

20<sup>th</sup> September 2020

## **NOTICE OF INTEGRITY HEARINGS PANEL RESULT – Mrs Karon Blakemore**

**PANEL: Mr Timothy McGrath (Chair), Ms Tanya Johnston and Mr Graham Loch.**

**STEWARDS REPRESENTATION: Mr Derek Kordick, Risk and Compliance Manager and Mr Des Jonas, Chief Steward.**



### **Authorised for public dissemination.**

On 15<sup>th</sup> September 2020 Mrs Blakemore appeared before the Integrity Hearings Panel (IHP) in relation to the charges arising from a Steward's Inquiry into her alleged failure to follow a direction to delete comments made from a Facebook account linked to her on the "Adelaide Responsible Greyhounds Owners" page on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2019.

Following investigation, Stewards elected to charge Mrs Blakemore with the following charges:

1. On 20<sup>th</sup> August 2019, the GRSA Integrity Manager was made aware of a Facebook post linked to Mrs Blakemore that was deemed inappropriately detrimental to the image of greyhound racing (see further below). As a consequence, the GRSA Integrity Manager communicated to Mrs Blakemore, via direct message on Facebook and voicemail message, a direction that the post be removed. Failure to comply with the lawful order of a Steward or other person acting in their official duties, is a contravention of GAR 86(p), and;
2. On 20<sup>th</sup> August 2019, Mrs Blakemore made a post on the "Adelaide Responsible Greyhound Owners" Facebook page from a Facebook post linked to her, seeking donations for veterinarian work for the greyhound 'Midnight'. The Stewards, in considering the full context of the post, in particular the emotional claims about the health and potential long-term plans for the greyhound, determined that it was detrimental to the image of greyhound racing, as it raised significant questions upon her and the industry's ability to care for, and ensure that the health and welfare of the greyhound is maintained to the standard GRSA, and the general public would expect, thus contravening GAR 86(q), and;
3. On 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020, Mrs Blakemore, on a Facebook account linked to her, contravened GAR 86 (f)(iv) in that she made comments of a contemptuous, unseemly, improper, insulting and offensive nature towards GRSA and members of the Senior Management of GRSA, and;
4. On 20<sup>th</sup> February 2020, Mrs Blakemore, on a Facebook account linked to her, contravened GAR 86 (g) in that she posted a distorted image of a GRSA official accompanied by a comment. Stewards determined that the photograph accompanied by the comment could reasonably be interpreted as being threatening in nature towards that official.

With the approval of the Chair, Mrs Blakemore was accompanied at the hearing by her solicitor, Mr Daniel Roach, as her “support person”. Mr Roach was of great assistance throughout the hearing.

Mrs Blakemore elected to enter pleas of not guilty to each of the 4 charges.

The IHP proceeded to hear submissions from Messrs Kordick and Jonas on behalf of the Stewards. Mrs Blakemore, with the assistance of Mr Roach, was then given an opportunity to make submissions on each of the charges in response. The bulk of the submissions from Mrs Blakemore were very helpfully contained within a Statutory Declaration, presumably prepared with the assistance of Mr Roach, which largely addressed the substance of each of the charges.

Following consideration of all materials and submissions, the IHP concluded that it could not be satisfied that Mrs Blakemore was guilty of Charge 1 and Charge 4, but found her guilty of Charge 2 and Charge 3.

In relation to Charge 1, the IHP could not be satisfied that the lawful direction to remove the post was effected (ie: received by Mrs Blakemore) prior to the administrators of the “Adelaide Responsible Greyhound Owners” Facebook page acceding to a request from GRSA to do so.

In relation to Charge 4, the IHP could not be satisfied that the posting of the distorted image, accompanied by a comment that, on one interpretation could be seen as being threatening in nature, was in fact intended to be threatening. It was communicated to Mrs Blakemore that the IHP formed a view that the posting of such material was unpleasant in the extreme, a gross abuse of the privacy that a GRSA official should be entitled to, and entirely inappropriate and ill-considered.

In relation to Charge 2, Mrs Blakemore, while accepting she was responsible for the post, expressed uncertainty as to whether the contents of the posting were in fact authored entirely by her. It was asserted that it was possible that the offending aspects of the posting (as considered so by the IHP, and implicitly agreed to by Mrs Blakemore during the hearing), may have in fact been added following her initial posting (ie: her account having been hacked by persons unknown). The IHP did not accept that version and formed a view that the contents of the posting were clearly of a nature that were detrimental or prejudicial to the image of greyhound racing.

In relation to Charge 3, Mrs Blakemore accepted that she was responsible for the comments forming the subject of the charge. It was asserted that there was an underlying factual basis for her comments, an assertion that was rejected entirely by the IHP and deemed to be deliberately disingenuous. The IHP formed the view that the comments were offensive to the persons named in the post, were intended to be offensive, were entirely improper and were entirely without foundation.

In relation to penalty for Charge 2 and Charge 3, submissions on penalty were sought from Stewards and Mrs Blakemore (assisted by Mr Roach). In considering those submissions, along with the circumstances of the offences, the IHP determined to finalise the matter as follows:



- Mrs Blakemore be suspended for a period of 6 months (that suspension being backdated to 20<sup>th</sup> August 2019)

Both parties were advised of their right of appeal.



**Timothy McGrath**  
**GRSA INTEGRITY HEARINGS PANEL CHAIR**

