8 October 2025

**DECISION**

**GREYHOUND RACING VICTORIA**

**and**

**BARRIE MORSE**

**Date of hearing:** 1 October 2025

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**Panel:** Judge Marilyn Harbison (Deputy Chairperson), Dr June Smith and Mr Des Gleeson.

**Appearances:** Mr Steven Brnovic, instructed by Ms Yana Podolskaya, appeared on behalf of the Stewards.

Mr Peter Briggs represented Mr Barrie Morse.

**Charge:** Greyhounds Australasia Rule (GAR) 165 (c)(iii), states:

An offence is committed if a person (including an official):

(c) engages in contemptuous, unseemly, improper, insulting, or offensive conduct or behaviour in any manner or form towards, or in relation to:

(iii) a Club, or an officer, employee or member of a Club;

**Particulars of charge:** 1. You were, at all relevant times, a trainer registered with Greyhound Racing Victoria (GRV) (Member No. 2616) and a person bound by the Greyhounds Australasia Rules and Local Racing Rules.

2. On 11 March 2025, you attended the Healesville Greyhound Race Track on a Race Day.

3. Prior to Race 5 you had an interaction with a Healesville Race Club employee.

4. As you walked past the Club employee, you have patted her on the shoulder several times. Your hand has then dropped lower and you have patted her buttocks 3-4 times.

5. This behaviour is considered unseemly and improper to an employee of a club.

**Plea:** Guilty

**DECISION**

1. Mr Barrie Morse has pleaded guilty to one charge of having engaged in conduct detrimental to the interests of greyhound racing. This is a charge which can cover many different types of conduct. In this case, it is alleged that he engaged in unseemly, improper or offensive conduct or behaviour in relation to a Greyhound Racing Victoria (“GRV”) employee.
2. The precise conduct relied upon is an allegation that on 11 March 2025 at the Healesville track, is that he touched a female race official on the left shoulder and then patted her on the bottom at least three or four times. He then touched her on the arm.
3. It is said that that behaviour, both in touching her on the shoulder and arm and touching her on the buttocks, is conduct detrimental to the interests of greyhound racing.
4. It is alleged that on that day, a short time prior to the race, a race official was standing near a door leading to the stir up and empty out area. Mr Morse approached that door with his greyhound. It is alleged that the race official asked him if he wanted the door opened and turned around to open the door when he said he did.
5. It is alleged that when she did that, Mr Morse touched her on the left shoulder as he passed her at the entrance to the door and then as he walked through the door, patted her on the bottom at least three or four times.
6. On his way back through the door after emptying his greyhounds he again patted her right upper arm with his left hand.
7. This action was reported to the Stewards. The GRV employee was extremely distressed by the incident.
8. We have noted that Mr Morse pleaded guilty to this charge. He did originally protest his innocence in relation to the suggestion that he touched the race official on the buttocks. It was only when he was shown CCTV video of the incident that he conceded at a Stewards Inquiry that he had touched her “on the arse”.
9. At the hearing before us, he again raised the question of whether he did in fact touch the race official on the buttocks. We have proceeded to sentence him on the basis that we find it clearly established by the video evidence and the evidence of the race official herself that he did touch her on the buttocks. We think it likely that he did not recall having done so or was not conscious of having done so.
10. We accept, and it was accepted by the Stewards, that this touching had no sexual intent. It was sexual in the sense that it was touching to the buttocks, but we have proceeded to sentence on the basis that the touching was not intentionally sexually suggestive, and we think it most likely that the touching was not intentional at all.
11. This does not mean that it was of no consequence to the victim. Unfortunately, the act committed by Mr Morse had severe consequences for the race official. She has described those consequences in a comprehensive Victim Impact Statement which was submitted at this hearing.
12. She describes herself as having felt shocked, violated and unsafe as a result of the touching. She felt that she had been reduced to an object rather than having been respected as a person. She describes a lasting impact on her from this event. She is constantly looking over her shoulder at work, and she feels unsafe. She has had bad dreams of the incident, and she is still in fear at work. She dreads seeing Mr Morse again.
13. Sexual harassment has been identified as a significant problem within the racing industry. It has been the subject of an Inquiry by the Racing Integrity Commissioner which resulted in a report published on 31 August 2023. That report identified significant examples of sexual abuse directed to people working in the Victorian racing industry and stressed the need for participant protection from harassment and the development of safe and respectful workplaces.
14. It warned that what happens off the track and the way employees, and indeed all participants in the industry are treated, is as important to racing integrity as what occurs on the track.
15. Given these considerations, the Stewards argued that a significant penalty should be imposed on Mr Morse for his conduct. It was stressed that there was no place in the greyhound industry for unwanted touching of any description, intentional or not. The Tribunal was invited to denounce inappropriate touching in the strongest terms, both to deter other participants from engaging in similar conduct and to protect the industry.
16. It was submitted that the actions of Mr Morse violated the safety of the race official and devalued her as an employee. It was submitted that the action took place within a situation of a power imbalance, in that he was an experienced trainer and she was a young attendant. It was submitted that it was no excuse to say that Mr Morse intended the gesture as a friendly gesture to thank the race official for opening the gate for him. To accept this as an excuse was said to normalise sexual harassment which was a serious concern to the industry.
17. We were also asked to take into account that this issue had not been given its proper importance in the past and reporting of incidents such as this had been discouraged. It was stressed that the Tribunal has a responsibility to protect victims of behaviour of this type.
18. We accept those submissions.
19. It was submitted to us that the behaviour is aggravated by the significant impact on the victim and also the fact that Mr Morse appeared to have little insight into the circumstances of his offending. He appears to have minimised the conduct when being questioned by the Stewards and had difficulty in recognising that conduct of this description should not be tolerated.
20. Given those circumstances, Stewards sought a very significant period of disqualification, in excess of two and a half years.
21. Mr Morse has been suspended since 14 March 2025. He is a greyhound trainer with an otherwise exceptional record. He is presently aged 73 and has been training greyhounds for most of his adult life. He now lives on a pension and is a hobby trainer. He submitted several references and medical reports. We have taken this material into account in his favour when considering penalty.
22. Mr Morse suffers from deafness for which he needs to use a hearing aid. He is unable to use a hearing aid on the track. We accept that this means that he stands closer to people than is acceptable in order to be able to hear what they are saying. We also accept the evidence that has been submitted, which indicates that he has other chronic medical conditions.
23. Our main concern is that Mr Morse seems still to have very little insight as to the effect of his unwanted familiarity on the race official involved in this case, and that this lack of insight throws doubt on whether this conduct is likely to be repeated by him in the future. We do accept that he intended to engage in a gesture of thanks towards the race official for opening the door for his dog. However, even at the conclusion of the hearing before us he still expressed a combative attitude towards the Stewards and had to be prompted to read the Victim Impact Statement and focus on the distress that he has caused, rather than on criticisms of peripheral issues.
24. This perception of lack of insight was not assisted by a friend who he had brought to the hearing, who seemed intent on focusing on the perceived shortcomings of the Stewards Inquiry, rather than the actions of Mr Morse and the resulting distress to the victim.
25. Mr Morse directed our attention to several other cases heard by this Tribunal. We have found those cases of little assistance, as they relate to quite different fact situations than the one facing us today.
26. Similarly, we have not been assisted by the Stewards reference to the case of Mr Craig Webb, which involved brazen and repeated sexual harassment.
27. In all the circumstances, we are of the view that a significant period of disqualification is necessary to address issues of general and specific deterrence and to reflect the seriousness of the offending itself.
28. The penalty which we impose is a period of 12 months disqualification. We order that this commence from 12 March 2025 which was the date on which Mr Morse was suspended by the Stewards.

Mark Howard

Registrar, Victorian Racing Tribunal