

# TRANSCRIPT

## INTEGRITY AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

### Performance of Victorian Integrity Agencies 2020/21: Focus on Witness Welfare

Melbourne—Monday, 9 May 2022

#### MEMBERS

Ms Harriet Shing—Chair

Mr Brad Rowswell—Deputy Chair

Mr Stuart Grimley

Mr Dustin Halse

Mr Jackson Taylor

Ms Vicki Ward

Hon Kim Wells

## WITNESSES

Mr Eamonn Moran PSM QC, Inspector, and

Ms Cathy Cato, Executive Director, Legal and Integrity,

Ms Alison Lister, General Manager, Integrity Operations, and

Ms Kathryn Phillips, Director, Budget Independence and Strategy, Victorian Inspectorate.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, everyone. Good afternoon, and welcome to these hearings in relation to the review of witness welfare.

I am Harriet Shing, Chair of the Integrity and Oversight Committee, and I declare open this public hearing for the Integrity and Oversight Committee's Inquiry into the Performance of Victorian Integrity Agencies 2020/21: Focus on Witness Welfare. I would like to welcome members of the public gallery and any members of the public who are watching the live broadcast today.

I also acknowledge my colleagues participating today, specifically Deputy Chair Mr Rowswell, Mr Wells, Mr Halse, and joining us electronically today are Mr Taylor and Mr Grimley. We have an apology temporarily from Ms Ward, who will be hopefully joining us at a later stage in these hearings.

I also acknowledge that we are meeting today on the lands of the Wurundjeri people, and I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of these lands and the presence of Elders and leaders past, present and emerging who have joined us here today, along with anybody who may be listening to or following these proceedings online.

To witnesses, I would like to remind you that all evidence taken by this committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. You are protected against any action for what you say here today, but if you repeat the same things anywhere else, including on social media, these comments will not be protected by this privilege. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the Committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament.

All evidence given today is being recorded by Hansard. You will be provided with a proof version of the transcript for you to check once this becomes available, and verified transcripts will be also placed on the Committee's website. Broadcasting or recording of this hearing by anyone other than Hansard is not permitted.

On that basis I might then begin by inviting you all, or one of you, to provide a very brief opening statement of no longer than 5 minutes if you can, please, on the matter that we are conducting an assessment of as part of this review—namely, witness welfare—and from there we will move to questions from members of the Committee. So perhaps, Inspector, I might begin with you, and indeed you can throw to anybody else within the 5 minutes that you have available. Thank you.

**Mr MORAN:** Thank you very much, Chair. Thank you very much for the invitation to attend the hearing today with its particular focus on witness welfare. I was going to say a few words generally about performance, but due to the time lines I will leave that until later—about funding, et cetera.

I am very proud of the fact that one of the first things we did at the Victorian Inspectorate when I took on the role of Inspector was to have a focus on witness welfare. In October 2018, we tabled a report in Parliament on witness welfare. The report followed an investigation of some incidents that had occurred in the course of IBAC's exercise of coercive powers, and of particular concern for the inspectorate was that it involved a witness twice attempting suicide. I said at the time in a press release, just quoting, that:

... the report highlighted the need for integrity agencies to have regard for the welfare of witnesses.

Victoria's integrity agencies have significant coercive powers to compel witnesses to provide evidence. With those powers comes responsibility, and Victorians need to be assured that agencies with these powers are being held to the highest standard ...

No matter who the witness is, or why they are being investigated, integrity agencies must demonstrate a regard for their welfare ...

So I stand by those comments today, and I think I can confidently assert that witnesses and complainants are given the highest importance by the VI in all our dealings with them.

The 2018 report caused other agencies in the integrity system to have regard to their processes from a welfare perspective. IBAC too changed its policy on welfare management for investigations and made improvements to its hearing room precinct. Indeed, the 2018 report has proved to be a seminal work in the area and has been a subject of consideration in other jurisdictions.

Integrity agencies are given the function by Parliament of investigating matters that relate to issues of integrity, but we acknowledge and recognise that an integrity investigation is an inherently distressing process. The obligation on us is to do everything reasonably practical to eliminate risk to the welfare of witnesses, complainants and persons of interest and, if it is not reasonably practical to eliminate risk, to do all we can to reduce risks so far as reasonably practical.

In advocating for the welfare of witnesses, complainants and persons of interest across the integrity system, the VI is seeking to make integrity investigations no more distressing than they need to be. It is important that an integrity agency does everything that it is required by law to do in support of witness welfare, such as ensuring that witnesses are aware of their rights and not deprived of access to counsellors and medical support and the support of their partners, but it can, in my opinion, and should, take reasonable steps beyond that. What is really important is showing empathy for what a fellow human being is going through and helpfully pointing them to avenues open to them.

I think, finally, it is important to bear in mind the limitations on our powers and what we can say publicly about operational matters. We are not able to overturn a decision of an integrity agency we oversee or direct them to take a particular action, such as not to hold a public hearing. We can, however, make recommendations in private or in a public report, and we are guided on how to respond in any particular circumstances by the *Integrity Response Guidelines* that we have developed.

It is important to emphasise that while by statute an integrity agency must notify us of any exercise, of course, of power, we do not have sight at every stage in an investigation undertaken by them, including in the natural justice process that follows the publication of a draft report. When new staff join the Inspectorate, they take an oath to not disclose anything that they learn in the course of their work except as authorised or required by law; I did the same before the Speaker. And of course under Section 33 of our Act, it is an offence for us to, except in very limited circumstances, provide, directly or indirectly, information acquired in the course of performance of duties or work.

So, with those limitations, my colleagues and I will be happy to answer any questions Members may have. As I said at the start, witness welfare is an important topic, and we are pleased that it is getting a focus here today.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Inspector, and thank you for your attendance here today. At the outset, I want to indicate that the subject matter, the themes and the systemic analysis that we are undertaking in the course of this review may well be distressing to participants or to people who are viewing these hearings online or as part of the public gallery process. So on that basis I again want to recommend that should this subject matter cause any distress for people as part of a systemic analysis, rather than an individual analysis of matters that have been the subject of assessment or involvement from integrity agencies, that people do not hesitate to contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 or otherwise to contact the Secretariat for additional support services that have been made available specifically for this review.

With that in mind, I would like to ask again in general terms—we do not need to hear and do not want to hear about any individual matters that have been the subject of your work—about the way in which valid confidentiality notices might be used to reduce the risk of harm to the safety or reputation of a person involved in a VI investigation. And the flip side of that: How can confidentiality notices do damage to witnesses involved in such matters, whether directly or indeed as peripheral witnesses?

**Mr MORAN:** Well, I can say—perhaps I can start and Cathy might supplement—we have quite an exhaustive process when we come to consider the issue of a confidentiality notice. We analyse the case for it, make sure that it is justified and a memorandum is prepared for me to sign that goes with the draft notice. So they are not issued just willy-nilly; there is a considered process. We are very conscious of the fact, particularly if you have got an investigation that involves a public interest disclosure, that you have to protect the confidentiality of the discloser, you have to protect their reputation too as far as you can, and if there is a person of interest that you are considering, you have to make sure that that person of interest is protected so their

reputation is not damaged within their organisation by perhaps those senior to them within the organisation knowing what is being looked at. So protecting reputation is a very important matter when it comes to issuing a confidentiality notice. They should not be in place any longer than absolutely needed, and when no longer necessary—they can go for five years if not revoked—they should be cancelled at the earliest opportunity.

**The CHAIR:** What is the process for cancelling a notice of confidentiality?

**Mr MORAN:** Again, it is a written notice that is sent to the witness advising the witness that the notice issued to them on whatever date it was is now cancelled.

**The CHAIR:** What is the nature of harm, just to come back to the second part of my question, that may well occur for witnesses or those involved as a consequence of the operation of a valid confidentiality order?

**Mr MORAN:** Well, reputation is the one that is coming into my head. It is a valid concern. Cathy?

**Ms CATO:** The damage that a confidentiality notice can do to an individual is the inability to talk about something that they are going through, so that needs to be taken into consideration when you are issuing the confidentiality notice—you need to consider the fact that the person that is subject to that notice has limitations on being able to share the experience that they are going through.

**The CHAIR:** And does that extend to discussion with a health professional or a support person, whether clinical or operating within another environment?

**Ms CATO:** The legislation requires—unless there is a reason not to, it actually requires, the confidentiality notice to permit discussion with a health professional. That is a really important part of the process.

**The CHAIR:** Does that health professional have any obligation to report or provide information back to the Inspectorate?

**Ms CATO:** The process under the legislation is that the confidentiality notice is passed on by the person who receives it initially. If they are authorised to disclose any of the restricted matters to anyone else, then they must pass that confidentiality notice on to the person they [are] sharing it with so they are then subject to the confidentiality notice as well.

**The CHAIR:** And what work do you do to make sure that witnesses are aware of what they can and cannot do under the operation of a valid confidentiality notice?

**Mr MORAN:** I guess I can say that we do issue an information sheet with the confidentiality notice that explains in full what their obligations are, what they cannot talk about, because the confidentiality notice lists restricted matters that they cannot discuss. It advises them what they can do if they want to discuss something with someone else who is not already authorised—to contact the Victorian Inspectorate. And we will give serious consideration to then writing to that person and authorising them to make a disclosure to the person that they wish to disclose it to, but of course advising them that they then need to give a copy of the confidentiality notice to that person and that person in turn is then bound by the notice.

**The CHAIR:** Does that then not present, arguably, the perception of a perverse outcome whereby a witness needs to disclose to the Inspectorate the issue which they then want to talk about with another party?

**Mr MORAN:** We just ask for information in very broad terms about it. I mean, often it is someone they may want to have as a support person, which is important to them. We do not ask for details about relationship. We get a name, we get a basic understanding of what it is about, and if it looks appropriate and if we can see no conflict—that this person is themselves not involved in the investigation—then we will generally authorise that.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. If I could ask just on notice that you provide a percentage where possible of the number of matters that have involved a lifting of [a confidentiality notice] or a disclosure capability for the purposes of seeking support or assistance, that would very gratefully be received. That is my time up, so on that basis I might hand to the Deputy Chair, Mr Rowswell.

**Mr ROWSWELL:** Thank you, Chair. Inspector, you say you are proud of the work that the VI has undertaken relating to witness welfare. Are you equally disappointed that in some cases your organisation took

six, sometimes seven, months to respond to issues or complaints raised, some of which referenced knowledge of suicidal ideation and attempted suicide?

**The CHAIR:** I will just interject there. If we can keep comments and answers to general matters and systemic issues rather than going to individual matters—that is indeed beyond our remit and inappropriate for us to deal with within section 7(2) of the [Parliamentary Committees] Act [2003 (Vic)], which we are all no doubt familiar with. No comment on what you have just asked, Mr Rowswell, but, again, bearing that in mind for the purposes of these hearings, please.

**Mr MORAN:** Thank you, Mr Rowswell. If I can respond in very general terms, I can say that we do have a process—there would be no case where we would not respond to a complainant for six or seven months. There is a process when a complaint comes in that we will acknowledge that complaint. We have set a standard that that is to be done now within five days; I think that is a performance standard that we have now agreed to. There would be a need then to analyse the complaint, to assess it. It is often the case that you have to go back and get further information in order to be able to analyse the complaint. There may even be a need to go to the body that the complaint is about, ask information from them, and then it may be four, five, six months before the person receives an outcome letter, the finalisation of the complaint. We always set out, ‘Well, this is what you complained about. This is what we have considered. We have sought this information. This is the result of the complaint’, and importantly for us we give reasons in 100 per cent of cases for the outcome that we have got. So I certainly can say, again speaking in very general terms, it would not be the case that someone complains to us and they hear nothing for months on end.

**Mr ROWSWELL:** Certainly in terms of an acknowledgement but not necessarily in terms of a wholesome, full response.

**Mr MORAN:** Because it can take time to properly analyse a complaint and make sure that we fully understand it.

**Mr ROWSWELL:** And if matters relating to either suicidal ideation or attempted suicide are raised in correspondence with you, what is your process—Do you in fact have a process?—to prioritise those issues for urgent resolution, setting aside the other matters which may take some time to respond to?

**Mr MORAN:** We certainly do have a process. Working in this area can be a distressing experience for staff, and we are very conscious of that. But the process very much is if you are dealing, and sometimes it is on the phone or via email, with someone where you have got concerns about welfare, that there is a suggestion that they are considering self-harm or there is some reason why you are really concerned, it is escalated within the VI. It will come either to Cathy or myself or Alison to decide what we do. Generally it will be to immediately get a welfare check done, which involves contacting the local police station. We would always do that. If you get some general suggestion that does not give a name of someone, our process would be to try and find out more, because one thing we think we put high importance on is making sure that people’s welfare is considered. So we do have a definite process in place and we have, on occasions, had to call out welfare checks on people.

**Mr ROWSWELL:** That process is articulated in a policy documents of sorts?

**Mr MORAN:** Yes, it is in our Welfare Policy. I think it may have been supplied along with the materials we supplied.

**The CHAIR:** It was indeed; thank you.

**Mr MORAN:** It is there, isn’t it?

**Mr ROWSWELL:** And just finally, in general terms, are you able to—feel free to take this [on] notice—share with the Committee the amount of times that this process has needed to be activated within, say, a 12-month period?

**Mr MORAN:** Yes. I would have to take on notice the actual number of times. It is not frequent. There are probably three definite occasions that come into my head where we would have done checks on people, but I really would have to go back and look at the records.

**Mr ROWSWELL:** Thank you, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Rowswell. All right, we might move on to Mr Grimley, who is appearing via Zoom. Thanks, Mr Grimley. Over to you.

**Mr GRIMLEY:** Thanks, Chair. My apologies if you have covered some of this information before; we had some technical issues with our audio from this end. My question flows on from Mr Rowswell. It is in relation to the confidentiality notices and the disclosure of such. When may a person who is subject to a VI confidentiality notice disclose a restricted matter to a health professional or a support person? In what cases can they do that?

**Mr MORAN:** Thank you very much, Mr Grimley. There is a general authorisation to be able to discuss with that person. I mean, obviously a health professional is important—that they can get the support that they need to deal with what is obviously a very distressing matter, distressing because of the nature of what has been looked at but also because of that inability to discuss that is imposed on them by a confidentiality notice. For the people who are authorised, whether it is a health professional—importantly, their partner too—there is a general presumption of being able to discuss matters with your partner and receive the support from them. I cannot think of any case where we have prevented a disclosure to a partner, for example. So certainly a health professional. We have been asked on occasions then to authorise others. I cannot think of any occasion where someone has asked for an authorisation where we have not granted it.

**Ms CATO:** It depends mainly on the impact of granting it and the purpose of granting it. Sometimes people ask for authorisation for a purpose that is not welfare-related, and if it might impact on the reputation of the person to reveal it to a greater source or a greater group of people, we might consider that, so it is a case-by-case basis. But for welfare purposes, yes, unless it would impact on the investigation it would be unexpected to not permit that.

**Mr GRIMLEY:** Thank you. Chair, if I can just have just one more continuing on from that one. How is this information conveyed to that person subject to the confidentiality notice? You mentioned before the information sheet. Is that something that would be supplied on that information sheet given to the person?

**Mr MORAN:** Yes, there is an information sheet that comes with the confidentiality [notice]. Now, this sets out in full their rights. There is always contact too—there is direct contact between a VI officer and the person, who will make contact and speak to the person about the notice and ask them if they have got any questions about it, and they can come back for more information.

Reputation is an important thing, so if there was a suggestion, for example, that you want to disclose something, that a disclosure should be made to someone who is in a senior position to that person and you are concerned about the reputation of that person, we will consider that and be disinclined. But where it is a welfare concern, where it is important for that person to get support, we will authorise. The actual authorisation is in the letter signed by me that goes to the person saying, 'We authorise you to disclose to this person', and reminding them of the obligation to provide a copy of the confidentiality notice to that person.

**Mr GRIMLEY:** Thank you, Inspector. Thank you, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks, Mr Grimley. I, at this juncture, want to note that Ms Ward will be joining us shortly via Zoom. I will now hand over to Mr Halse.

**Mr WELLS:** My call.

**The CHAIR:** Sorry. I beg your pardon. Sorry, Mr Wells. My apologies. Over to you.

**Mr WELLS:** Thanks, Chair. Inspector, in answer to one of your questions to the Committee, as one of the principles you have said:

The VI aims to lead by example in demonstrating regard for witness welfare and ensuring their health and safety is the VI's first priority.

So, if it is taking six months to respond to a concern, is that leading by example?

**Mr MORAN:** Thank you, Mr Wells, for the question. It really depends on the nature of the issue that has been raised with us, and sometimes they are very complex and really do need a careful analysis. We want to

make sure that we consider every angle. As I said, it can involve getting more information from the complainant. It can involve going back to the body to get some information too, and to compile reasons. I should say, like so many bodies over the last two years, COVID has had an impact on us too in dealing with things—to make sure we can only ever have a small attendance in the office, which has impacted. The phone line has not been working as well as possible. But within all those constraints we believe that we make the best effort we can, and if at times we feel we could have done better, we will say to the person, ‘We apologise that there has been a delay in this’, because we know it is very important to that person. We do genuinely strive to do our best but within our resources. I mean, I can point out, for example, that up until very recently we had two officers who deal with complaints. We have usually around the 100 mark of complaints that are coming in each year, so there is a lot to be looked at, and that is only the complaints side of the work. But I am not saying that that justifies an unreasonable response. We will make every effort we can that is reasonable.

**Mr WELLS:** So, based on what you have just said, was it due to COVID or short staff or staffing issues that it may have taken six months to respond?

**Mr MORAN:** Well, as I said, I do not want to talk about any particular matters.

**Mr WELLS:** No, no. I am just talking in general terms.

**Mr MORAN:** It can, because you are also dealing with entities, too, that have been impacted by COVID. But the complexity of the issue is a thing that generally adds to the delay, and I guess the volume of work—to be conscious too that if you have got two officers and you have got, say, 90 complaints, it takes time.

**Mr WELLS:** Okay. But in answer to one of Mr Rowswell’s questions, when he asked you about the prioritisation, surely if someone comes in with a concern, generally speaking, that someone is suicidal, then surely that would go to the top of the rung and be dealt with. I guess my issue comes back to: Why would it take six months—in general questioning—for that to be responded to? I would have thought—

**The CHAIR:** Again, can we just please keep it to the general by not referring to specific periods of time? If you want to refer to a lengthy period of time, that is fine. I am just—

**Mr WELLS:** Okay, a lengthy period of time between six and eight months.

**Mr MORAN:** Can I ask Alison, who is—

**Ms LISTER:** Yes, certainly. I guess the really important thing to understand is that it would not take us six months to come back to somebody who had raised a welfare issue. It may take several months to get an outcome to the complaint, but in circumstances where someone raises a welfare issue with us, we look to connect and engage and see if that person has got enough support and assist them wherever we can. Obviously in relation to all complaints we try our best to get them done as quickly as we can, but, as Eamonn has talked about, that often involves us going to different organisations, receiving information and analysing and assessing that information. I think also we would keep in contact and provide updates to complainants, so it is not that they submit their complaint and then wait for an outcome letter. There is generally a lot of contact that happens in the process and throughout the process.

**Mr WELLS:** Can I have one last question?

**The CHAIR:** Yes, briefly.

**Mr WELLS:** Very quickly, you mentioned, Inspector, that on three occasions you have had a similar situation. How long would it have taken to respond to those three occasions where there has been real concern about a witness?

**Mr MORAN:** Instantaneous—within an hour at most—because it would be escalated within the VI. We would look at it, look at what has been said and what is the cause for concern and then authorise contact to be made with the local police. So it is, absolutely, because you are not going to delay a response like that.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks for that. I will hand over now to Mr Halse. Thank you.

**Mr HALSE:** Thank you, Inspector, and others. To what extent do witnesses seek exemptions to confidentiality orders, and what is their capacity to do so? What have you observed in that process?

**Mr MORAN:** It is not all that frequent. I mean, we do not issue a big number of confidentiality notices. They are, you know, reasonably rare, and certainly in complaints you do not have—you only get to confidentiality notices when you are investigating a matter or when you have exercised your power to conduct an inquiry. That is when you get the power to exercise that coercive power. So in the general handling of complaints there would not be a confidentiality notice in place. But on those occasions where there is an active investigation and we have considered the circumstances in which it will be issued, among those I think it is comparatively rare that someone has come back. I can certainly recall several instances in recent times where applications have been made, but we can take it on notice and get you some facts and figures. That is probably the best way for me to approach it.

**Mr HALSE:** Thank you.

**Ms CATO:** I could just add that perhaps part of the reason that it does not happen overly frequently is that there are already the exceptions within the notice itself, spelt out in that information sheet and the notice, where they can go to their partner or a medical practitioner and they do not need permission to do that.

**Mr HALSE:** Thank you. Moving on to another question. In what ways, if at all, does IBAC need to improve its management of witness welfare?

**Mr MORAN:** As I said, we have given a big priority to considering issues of witness welfare. When we did our 2018 report, we made 10 recommendations to IBAC. At the time, as reported in our annual report, IBAC did not accept our findings. It did not accept the recommendations but set about itself doing a review of its processes and brought into place a number of changes which in part satisfied our recommendations. We have been observing how they have been doing it. For example, when Operation Gloucester came along, we gave a close observation of what was happening in that and could see improvements in place for how witnesses were handled. They developed a new witness welfare management policy. So we have seen improvement. We regularly monitor it, and if we see an issue, we contact IBAC in writing about it.

**Mr HALSE:** Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** All right. Thank you, Mr Halse. Lastly, Mr Taylor, joining us online.

**Mr TAYLOR:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you very much. My question is: What has been the impact, if any, of the VI's new case management system, which has been in operation since February 2021?

**Mr MORAN:** Cathy or Alison, you might be best.

**Ms CATO:** Sure. I think the new case management system that we introduced, Resolve, has been excellent in terms of enabling us to, I guess, have a very efficient system—not just our complaint part of our function but a number of our other functions. We are able to monitor all of our work within a good database instead of the spreadsheets and things that we were using to assess and review a thousand notifications per year before that. It enables us to do a lot more in terms of analysis of issues that we identify. It enables us to track issues and improve our reporting process. Really, just having information more at hand and more accessible and using up less staff time as well in doing so is more efficient as a process.

**Mr TAYLOR:** Thank you very much.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks, Mr Taylor. Just one final question before we wrap up: Do you have any clinical staff or staff with clinical expertise in understanding the impacts of specific processes within the work that you do? What level of training do you provide to staff, if any, in relation to understanding the impact or potential impact of proceedings on witnesses, and to what extent does that extend to making sure that the work of staff at the Inspectorate is able to best contemplate and address issues around witness welfare? I am happy for you to take that on notice if you would like, or otherwise to give a very brief answer with the time that we have left.

**Mr MORAN:** I can say we do. Our staff who are in contact with the public do training—mental health welfare training—so they do have awareness of issues. But importantly we have been engaging over the last few years a consultant psychiatrist who is an expert in this field, who we have had come along to give



workshops at the VI. I think in Alison's team you have had him particularly dealing with the people who handle complaints. It may be best, Alison, that you supplement that.

**Ms LISTER:** Certainly. In relation to the consultant forensic psychiatrist that we have to help our staff development in this area, we certainly take the opportunity to talk about any particularly challenging cases, and sometimes they are cases that involve complex welfare issues but also potentially complex complaint issues. So we certainly look to work with him to understand how we can better, I guess, engage with the complainant so that we can better understand and manage their complaint. Also, if you want me to touch on some of the training, I think it is covered in the information—

**The CHAIR:** Happy for you to take that as read in terms of what you have provided to date. Just finally, is that part of staff's KPIs in terms of the way in which they adapt to advice provided by mental health experts and clinical experts?

**Ms LISTER:** It is not part of a KPI, but certainly it is something that our Senior Complaints Officer, in reviewing complaint files and providing some feedback or coaching to staff, really has a very big focus on.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. All right, that then brings to a close this particular hearing. Thank you for your time. There are a number of questions as they relate to general performance which I hope you will accept as questions on notice from today. They will be provided by the Secretariat.

As I said at the outset, if any of this material has caused anybody any distress, please contact Lifeline on 13 11 14. You will receive a transcript of this hearing, and that will be part of the ongoing process for assessment under this review. Any comments or feedback, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the Secretariat. Thank you very much for your time here today. We will declare this hearing closed.

**Witnesses withdrew.**