



# MEDIA STATEMENT

Thursday 28 July 2022

## **Independent review into Victorian racing industry victim support and complaint processes**

Earlier this year, Racing Integrity Commissioner Sean Carroll announced that he would conduct an independent review into Victorian racing industry (**VRI**) victim support and complaint processes (**Review**).

The Commissioner's announcement followed a joint referral made by the three Victorian racing controlling bodies – Racing Victoria Limited, Harness Racing Victoria and Greyhound Racing Victoria – requesting the Commissioner establish an independent opportunity for people to report their experiences of physical and sexual abuse, physical and sexual assault and sexual harassment within Victorian thoroughbred, harness or greyhound racing workplaces, ensure victims are provided with appropriate support and access to counselling, and review the industry's current processes and systems for handling such complaints.

Since announcing the Review, the Commissioner has undertaken an extensive procurement process to identify a team of suitably experienced and qualified experts (**Review Team**) to assist with the conduct of it. The Review Team will also ensure the Review is conducted with the required sensitivity, confidentiality and independence.

Following consultation with the three controlling bodies, the Commissioner is pleased to announce that he has appointed highly respected barrister Ms Regina Weiss as Review Lead. Ms Weiss is a former Director of Legal at Sport Integrity Australia and has significant experience in this field. She has conducted similar reviews into allegations of historical abuse in sport, including leading Sport Integrity Australia's independent review into the West Australian Institute of Sport Women's Artistic Gymnastics Program.

Former Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner Ms Kristen Hilton has also accepted an appointment as an Expert Adviser to the Review Team. Ms Hilton has worked extensively with organisational leaders across the public, private and community sectors to embed positive cultures in their workplaces. She is currently leading the cultural review of the adult custodial corrections system commissioned by the Victorian Government.

The Commissioner recognises that discussing physical or sexual abuse and assault or sexual harassment can cause distress and discomfort to individuals who have experienced or witnessed it. Therefore, the Commissioner has established a dedicated hotline to enable all current and former VRI participants who have been affected by these workplace issues to access confidential, trauma-informed counselling services and other specialist support services. The hotline can also be used to register their interest in taking part in the Review and can be accessed by calling **1300 896 049**.

The Review will only inquire into systemic issues. It will not investigate or make findings about individual allegations. The terms of reference for the Review have also now been finalised and can be found at [www.racingintegrity.vic.gov.au](http://www.racingintegrity.vic.gov.au).

The Review Team will now contact everyone who has so far registered to participate in the Review and begin the important task of hearing their stories and experiences. Anyone who is yet to register their interest in taking part in the Review can still do so by:

- contacting the dedicated hotline on **1300 896 049**
- completing the confidential online [Review Survey](#) (click on the link)
- contacting the Office of the Racing Integrity Commissioner at [review@racingintegrity.vic.gov.au](mailto:review@racingintegrity.vic.gov.au).

It is expected that a final report of the Review will be publicly released by 30 June 2023.

### **Quotes attributable to Racing Integrity Commissioner Sean Carroll:**

*“The Review is of the utmost significance to ensure that we have best practice processes and systems in place to provide safe and respectful workplaces for everyone who works in the VRI. The Review will provide an opportunity to place wellbeing at the forefront of VRI workplaces by examining the adequacy, effectiveness and awareness of current complaint and reporting processes and systems, supports, and referral pathways to prevent and respond to incidents of abuse, assault and sexual harassment in the racing industry.*

*“To support this incredibly important work, I have assembled a dedicated team of leading experts to ensure the Review process is trauma-informed and conducted with the utmost respect to victims of these distressing workplace behaviours. The involvement of experts of the calibre of Regina Weiss and Kristen Hilton will immeasurably enhance the Review Team’s capability, and I look forward to working with them both.*

*“I strongly encourage any person who has been abused, assaulted or sexually harassed while working in the Victorian thoroughbred, harness or greyhound racing industries to come forward and take part in the Review. This will allow us to make sure they are appropriately supported and offer access to professional counselling and other services. In hearing their stories, we want to learn from their experiences and improve how the industry responds to these issues.*

*“I acknowledge the Victorian racing controlling bodies’ ongoing support for the Review. Their commitment recognises that what happens on and off the track is of equal importance to racing integrity and the industry’s social licence.”*

### **Accessing support**

The following services provide specialist counselling and others forms of support.

### **If your situation is urgent**

If you or anyone you know is in immediate danger, or a crime is currently occurring, please call police on Triple Zero (000) or contact your local police station.

## **Report a criminal offence**

For non-urgent matters, you can report a crime by contacting the Police Assistance Line on 131 444 or, if you wish to remain anonymous, contact Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

## **Support line for current and former Victorian racing industry participants**

### *Victorian Racing Industry Support Line*

An independent and confidential telephone service established by the Racing Integrity Commissioner to support all current and former Victorian racing industry participants. The support line provides referral to confidential, trauma-informed counselling services for people who have experienced a serious incident in a workplace in the Victorian racing industry. The service can also provide supported referrals to other specialist services.

Ph: 1300 896 049

## **Sexual assault, harassment and violence support services**

### 1800 Respect

A confidential counselling, information and support service that operates 24-hours a day, 7 days a week for people who have experienced sexual assault or sexual harassment

Ph: 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)

Website: <https://www.1800respect.org.au/>

### **Sexual Assault Crisis Line**

Crisis Line: 1800 806 292 (free call)

Email: [ahcasa@thewomens.org.au](mailto:ahcasa@thewomens.org.au)

Website: [www.sacl.com.au](http://www.sacl.com.au)

### **CASA**

Website: [www.casa.org.au](http://www.casa.org.au) for a list of Victorian Centres Against Sexual Assault

## **Mental health support services**

### *Lifeline*

24-hour crisis support and suicide prevention

Ph: 13 11 14

Website: <https://www.lifeline.org.au/>

### *beyondblue*

Mental health support

Ph: 1300 224 636

Website: <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>

### *Headspace*

Supports young people aged between 12 and 25 years of age

Ph: 1800 650890

Website: <https://headspace.org.au/>

*Kids Helpline*

Counselling service for those aged between 5 and 25 years of age

Ph: 1800 55 1800

Website: <https://kidshelpline.com.au/>

*Suicide Call Back Service*

Ph: 1300 659 467

Website: <https://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au/>

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