff member.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It would be a staff member.

**Mr Roberts:** I think it would be a staff member.

**The CHAIRMAN:** And what about on the board? There has been some talk that there should be a person from country racing or trotting representing the country.

**Mr Roberts:** That would be the ultimate. I reckon that you do not want to make them too cumbersome but certainly at the moment we see the board of RWWA as being very metrocentric, and we have often had conversations with members of the board who do not really understand what the situation is out in the country.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Can you tell us how the country harness racing is going? We read about amalgamations and clubs having meetings taken off them and things like that. How do you think it

is all panning out? Could you give us some picture of what is happening out there at country trotting clubs?

**Mr Roberts:** I think it is a mixed bag. There are some country clubs which have been earmarked to be successful, and Bunbury and Pinjarra probably are good examples of that. It almost seems like there were some clubs that have been earmarked as they are on a slippery slope—Albany and Kalgoorlie to some extent. Kalgoorlie has had four meetings taken off them this year. There are various reasons for that and some of those were logical. But Albany—there was not a lot of logic in taking meetings off them. Wagin is another one that sort of has not been given a clear direction of where they are heading.

**Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM:** Can I interrupt you a second, Mr Chairman? Just a point to be made here, because the Albany club has asked me to make some comments in this particular respect. I know that, say, three or four years ago they were encouraged—and both of you have been keen supporters of country harness racing down at the south coast—and they were basically told to get more horses there and then there would not be an issue with respect to losing meetings. Is this a true statement, that they were advised they needed to do that?

**Mr Roberts:** Yes, that was one of the yarns they had had.

**Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM:** But despite all of the moves that the particular club made to get more and more horses to their meetings, they have continued to lose meetings and I think the same has happened at Kalgoorlie. You might know as well.

**The CHAIRMAN:** So can you elaborate a bit on what you think happened in Albany, because one of our members, Peter Watson, is the member for Albany and did express—although he cannot be here today—that he did want this matter raised?

**Mr Roberts:** Yes. They have been sort of pushed into an area where they cannot expand effectively, so they took meetings off them and basically gave them to other Sky clubs to increase the Sky channel. Our view is that all clubs, be they in Albany or Kalgoorlie—Kalgoorlie is on Sky anyway—but in Albany Sky is down there; they do it for the gallops. There is no reason why one or two of their meetings could not be on Sky to help them. But they do it in the eastern states all the time, like the major centres that have a cup meeting; they just send the SNG van out there and they put them on Sky. Our view is that country clubs like Albany, Central Wheatbelt, maybe even Geraldton because they have Sky already, there is no reason why their major cup meetings should not be on Sky and promoted as such. We do not see that RWWA is actually helping to promote those clubs getting on to Sky. Sky, whether we like it or not, is where everybody is heading: in the Sky situation.

**The CHAIRMAN:** And do you think Sky would take those meetings up, or not?

**Mr Roberts:** We are not sure because we get a different view. We have had people actually go over and talk to Sky people and they say, “Yeah, we’re looking for meetings.” And in the future where we are going to have an extra channel on Sky they are going to be looking for meetings, so you would not have a problem actually getting it on Sky. But when you talk to RWWA they say, “Oh no, they don’t really want it”, and we wonder whether they are pushing our barrow as hard as we would like to push it. Then they come up with a figure that it costs \$10 000 or something to actually put your name up on Sky. We have a lot of people who are much smarter on the computer than I am, so that is the question. It does not cost that much to program the computer.

**The CHAIRMAN:** RWWA, from what I gather, also has a view about night meetings and there is a lot of importance placed on whether people in the eastern states are betting on the product.

**Mr Roberts:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Do you guys have a view on that?

**Mr Roberts:** We have been a bit of a fill-in for a while. Going back a couple of years ago when Cannington Central was not doing all that well on a Saturday night and they were the only ones on Sky and Gloucester Park and other country venues actually got put on on Saturday nights to help pay for the Sky channel on Saturday night. We were quite happy about that. It helped us out to some extent as well. We are quite happy to fill in wherever turnover is going to help. I think most clubs would just like the opportunity to actually have a chance at having a good turnover day and to show that they are part of the industry. But it is very hard for a club like a Central Wheatbelt or an Albany on a Sunday. You do not get radio coverage because you end up getting swamped by another meeting so your race gets called off. So you cannot get turnover that way. You are not on Sky. You might have eight races of really good competitive fields but if you are not getting the coverage of it, you do not get anything. And we do not feel that RWWA has actually helped us in that respect.

**Mr Paganoni:** I can refer to that. I was at a restaurant in Bunbury and I had a horse running at Central Wheatbelt and I think it was at 1.33. I got back in the restaurant at five to two. It went 400 metres and stopped. I was going to have a look and write to Richard Burt about it. It then went to some obscure place because they would not switch to the Western Australian product. And I believe that radio is probably the only way forward for country clubs—they cannot get their vision out, but they can get the voice out. And every other punter in Perth from that meeting over east can see it on Sky. Whereas Western Australian racing radio tends not to go to the local product; it will just take the eastern states' product because it is on Sky.

**The CHAIRMAN:** So you are saying that even the radio is not taking the local product straight away.

**Mr Paganoni:** No.

**Mr Roberts:** No. Actually it depends on who the presenter is. If you have Brad Hallows in there, he will tend to take the local product. If you have somebody else, they tend to do the eastern states. So obviously there is no direction.

**Mr J.J.M. BOWLER:** Even the fact that in a lot of areas where your clubs operate there is no racing rolled out, which has been raised by Mr Vincent.

**Mr Roberts:** I actually live 15 kilometres from Northam, in a triangle from Northam–Toodyay–Clackline, right in the middle. Northam has an 88FM station. I am too close to Northam to get 1206 from Perth because the ABC in Northam is 1215, so it cuts you out. Unfortunately the Christian radio station has got 88FM in Toodyay. So as you drive around the paddock, you are cut in from the Christian radio station to racing radio and back.

**Mr Paganoni:** That is your moral compass!

**Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM:** Sometimes divine intervention is useful when you are racing horses!

**Mr Roberts:** Exactly, you are just coming into the straight on some race. And that is an issue too that we do not actually get coverage. I could drive from my place to Kellerberrin and I can only get racing radio for probably 30 per cent of that time.

**Mr Paganoni:** Can I refer back to that matter Mr Bowler raised, and that is we believe that there are a lot of situations that have happened within country harness racing clubs and country thoroughbred racing clubs. Financial improprieties have happened because there have not been people on the ground from RWWA to monitor what is going on, a roving-type person that we talk about here, to actually see it, because people who run clubs are volunteers, and they are not skilled and committees change and people change and secretaries change. And this huge organisation, RWWA, which turns over \$1.6 billion, is relying on people down here and not servicing them and just saying, "Give us an annual report." Therein lies the problem, and that is why we raised that issue and put that forward.

**Mr Roberts:** You would have some experience of that at Kalgoorlie.

**The CHAIRMAN:** This graph, the country harness racing regulatory model that you have given us, would indicate that you want a body between RWWA and the clubs. Can you just explain that?

**Mr Paganoni:** That is the harness racing consultative group.

**Mr Roberts:** That is actually already there.

**Mr Paganoni:** That exists. That is the consultative process that we actually input into.

**The CHAIRMAN:** So you will meet and you have a meeting with RWWA?

**Mr Paganoni:** Yes.

**Mr Roberts:** Every two months.

**The CHAIRMAN:** And are you happy with that?

**Mr Paganoni:** Yes, very happy.

**Mr Roberts:** We need it. Unfortunately some matters are missed because it is a two-month gap. We do miss some matters but I think it is a very important industry communication between us and RWWA and we also get to talk to them and the other groups as well to see how they feel about issues.

**The CHAIRMAN:** In your submission you mentioned some concerns about RWWA's current approach being too focused on wagering performance. Do you think that is impacting on country harness racing?

[2.20 pm]

**Mr Paganoni:** Definitely. Country harness racing wanted something to be established by statute. We put forward to the Turner report an individual code. We talked specifically about our code, and in the recommendations that it came out with was an overarching industry council and separate code bodies. We believe in abolishing those separate bodies. RWWA as we know it is shaping us down here according to its bottom line when it has to deal with deregulated gambling and wagering and all that sort of stuff. It is trying to maximise its bottom line to return a dividend to government and to the codes. The act refers specifically in one section, with a motherhood statement, to "duty of care", "foster", "promote" and all that sort of stuff. It is a bit incongruent when RWWA is trying to maximise its bottom line and govern the whole industry. If you look at the Albany club, it is a club that has a turnover of only \$55 000 offcourse because it has no vision; it has poor radio coverage. As I say, you have to wait 40 minutes. It has no leverage with RWWA at all, so it just gets picked off and loses meetings.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Without someone pushing for it to get Sky coverage it will never be able to —

**Mr Paganoni:** It will never clamber up; never.

**Mr Roberts:** It cannot improve.

**Mr J.J.M. BOWLER:** How many of your country members are regularly on Sky?

**Mr Roberts:** Bunbury, Harvey, Pinjarra, Northam, Kalgoorlie, Narrogin—six.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It would be mainly the smaller clubs such as Wagin and Albany?

**Mr Roberts:** The outer ones. Busselton is probably unique.

**Mr Paganoni:** It does well financially.

**Mr Roberts:** It does not really need to go on Sky.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It has big meetings.

**Mr Paganoni:** It has the best oncourse turnover of any country club.

**Mr Roberts:** It turned over about \$80 000 oncourse one day. It had a \$53 000 carryover trifecta at one stage.

**The CHAIRMAN:** At Busselton?

**Mr Roberts:** Yes. Busselton does not need Sky because it gets 2 000 or 3 000 people betting on course. They do better oncourse than offcourse. We as country representatives understand that situation, whereas Busselton is different from Albany, Kalgoorlie or the central wheatbelt. We need to foster Busselton in the way that it can make money but it does not need to impinge on anyone else.

**The CHAIRMAN:** In your submission you state that there may be a requirement for a change to the RWWA act to enable RWWA to pursue a more business-type model and maximise the dividend to government and the codes, and have stakeholders with greater input deciding the future shape of the harness industry. Can you elaborate on that?

**Mr Roberts:** We feel that RWWA is working from an all-encompassing basis. The people who are running trotting at RWWA do not have a lot of authority; they have to go through Richard, Ken or whoever. They cannot make decisions about what is best for pacing itself. They are looking at what is best for RWWA as a business, which is fine. We all have to make sure RWWA succeeds, otherwise none of us will succeed. We are not getting a clear indication of where pacing has to go to succeed.

**Mr Paganoni:** We are saying also, “You have a business model that goes over there and maximises wagering; give the codes the dividend so we can say that we want 12 meetings at Albany, we want 18 meetings back at Kalgoorlie; let us decide the shape based on how it looks to us, not how it contributes to RWWA’s bottom line.”

**Mr J.J.M. BOWLER:** Rather than having both, are you saying you want to make it more a business model?

**Mr Paganoni:** I am saying make RWWA more a businesslike model out there but—back to the Turner report—give us the harness racing dividend and let us decide to run 12 meetings at central wheatbelt. Let us decide its shape. RWWA is deciding the shape according to the commercial viability of itself, not according to how we the industry want it to necessarily develop. Central wheatbelt might have 20 registered trainers, but it turns over very little on a Sunday. Do you see where I am coming from?

**The CHAIRMAN:** Which body would decide on your behalf how many meetings the clubs have? Would it be HRCG in the middle?

**Mr Paganoni:** No; I am asking to look at it differently again and establish by statute this other harness racing —

**The CHAIRMAN:** As per the Turner report?

**Mr Paganoni:** Yes. In other words let us, not the bottom line of the TAB, decide the shape. The TAB is now incorporated into RWWA, and that is the driver.

**The CHAIRMAN:** In your submission you talk about no reduction in meetings. It is obviously a big problem for you, but your clubs are losing meetings. How serious is that?

**Mr Roberts:** A club like Wagin has gone down from 12 to 10 and now has seven meetings. It is mooted to lose meetings again this year. It has got to a point now where it is very difficult for a trainer to exist in Wagin. It is struggling to hold its numbers as far as trainers go. If the same sort of thing happened in the central wheatbelt where there are a number of trainers—okay it has only 12 meetings a year, but it feeds into Northam and Gloucester Park—the same situation would happen; you would lose the trainers out of the area. You would lose young people.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Does it frustrate you that you cannot do anything about this?

**Mr Roberts:** It is thrust on us and we are told that we have lost meetings, and we do not get any input. When they first decide how many meetings will go, we do not even get to know the logic to it. I remember an instance two years ago when RWWA was going to cut central wheatbelt from 12 to 10. It has just amalgamated with Cunderdin and got Cunderdin's meetings to go to central wheatbelt, so went from 10 to 12 with Cunderdin's meetings. They were then going to be cut from 12 to 10. I heard about it on the grapevine and said to RWWA, "Look, you've just got them to amalgamate with Cunderdin, so there is a big conglomeration, and now you're going to take meetings off them; it doesn't encourage anyone to amalgamate again." I got the argument through and they got their two meetings back. That was only because I heard through the grapevine. We did not have any consultation that that was the case. That was a very good argument. How can you tell Narrogin and Wagin to amalgamate and then say, "But you might lose meetings in the process"?

**The CHAIRMAN:** RWWA might argue that some of these meetings are not profitable in terms of TAB turnover. What is your response to that?

**Mr Roberts:** We accept that but we should consider that a lot of them are not being given a chance to be profitable. We talk about the ones at, say, Albany on a Sunday. Its offcourse turnover is terrible, but what chance does it have? It cannot get radio coverage, and it is not going to get Sky coverage. It has eight races and it gets good crowds oncourse, but you cannot get turnover if people cannot even listen to a trot. You cannot get it. It is not going to happen, is it?

**Mr Paganoni:** Volunteership is not costed out by RWWA. If you want to run race meetings, run every meeting at Collie because it turns over a helluva lot oncourse.

**Mr Roberts:** Or Busselton.

**Mr Paganoni:** Yes, or Busselton. Venue fees at Gloucester Park are \$11 000 to run a meeting with turnover equivalent to the \$5 000-odd at Pinjarra. With regard to return per dollar invested—that is probably what you are looking at—I do not know whether RWWA has done a costing of that. Every race meeting in Western Australia is run at a loss from what RWWA has to pay in dividends to the codes. If we were just put up fixtures and rolled out the eastern states stuff, it would make money. Every one that runs here runs at a loss because of what it has to pay in stakes. For a dollar invested, Collie and these sorts of clubs do very well in what they return to the industry.

These small trotting clubs are part of the social fabric of the community. I was a shire president for five years and tried to get a policeman in the local community to live in Broomehill. Unfortunately the policy was to have two-man stations, not one-man stations. But I asked that he have one kid in preschool, two in primary school and one in high school because that is how much that meant to the community. A harness racing meeting means the same thing to a community. If you take one away, you are taking away part of their entertainment. It is a loss.

[2.30 pm]

**Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM:** I refer to the demise of the owner incentive payments. Do you have any comments to make on the impact that that is having on harness racing and also what it is doing to some of the smaller clubs? I will lead you in the direction that I thought you might go: are some of the clubs not also subsidising out of their own pockets to get trainers to actually come to their meetings?

**Mr Roberts:** Yes, this year Albany gave a \$50 fuel voucher to everyone who did not run a place. I must admit that I thought it would have a much bigger effect when they took the \$100 away. We were in favour not so much of the \$100 straight out, but a travel subsidy. We would still like to see that go forward. The paying back to six has been relatively well received. If we could have a combination of the two—travel subsidy and paying back to six—we might be going somewhere in the right direction. It has not had as big an effect as I thought it would. I do not know why that is. People complained about it hugely when they heard about it, which was a few months before it happened. They heard about it through the grapevine. However, for some reason they kept their

horses going. As you said, a club like Albany had to put on \$50 vouchers, and that did have a big effect. Busselton pays a similar amount. Narrogin did it for a little while to keep its numbers up, but has now stopped it.

**Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM:** Is this another example of the lack of communication or consultation that seems to be surfacing in most of the reports we are getting? From reading them, most of the associations are saying exactly what you are saying: decisions are delivered as a fait accompli and you can like it or lump it. Is that a fair statement to make?

**Mr Roberts:** Often we feel that the decision has already been made when we hear about it. It comes to us and they ask us whether we agree with it. We ask ourselves what choice we have. If we do not agree with it they will do it anyway. If we complain, they close the door on us. Often we feel that the decision has already been made and we do not get any input at all at that level.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Do you have any fears that there will be more rationalisation of clubs and more clubs will be encouraged to either close down or amalgamate?

**Mr Roberts:** Yes, we do.

**Mr Paganoni:** These smaller clubs have no leverage with RWWA from a wagering point of view. They are easy targets.

**Mr Roberts:** Wagin is probably the one that is in the firing line at the moment.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Wagin is a traditional breeding ground of some great horses.

**Mr Roberts:** Yes and it has a strong trainer base.

**The CHAIRMAN:** What impact would having a centralist policy of putting more meetings at Gloucester Park or closer to the city have on the harness racing industry? The country clubs would be dropping off the vine, so to speak. Do you think it would have an impact at the grassroots level?

**Mr Roberts:** It is like a pyramid. The top is at Gloucester Park on a Friday night and then you come down to the Central Wheatbelts, Albanys and Wagins at the bottom. That bottom tier cannot be taken off, because people have to race there because they do not have horses that can go to Gloucester Park on a Friday night. They do not have horses to go to Pinjarra on a Monday. They want to race at that level. If they are out of the industry and cannot race at those places, they will not stay in the industry until they get a good horse. I used to race around with Gary Hall many years ago until he got to the right level and was able to go on with it. If we do not have the level at which people can win a race, they will, without any doubt, be lost to the industry.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Are you saying that it would be less cost on the industry to run those meetings than it would, say, a meeting at Gloucester Park?

**Mr Roberts:** A Gloucester Park meeting would be paying out an \$11 000 fee compared to Wagin that would pay out \$4 000, plus half the stake money almost. Gloucester Park would have to have four, five, probably six to seven times more turnover to pay for that meeting to cover the same cost as at Wagin.

**Mr J.J.M. BOWLER:** Does it do that?

**Mr Roberts:** No.

**Mr Paganoni:** If you give out a dollar you have to return seven per cent.

**Mr Roberts:** Gloucester Park will turn over approximately \$240 000 at a Tuesday night Sky meeting; Wagin will turnover roughly \$100 000. The difference is about two and a half. In comparison with how much money is paid out to Gloucester Park and with the Sky costs and everything else, Wagin is in front because it is not costing the industry as much.

**Mr J.J.M. BOWLER:** The greyhounds are saying they get a disproportionate return from the total dollar that the TAB makes and racing are saying they need more, which obviously leaves you as the meat in the sandwich.

**Mr Roberts:** It does.

**Mr Paganoni:** If they are maximising the dividend over there, that is the business model. If they maximise the dividend they should give it to the codes over here to distribute to shape our industry. We would know we have so many dollars and horses. They all eat the same chaff and oats. What we would do is shape it according to what is returned. That should be returning a dividend. Everyone wants to claim their bit. How can anybody lay claim to a dollar that is turned over in eastern states thoroughbred racing? How can the thoroughbred industry lay claim to thoroughbred turnover average? It cannot. It is a gambling exercise. It is just a product. That is how it has to be looked at.

**Mr Roberts:** To some extent we have been pushed to the lower turnover areas.

**Mr J.J.M. BOWLER:** In what way.

**Mr Roberts:** As I said before, we were the fill-in on Saturday night to help Cannington Central get into Sky. Our blokes do not mind racing on Saturday nights. We have done it for ever and a day. We do not mind doing that, but it is not a good turnover day. It does not turn over a huge amount of money. It is a good racing day for us as an industry. It would be much better if we could race at four o'clock in the afternoon, coming in at the end of the eastern state races. We would then turn over twice as much, but that would not help RWWA. It is an area that we have been pushed into and we cannot go forward or improve. Sundays is a very similar situation. Clubs like Central Wheatbelt, Albany and Geraldton are basically fillers on a Sunday. Their meetings should be held at a time when they could actually do some good.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Some codes, for example, Kalgoorlie races, like racing on Sundays.

**Mr Roberts:** They are on Sky. It is the same in Melbourne. Melbourne's big harness racing day is on a Sunday. They are big meetings—they have their big country cup meetings on a Sunday. They are huge, but they are all on Sky.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Will you be helped when Sky gets the new channel?

**Mr Roberts:** I hope so. What we would fear, though, is that they would say, "Take those six meetings off Wagin and give them to Northam, Pinjarra, Bunbury or Harvey to fill in the gap on a Sunday". They could even take them off Central Wheatbelt. We would like Central Wheatbelt to be given the chance to become part of the Sky industry.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Are you saying that there should be no more reduction in meetings for those clubs?

**Hon ALYSSA HAYDEN:** I want to refer to what Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm said about travel incentive. Many country clubs have put in their submissions to reinstate the travel incentive. Is that by individual tracks or is RWWA helping with that?

**Mr Roberts:** RWWA was originally paying a \$100 unplaced subsidy. Our view was that it should have been a travel subsidy. It came off the top of the stakes for the gallops. They took it off when they were short of funds. We believe it should be replaced as a proper travel subsidy. If you are over the road from the track you do not get it, but if you travel —

**Mr Paganoni:** You must travel a distance greater than 30 kilometres. It is easy to calculate travelling by postcodes. If you travel from the Geraldton postcode to the Broomehill postcode, you know you have travelled from post office to post office.

[2.40 pm]

**Mr Roberts:** We had a partial one in some respects because the inner clubs had \$100 subsidy and the outer clubs had \$125 subsidy, so they were doing it in a way —

**Hon ALYSSA HAYDEN:** When was that stopped?

**Mr Roberts:** About 12 months ago.

**Hon ALYSSA HAYDEN:** Did they give you a reason why—lack of funds?

**Mr Roberts:** Budgetary reasons. When the product fees in the eastern states hit hard, and they were going to lose something like \$4 million—I do not know the exact figure—they had to find cuts to their own budget. That was an easy one to do, because just at a stroke of a pen you just wipe it out. It was just an accounting bottom line.

**Hon ALYSSA HAYDEN:** The other question before I get bumped off is the country representative on the board. Are you happy with your country representative?

**Mr Roberts:** We do not have one.

**The CHAIRMAN:** You have a harness representative?

**Mr Roberts:** We have a harness representative, yes, but we do not have a country representative. That is what we were talking about before. The ultimate would be for us to have someone on the board because, as I say, we go there and they do not understand some of the country issues.

**The CHAIRMAN:** So what you are saying in some respects is that although the industry thinks it is advantageous to have this independent body, RWWA has become a little too distant from the actual hands-on industry?

**Mr Roberts:** It has become very TAB orientated. There has to be a mix of both.

**The CHAIRMAN:** So it is working on a business model that does not always look at the needs —

**Mr Paganoni:** Yes, the governance.

**The CHAIRMAN:** — of racing clubs.

**Mr Roberts:** The social aspects of racing to some extent.

**The CHAIRMAN:** On another subject, governance has been raised with us—the control of racing and the actual races themselves. Do any of your members or drivers talk to you about the penalties? There has been some talk about penalties being a bit inconsistent between drivers and that maybe the better drivers are being looked after a bit more than the ones who are not so good? Is that something that has been raised with you?

**Mr Roberts:** Yes, to some extent I think that is true. I think it is as much a case of these stewarding being different. As a driver I go into the stewards room quite a lot. If I go in with somebody like Rick Durie from Albany, the stewards will believe me and not Rick Durie. If I go in with Chris Lewis, it would not matter what Chris did on the track, he would be believed. Sometimes you really have to fight hard with the video to prove your point. My personal view is that stewarding at the moment is at a pretty low ebb.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Why is that? Is it just a change of personnel? Are the RWWA stewards for harness racing just dedicated harness racing stewards?

**Mr Roberts:** They are, but we grabbed one from the dogs. I am sure you will appreciate that dog racing is a helluva lot different from harness racing. It has taken a couple of years to get that bloke to realise that there is a driver. He has actually turned out to be a reasonable steward, because I think he is concentrating a lot on what he is doing.

**Mr J.J.M. BOWLER:** Surely, the Gloucester Park stewards go out to country areas?

**Mr Roberts:** They do. They have a city panel and a country panel, but there is a bit of crossover amongst them. I have heard of blokes who drive a lot in the city are not happy with the city panel either.

**The CHAIRMAN:** But basically you are happy with the control of the sport. You think that the integrity is pretty good.

**Mr Paganoni:** The integrity, yes, it is very good since RWWA has come in. There is no doubt about that.

**Mr Roberts:** I do not think there is a problem with that.

**Hon ALYSSA HAYDEN:** Can I just touch on communication between you and the decisions being made? Do you feel that there needs to be an independent body that you can go to for a complaints process?

**Mr Roberts:** I reckon that might be a bit cumbersome. I guess if we did not get a bit more communication, then that might be the way to go. I would just like to have a little bit more, when you make decisions about country clubs, country decisions, and that we actually have input into it at a sooner level. By the time we get to hear about it, it is pretty well a fait accompli. Part of that problem is the staff that RWWA inherited from WATA. Everybody in this industry would agree that there is probably a little bit of dead wood in there that probably is not all that efficient. There are people who could do the job somewhat better. Our manager of harness racing tends to say, if you ring him up about something, first no, and you have to talk another three or four times and eventually he comes around. If there was somebody there to actually listen to you in the first place, we might have some chance of getting through. That is probably where we fall down a little bit. We have not got the first point of contact that we could actually get to nicely.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Do you feel under threat at all as a code —

**Mr Roberts:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** — harness racing. Obviously, thoroughbred racing is going very well, and they are paying \$50 000 Saturday stakes; and the greyhounds, we are told, are having a lot of turnover on the TAB because they are on the Sky Channel all the time. Do you feel now that you are fighting for survival in some respects?

**Mr Roberts:** We feel that we have been squeezed into an area and we are really struggling to get out of it, and we have got nowhere to go. We had dogs at Northam as well as the trots. I can tell you now that the dogs at Northam get treated a lot better than we do. They get a lot more than we do.

**The CHAIRMAN:** In what way?

**Mr Roberts:** If they want to resurface their track, it is just a matter of their ringing up and saying, “We need to resurface our track” and it gets done. They got it done the other day. They came and spent the whole day doing the track.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Have you just had new stalls put in at Northam?

**Mr Roberts:** We did, but that was through the old system. That was something I was hoping to bring up at the end. Now that things have gone from a pool that RWWA used to control funds to racing to royalties for regions, country clubs are really struggling. We put in two applications to royalties for regions for a disabled toilet at Northam, for both the trots and the dogs, and we cannot get through to first base. They say, “Go back to the shire.”

**The CHAIRMAN:** Royalties for regions are telling you that?

**Mr Roberts:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** So RWWA is telling you that you should go to royalties for regions to get amenities at your courses?

**Mr Roberts:** Yes, so we go to royalties for regions.

**Mr J.J.M. BOWLER:** There has been a suggestion that has come from racing that if there is a further tax cut in the industry, rather than put it into RWWA to go anywhere, it should be quarantined into a facilities fund for all codes.

**Mr Roberts:** I do think there needs to be some sort of fund for the industry, because it is very hard for us as a racing club. We go to royalties for regions and they say, "But you are earning an income." We do not earn much and all our money goes back into racing. The netball club and the local basketball club—it is easy for him to make a donation to them but not so much to us. So it is very hard. There are very few people in the area who have actually got any interest in racing at all, so the kids probably do play netball, basketball or football.

**Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM:** I know we have been talking about this, but I am certainly interested in continuing to discuss with you your views on the challenges confronting country harness racing. I am interested in finding out your views about challenges facing the entire industry. But can I ask you about two particular things that really concern me? One is the number of foalings that now occur and the second is the loss of sire stakes racing. The reason for saying that is that I look at things like the Pacing Cup field for the particular year just gone at Gloucester Park. There were eight out of 12 New Zealand-bred horses.

**Mr Roberts:** Three of the others were from the eastern states.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Okay. I am just interested in your thoughts about the challenges, particularly things like the decrease in the number of foalings and especially the sort of clientele that you to work with—the country harness-racing people and the grassroots people—they are not the sort of people who go to New Zealand and buy a \$100 000 horse. Foalings are down, though, and your very clients are the ones who are not getting into the horse-racing game any more. Do you have any comments in respect of that particular area and also perhaps with things like—I think it is now called west born, isn't it, rather than west bred—and there is no side-stakes racing in harness racing. Do you have any thoughts on those sorts of issues?

[2.50 pm]

**Mr Roberts:** The foaling numbers have dropped over the past 10 years. In the past two or three years it has dropped even more because people are struggling to see where the industry is heading. It is hard for someone to spend \$5 000 or \$10 000 on breeding a horse when they are unsure whether they will have a place to race it in two or three years when the horse is ready to race. That is an issue. A lot of people would love to breed a horse, but if they have nowhere to race it, what is the point?

**Mr J.J.M. BOWLER:** Does the WA trotting stake money compare favourably with New Zealand and the eastern states?

**Mr Roberts:** It does if you are racing at Gloucester Park, Pinjarra and Bunbury.

**Mr J.J.M. BOWLER:** If the stake money is good over a number of years, I would imagine that the breeding industry would follow. Are you saying that that has not happened?

**Mr Paganoni:** We have a hierarchical stakes system. We have Sky Racing stakes and non-Sky Racing stakes. I think there is now a \$1 500 difference.

**Mr Roberts:** It was actually worse for a while.

**Mr Paganoni:** The horses for that bottom tier—a lot of horses are bred for that because they are not \$300 000 horses—are not being bred any more because they have to be taken to race at Central Wheatbelt for stakes of \$4 000, as opposed to a Sky club, which is \$5 500. We actually have a policy that we support our hierarchical stakes. There has to be that difference, and we recognise that. As a consequence, there may be a low rate of foaling. We have a very low population of mares. I think Victoria has about 3 500 and we have about 900.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Is that a big turnaround from what the percentages were 20 years ago?

**Mr Paganoni:** I could not tell you about 20 years ago.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Western Australia used to have a reasonably significant standard-bred breeding industry, did it not?

**Mr Roberts:** Yes, it did.

**Mr J.J.M. BOWLER:** What is the answer?

**Mr Roberts:** Part of the answer is that because we have gone to artificial insemination, it is not as viable to bring a stallion to the state any more because a mare can be bred with an eastern state's stallion. I do that myself sometimes. There is not an incentive for breeders to bring decent stallions into WA. A horse has to prove itself here before its semen can be sold to the eastern states, which a small-timer has not been able to do. That is a problem. Unless you have a state program, that situation will only get worse. At least at some stage those horses had a race that they could win by themselves. Jack Cantell and those horses had a race they could go to where they did not have to compete against a \$300 000 New Zealand horse. Eventually, you will find that that will go all right anyway. Has the Answers is actually a locally bred horse. It was the only one out of the Pacing Cup field that was a Western Australian-bred horse. Unless you have some sort of sire stakes, you are going to have that number fall away again and it will be even worse than it is today.

**The CHAIRMAN:** There used to be a system where you had to win three races in the country to get down to a 225 mark and then you can run in the qualifying stakes.

**Mr Roberts:** 28 to 25, yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Would that be turning the clock back? Could you ever go back to those days, or would owners resent having to take their horse -

**Mr Roberts:** That is the problem and is what caused it to stop. The owners resented having to go back to the country. Originally when they started midweek races at Gloucester Park, you had to be a C2 to start.

**The CHAIRMAN:** That meant that a horse had to have won two races in the country.

**Mr Roberts:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Was that dropped?

**Mr Roberts:** That was dropped because the owners asked why they should take a \$300 000 horse they had bought from New Zealand and take it to some place to get it back to Gloucester Park.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Some very good horses had their first start in the country.

**Mr Roberts:** Pure Steel went to Pinjarra. The system worked fine. From a punting point of view, I would much rather that a horse went to the country and proved itself before it went back to the city. I do not know how many committee members punt, but John and I -

**Mr Paganoni:** Off the record!

**Mr Roberts:** It is very hard to have a punt when you see a horse that has come from New Zealand has never had a start anywhere in WA and probably has not even trialled and it lobs into Gloucester Park into a C0.

**The CHAIRMAN:** What do you think the future is for harness racing in the country clubs?

**Mr Roberts:** They are struggling. RWWA has probably picked out half a dozen clubs: Northam in the north east; Pinjarra and Bunbury; to a lesser extent Harvey, but Harvey holds in there because it gets a very good turnover; I think Narrogin is earmarked in the Great Southern; and Kalgoorlie will survive purely and simply by the fact that it will survive to some extent, although, then again, if it

starts to lose meetings again, it will struggle. Albany, Geraldton, Wagin and Central Wheatbelt are on a knife edge. There are probably half a dozen clubs that are really struggling.

**Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM:** Can I focus on what you have just said, Mr Roberts? Peter Watson had to leave early but he did leave one question for me to ask you. You may well have just answered it. The question is simply: has RWWA an agenda to get rid of some regional clubs?

**Mr Roberts:** We believe so.

**Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM:** Thank you.

**Mr Roberts:** It affects all of our industry. We have a situation where if you want to become a full-time employee, you have to go to TAFE and do a course. You cannot just go and help somebody out in the stable any more. We have kids down in Albany who want to help. They come through the pony trot system, which is a very good and healthy pony trot system down there. If they want to go to the next step, they have to come to Perth and spend time at the TAFE before they can get accredited to do it. The same will happen in Kalgoorlie; it is a similar situation. That is not helping us go forward.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Can people not start out by helping out a trainer by filling up the water buckets?

**Mr Roberts:** No. That is happening in not just in our sport, but in the gallops as well. It is having a devastating effect on young people coming through. The pony trots in Albany is very strong. They probably have 15 or 20 kids going through every season. The number of those who actually go through to the next level is probably just two or three. They cannot even go from the pony trots, walk around and ask if they can hose down a horse. That is how silly it is. We should have a system where they eat dirt to come and help us by hosing down the horses!

**The CHAIRMAN:** Getting back to Albany, does it not own its own track?

**Mr Roberts:** Yes. That is what will save it in the end.

**The CHAIRMAN:** That would be a fairly valuable piece of real estate, would it not?

**Mr Roberts:** It has bit of value to it. There was a suggestion a couple of years ago to shift the gallops track and the trot track out to opposite the airport. That probably was a good idea at the time. Owning its own course probably gives Albany some leverage.

**Mr Paganoni:** There needs to be a safety net for those clubs, where there is no wagering leverage with RWWA. There has to be. If they want them to disappear and the communities do not want a harness racing club, it should just disappear. It should not be RWWA just striking it off because it is not continuing voluntarily —

**Mr Roberts:** Albany lost four meetings this year at the stroke of a pen. It had no comeback either.

**Mr J.J.M. BOWLER:** Kalgoorlie lost two.

**Mr Roberts:** It lost three.

**Mr J.J.M. BOWLER:** You touched on the youngsters not being able to get involved in filling up water buckets. This is not just a country thing, but 20 years ago the trots tried to go down the Hong Kong model when they tried to get the big training establishments. I think that has backfired. Do you agree?

**Mr Roberts:** I think so, yes.

**Mr J.J.M. BOWLER:** You lose that groundswell of the public.

**Mr Roberts:** We had a good number of big trainers but we also had a very strong bottom layer of part-time trainers who worked and trained horses.

**The CHAIRMAN:** They were butchers and bakers.

**Mr Roberts:** And milkmen. About half a dozen milkmen used to do it. All those people used to use local kids to help them out. To some extent they were driven out of the industry.

**Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM:** How viable is the training at all levels of harness racing as a profession for people who do it full time? Is it a hand-to-mouth existence?

**Mr Roberts:** Pretty much. I was in the Narrogin club for a long time and I ended up having to shift to Northam, where I am now, purely and simply because I was travelling 400 or 500 kilometres a week at some times of the year because there would not be a meeting in my area for a month. If you were trying to keep a full-time stable going in the Great Southern at the moment, you would be struggling.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I saw the field for Williams the other day and the prize money for one of the races was \$1 500; is that right?

**Mr Roberts:** It was \$2 500.

**The CHAIRMAN:** That is not much money, is it, in this day and age, for driving all that way?

[3.00 pm]

**Mr Paganoni:** That is a non-penalty race. With the Australian Harness Racing Council, anything below \$3 000 is considered a non-C penalty.

**The CHAIRMAN:** So it is a free race.

**Mr Roberts:** Basically, it is a free race, yes.

\*page: It is a free race.

**Mr Roberts:** We do not have a problem with that in terms of clubs like Williams, because that is what helps Williams continue to survive. We do not have a problem with that. The fact is that Williams has held two meetings in the past six weeks. Both of them have been well and truly over-nominated for. People actually want those races. So while it is not good as a trainer if you have somebody else's horse and there is not a lot of money involved, as a way to keep going, it is actually not a bad situation, and people do not mind it.

**The CHAIRMAN:** You said the foaling numbers were down.

**Mr Roberts:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Are numbers of owners diminishing, or are you finding that there are still people out there who are prepared to race a standardbred, given that standardbreds can raise every week of the year because they are much more durable animals?

**Mr Roberts:** Yes. I reckon owners would probably stay pretty constant, and I say that because you now find fairly big syndicate numbers. Robbie Tomlinson has got some big syndicates going. Gary Hall—a lot of his are in syndicates. In terms of syndicates, though, similar to the gallops, you cannot keep them going by leasing a half-decent horse in New Zealand or something. Owners, I think, will probably stay, but they are racing fewer horses, because there are probably 10 of them in a horse now compared with two or three.

**The CHAIRMAN:** One last question from me: what about betting at country tracks with bookmakers? Do you have any bookmakers at these meetings any more?

**Mr Roberts:** We had one at Northam a couple of weeks ago.

**The CHAIRMAN:** One bookmaker?

**Mr Roberts:** One bookmaker, yes.

**Mr J.J.M. BOWLER:** Kalgoorlie does not even have them any more.

**Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM:** I could not tell you the last time I saw a bookie at Albany, for instance. It would be three or four years ago.

**Mr Roberts:** The bloke from Narrogin went down there a couple of years ago—three or four years ago.

**Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM:** That is right.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Has that had any impact on the meetings or not? People still go.

**Mr Roberts:** Yes, people still go. I think they lost their usefulness in the country a little bit. The clubs themselves get a better result out of the tote. The last time we had a bookie at Northam, we did not get anything out of it. It was a big night, so we let him come sort of thing. But he does not pay a standing fee. I think he paid us about \$50. We would have been better off having that money go through the tote.

**Hon ALYSSA HAYDEN:** One of the submissions made a comment about RWWA needing to recognise the volunteer support in country clubs, especially ones without Sky, saying that it equals roughly \$60 000 to \$70 000 per annum. Do you have any comment on that? Is there a reason why they need that recognised by RWWA?

**Mr Roberts:** RWWA has almost got like a budget for every club. Say a club like Central Wheatbelt, it has no paid servants. They pay the tote people, and that is about all, on a trot day. Everything else is done pretty well voluntarily. So the cost to the industry of that meeting is minimal. At a club like Northam, we pay the track men and we pay the secretary. Bunbury is the same and Pinjarra is the same. So the money going out to some extent—there should be a budgetary figure in RWWA saying, “Central Wheatbelt was actually providing this amount of money every meeting via volunteers”, saying that this has actually been paid out somewhere else, and that would then equate to saying, “Well, that club is actually doing just as well as this club.”

**The CHAIRMAN:** You could be suffering. If you get a good number of volunteers, you are being penalised for it.

**Mr Roberts:** Pretty well, yes.

**Mr Paganoni:** A dollar return to a dollar invested, because the industry is paying for it somewhere.

**Mr Roberts:** Yes. At Northam, for instance, we would probably have a wages bill of close to \$100 000 a year. Central Wheatbelt might have \$10 000. Now, the extra money that they get back, they just put back in stake money, so in actual fact they are feeding the industry, and that should have —

**Hon ALYSSA HAYDEN:** Some recognition.

**Mr Roberts:** — some recognition somewhere, as the club is doing something for the industry.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Were you disappointed when York was closed?

**Mr Roberts:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Because that was a club that ran at no cost to the industry.

**Mr Roberts:** No cost at all, and it was a place where everybody wanted to go. It was not because they had trouble getting the numbers there. That was never a problem. People still wanted to go there. I was very disappointed. That was another situation where it was just a fait accompli: “York is going to close. We can’t justify its staying”—blah, blah, blah. What can you do? We did not get a chance to argue one or the other.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Are there any other points that you feel you would like to make before we wind up?

**Mr Roberts:** Only if I could go back to the royalties for regions. If you can try to do something to help us somewhere along the line —

**The CHAIRMAN:** The member for Kalgoorlie might be able to help you with that!

**Mr Roberts:** Yes. It is just very hard. The race clubs must be suffering. The Northam Race Club is having a problem now with water, because their bore has run dry, and they are the same. They are going to —

**Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM:** I am sorry; I did not catch that.

**Mr Roberts:** The bore has run dry at Northam Race Club. They are going to have to spend a fair bit of money, and they are talking about going to royalties for regions. I just say to them, “Gee, I wish you luck.”

**Hon ALYSSA HAYDEN:** From where do the city tracks get their money for the same thing?

**Mr Roberts:** RWWA paid for Gloucester Park’s redevelopment, and they paid for Pinjarra. Pinjarra is really a quasi-metro track. So RWWA will help them out, but it will not necessarily help the other clubs out.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Alf, did you have any closing comments?

**Mr Paganoni:** No.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Gentlemen, 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, so if you are happy with it, you do not have to send it back. New material cannot be added via these corrections and the sense of your 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 transcript of evidence. So if there is something that you think we might need to know about, you can send that in along with the transcript. Thanks again for your time.

**Mr Roberts:** Thank you very much for having us. We appreciate your listening to us.

**Mr Paganoni:** Thank you.

**Hearing concluded at 3.06 pm**