

TRANSCRIPT

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Inquiry into the legislative and regulatory framework relating to restricted breed dogs

Melbourne — 10 November 2015

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Dr Paul Martin, President, and

Dr Susan Maastricht, Committee Member and Past President, Australian Veterinary Association Ltd (Victorian division).

The CHAIR — Good morning. I will begin by declaring open the Standing Committee on Economy and Infrastructure's public hearing. This morning's hearing is in relation to the inquiry into restricted breed dogs, and the evidence today is being recorded. I welcome everyone who is present here this morning. This hearing is to inform the report that is due to be tabled in March 2016, and witnesses present may well be invited to attend future hearings as the inquiry continues. All evidence today is protected by parliamentary privilege, therefore you are protected for what you say in here today but if you go outside and repeat the same things, those comments may not be protected by this same privilege. I welcome our first witnesses, from the Australian Veterinary Association, and I begin by asking you to introduce yourselves and state your positions.

Dr MARTIN — Thank you, Chair. My name is Dr Paul Martin, and I am president of the Victorian division of the Australian Veterinary Association. I am here today with my colleague and a past president of the Victorian division of the Australian Veterinary Association, Dr Susan Maastricht. We are here representing the Australian Veterinary Association. We thank you for the opportunity of appearing.

The CHAIR — Very good. I will hand over to you, but before we begin I remind you that as today's evidence is being recorded, you will be provided with proof versions of the transcript, which you will be able to peruse, and ultimately they will be made public on the committee's website, but I now invite both of you to make your opening statements and comments, followed by some questions from the committee.

Dr MARTIN — Thank you, Chair. I would like to start by mentioning that the Australian Veterinary Association is the only national organisation representing Australia's veterinarians. We have over 8500 members, and they come from all fields within the veterinary profession. Clinical practitioners work with companion animals — dogs and cats, obviously — but also horses, farm animals, cattle, sheep, alpacas and, importantly, wildlife. Members of our association also work in the pharmaceutical area and in other commercial enterprises, and also in government and in research and teaching. Importantly, the membership of the Australian Veterinary Association includes the nation's leading experts in animal health and animal behaviour.

As individuals and as an association we value deeply the positive role that companion animals play in our lives. There is ample evidence of the positive effects that dogs can have on the physical and mental health of humans. However, there is a persistent gap between the community's desire to live alongside dogs and its knowledge of how to actually properly interact with those same dogs. Dog attacks on humans, other companion animals, livestock and wildlife in Australia mimic those in other developed countries. Some breeds of dog receive more media attention when attacks take place, even though the frequency of attacks by those same breeds may be small. I have been in veterinary practice for 35 years, and over that time I have received many bites from dogs, many from different breeds. However, for many years countries, including Australia, have attempted to regulate certain breeds in an attempt to reduce the frequency of dog bites. In our belief it is a mistaken belief that certain breeds are more dangerous than others. We are here today to tell you that that is not the case.

The Australian Veterinary Association, along with the national veterinary associations of Britain, the United States and Canada, recognise that breed-specific approaches to dog regulation are just not effective. The evidence is clear. This approach does not protect the public because it does not reduce dog bite incidents. The veterinary association is advocating a legislative approach based on the early identification of potentially dangerous dogs, and acting to prevent them from becoming dangerous and inflicting harm. We, along with everyone who appears before you, I am sure, feel that the aim is to decrease the number of incidents and eliminate, where practical, dog bites.

To this end the Australian Veterinary Association has: one, reviewed the relevant legislation in Australia; two, reviewed the overseas initiatives; three, drawn on scientific literature; four, identified and looked at the key elements of dog management legislation; and then, five, come up with the key principles and elements of what may be a model legislative framework.

Let me talk to you a little about dog bites. Dog bites are the result of complex behaviour caused by the interaction of many factors. To reduce dog bites, the regulatory process must include an effective policy response based on solid evidence that includes: one, the persistent and effective identification and registration of all dogs; two, a national reporting system that provides the data to then deliver informed legislative decisions; three, temperament testing to understand the risks and needs of individual animals and develop from that mitigation strategies that produce dogs that are valued and safe family and community members; four, a comprehensive education program and support that deliver community engagement and encourage socially responsible pet ownership; and, five, enforcement as a final option only.

I would like to take a moment to outline the facts about dog bites. Whilst genetics are an important factor, the impact of the environment and learning are critical to safe and appropriate dog behaviour. The tendency of a dog to bite is dependent on at least five interacting factors. Yes, heredity, genes and breed, but more importantly: early experiences as a puppy; the socialisation of those puppies, which mostly only occurs between the ages of 6 weeks and 16 weeks of age, and then their subsequent training; health, both physical and psychological health, can have an extreme effect on dog bites; and victim behaviour.

Dogs at large are responsible for a small percentage of dog bites, yet they attract disproportionate media and political interest. They are, however, the public face of the dog bite problem, and most legislation is designed to control that part of the problem. But actually most dog bites occur in the dog's own home and involve victims being bitten by their own dogs. There is ample evidence that in Australia differing scientific studies have shown that 73 to 81 per cent of attacks occur in the domestic setting. Children, however, are the most common victim of dog bites, with most scientific studies reporting that children are more likely to be bitten by dogs than adults. This is clearly where our attention is aimed. Because children are the most common victims of serious dog bites, studies have shown that 70 per cent of fatal dog attacks and more than half of bite wounds requiring medical attention involve children.

I mentioned before victim behaviour. I am not in any way suggesting that the victims are responsible for the result of that situation, but it is children's natural behaviours — including running; yelling; grabbing; hitting; quick, darting movements; and maintaining eye contact — which put them at risk for dog bite injuries. Proximity of a child's face to the dog also increases the risk that facial injuries are more likely. Veterinarians, along with the rest of the community, are very concerned about this situation, and it is for this reason that we are so keen to see a solution and a program that will have tangible, positive effects in the community.

Breed-specific legislation has been introduced in a large number of jurisdictions in an effort to address the issue of aggressive and dangerous dogs in the community. The legislation has generally taken the form of banning and/or placing stringent restrictions on the ownership of certain breeds of dogs. The Australian Veterinary Association is opposed to breed-based dog legislation and control measures because the evidence shows clearly that they do not work. At its very heart, the current breed-specific legislation was introduced for the purpose of improving public safety. Well, on this front, it has failed, and there are good, sound and valid reasons why it has failed.

Firstly, breed on its own is not an effective indicator or a predictor of aggression in dogs. Secondly, it is not possible to precisely determine the breed of the types of dogs targeted by breed-specific legislation either by appearance or by DNA analysis. Thirdly, the number of dogs that would have to be removed from a community to have a meaningful impact on hospital admissions is so high that the removal of any one breed would have negligible impact. Finally, and probably the most important, is that breed-specific legislation ignores the human element, whereby dog owners who desire this kind of dog will simply substitute another breed of dog of similar size, strength and perception of aggressive tendencies.

All dogs, regardless of breed, are capable of biting and causing serious injury, especially to children and the elderly. I believe that that is so important I would like to repeat it: all dogs, regardless of what breed they are, are capable of biting and causing serious injury. It is clear, however, that one of the factors that differentiate between breeds of dogs is temperament. There is strong evidence that behavioural traits are more associated with the current use of that dog than with a breed's historical purpose. Social and non-social fearfulness resulting in aggression can be altered with just a few generations of intense breeding selection. By that I mean that if you want to breed a seemingly aggressive male with a seemingly aggressive female, whatever the breed, guess what? You are most likely going to end up with aggressive puppies. A number of studies have been undertaken in the past decade that clearly show the profound influence of the owner and the way the dog is raised on its temperament and the observation that some breeds are more likely to be owned by certain types of people. It is these owners who need to be held accountable for their dog's behaviour.

Breed identification, particularly for crossbreed dogs, has a long recognised history of inaccuracy, and veterinarians have been reluctant to certify that an animal is a member of a specific breed. This is understandable as breed assessment by observation has been shown to be flawed. In considering the high-profile breed that we are all concerned about, it is still impossible to establish whether a dog is a pit bull terrier. There are currently two DNA tests available in Australia. The first, BITSA by gene technologies, does not even include pit bulls in its range of breeds, so it cannot prove that a dog is a pit bull. For similar reasons the other

available test, which is produced by Mars Petcare Australia Pty Ltd, is not designed to validate the purity of a purebred dog, and test results should not be relied upon as official certification of a dog's genetic make-up, including for the purposes of the laws relating to restricted breeds.

I would like to conclude by drawing your attention to what we call the alternative solution. The Australian Veterinary Association's alternative to breed-specific legislation is a comprehensive strategy to address the multiple complex causes of dog bites. It has been documented in a paper entitled *Dangerous Dogs — A Sensible Solution*, and it is available to you with copies here today. It was published in 2012. The model legislative framework actually sets out the sound principles for regulating dangerous dogs as well as describing a system to identify and control potentially dangerous dogs at the individual rather than at a breed level. At the same time a complete system of measures to support socially responsible pet ownership is essential to achieve a real reduction in dog bite incidents.

The model actually involves five key areas. Number (1) is the identification and registration of all dogs. This we already, to a large extent, have done in Victoria. Number (2), we need a national reporting system with mandatory reporting of all dog bite incidents to the national database. Number (3), temperament testing to understand the risks and needs of individual animals to help owners make more appropriate choices for their new pets and to guide breeders to improve the temperament of puppies. Number (4), a comprehensive education program for pet owners, dog breeders, all parents and all children. And (5), importantly we will still need enforcement of all dog management requirements.

Unfortunately resourcing is often a major barrier to effective enforcement here in Victoria, and this problem needs to be addressed effectively to achieve tangible reductions in dog incidents. Thank you for your attention. Dr Maastricht and I will be pleased to address any questions you have.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Dr Martin. Dr Maastricht, were there any initial comments that you would like to make?

Dr MAASTRICHT — No, I am happy to answer questions, however.

Mr FINN — Doctors, thank you for your presence here today and for your expert evidence. I think we all accept that all dogs have the capacity to bite. Would it be fair to say, though, that there are some breeds that have the greater capacity to inflict damage, whether it be on a child or an adult? If you are bitten by a foxy, it might be a bit annoying, but if you are bitten by a pit bull terrier or whatever that may be, then obviously that could cause some significant damage, if not death, as we have seen in one case.

Dr MARTIN — I would agree with your basic premise that the amount of damage done is more likely to be done by dogs with big mouths, large weight and large teeth. They will always cause more damage than small dogs. In fact in my practice over 35 years I have probably been bitten more by Chihuahuas than I have by Rottweilers. However, when a Chihuahua bites you, I think there is not a great difference between that and a mosquito bite. However, one day when I had a Rottweiler firmly attached to my arm and I was holding it off the ground the damage inflicted under those circumstances is going to be much greater. So the basic premise I would agree with. Susan would you like to — —

Dr MAASTRICHT — Yes, I would concur.

Mr FINN — Would you agree that there are some breeds that are bred specifically for a purpose? There are some breeds that perhaps have more of an inclination to be an attack dog or to be a dog which has a natural inclination to cause the sort of damage which we are speaking of.

Dr MAASTRICHT — I think that what we see is that we have an interesting human intervention with dogs. As we have already said, all dogs have a propensity to bite, but what we do see is that humans intervene in fact and can create a situation where a dog is more likely to bite, whatever the breed may be. The interesting thing for me is that selection about the breeding. If you go into a dog show situation, often the dogs that are winning in fact are the ones that bite the most often. In fact — —

Mr FINN — Just not the judges.

Dr MAASTRICHT — I think even the judges. There are some decisions that are made by humans that in fact are having the negative impact on that. I think that that is the thing we need to keep in mind: that natural propensity to be aggressive can be enhanced by the human intervention.

Mr FINN — The human intervention obviously, yes, is a part of it, but I am talking about some dogs that have been bred through the years, sometimes through the centuries, for a specific purpose, whether they be — I will not mention any particular breeds — dogs that are natural hunting dogs, that are natural attack dogs, that have been bred for that purpose. Do you find that that comes out in their DNA, in their natural personality, if I could call it that, without much human intervention at all?

Dr MAASTRICHT — I think like most traits they may be actually manifestly present through selective breeding, but that is not necessarily an attachment to aggression. They may be in fact great ratters. For example, Jack Russell terriers were great ratters, but that does not mean that they are necessarily aggressive. You need to see that the traits are not necessarily linked and may be quite different. Hunting dogs that will actually act as retrievers, so go in and retrieve the birds that are shot in the water, are taught to do that, but that is not necessarily an attachment to aggression. It is just simply a way they have been selectively bred over time.

Mr FINN — One last question from me, and that is: these suggestions that you have put forward, Doctor, do you have any idea of the cost that we would be looking at to implement them?

Dr MARTIN — I believe that the framework that they are under has to be an integrated approach from government. I think the reason we are here at the moment is because the current situation is not working. There is clearly a lack in various areas of Victoria at a council level, and that is where the enforcement of the dog legislation ends up. There are some councils that seem to have next to no trouble. There are other councils in other parts of Victoria which seem to be in the news on a constant basis. I know that Mr Bill Bruce from Canada, from Calgary, has presented to this committee, and he has clearly indicated that under the Canadian model, or the Calgary model, it was cost revenue neutral.

We do not have any statistics here in Victoria, certainly none that we are aware of, as to what actual percentage of dogs are registered with council. We just do not know. I live in the Shire of Yarra Ranges. Is it 25 per cent of the dogs that live in the shire are actually registered with the shire? Is it 50 per cent? Is it 75 per cent? I can tell you anecdotally that the people who come into my veterinary clinic with dogs now have a large proportion of them microchipped, because we introduced legislation for microchipping and we have got it pretty well right, I would suggest. All those dogs end up on a database. It just seems bizarre to me in this day and age that councils do not interact with that microchipping database to make themselves aware of what dogs are actually in their shire that are not registered.

When it comes to funds, I would support, because I believe, that as demonstrated in the Calgary model it could be really revenue neutral if we had a far greater participation in the dog registration process and we did not have what I perceive at the moment as an adversary-type approach, where if a council officer walks down a street, then the members of the community are going, 'Oh, what's he looking for? If a dog gets out, he'll end up in the pound and he may be euthanased.'. There are other approaches. The Calgary approach, which I mentioned — and I am not suggesting that the Calgary approach is the only one — is a legislative approach on a framework which involves education and getting the community very much on board so that everyone in the street knows that the right thing to do is to register their dog.

Mr ELASMAR — Doctor, thank you again for coming today. Just to follow this up, are you telling me that if I have to become a dog owner today, do I not have to register it in the council? That is one. The second one: I heard you talking about victims and children. Do the adult owners have a guide or instruction on how to explain to the children not to approach the dog and the reasons you mentioned?

Dr MARTIN — A question in two parts, and I will answer the first one and my colleague might answer the second one because it goes to the issue of children bites. The first one was about, 'Is it required to register your dog?'. Yes, I believe in every community, in every shire of Victoria, the law is to register your dog. But what do we do? When do you go and get a dog? Or when did any of you get a dog? You either got it from a breeder or you got it from someone you knew. You got it as a rescue animal from a pound. You got it from the RSPCA. At some stage you actually physically go and obtain that dog, but at no point in that purchase process are you given the ability or encouraged to register your dog with the council. That is the point that I am making. Does that answers your question? So to children bites.

Dr MAASTRICHT — Yes, there is literature out there. There is literature from around the world on the best way to behave around dogs. The problem is that its application is hit and miss. We have some hospitals where parents are actually provided with a flyer that tells them about how to introduce the child into a family where you have got dogs — so, what you could be doing. There are preschools where they run programs to help the children understand how to behave around dogs, but it is hit and miss; it is not consistently applied. What we need is something that is consistently applied so that everybody in the community, every child in the community, has the opportunity to hear this information.

I have a really good example that I will very quickly tell you about. A couple of years ago I was talking on the radio, and a lady rang and she said that she just wanted to say how much she appreciated the fact that her child had been in one of these programs at preschool. She said that she and her daughter were walking along the road and three dogs ran out of the house, barking. They ran down the street, and of course the mother's first desire was to pick her child up and run for their lives, and her daughter, a preschooler, said to her, 'No, Mummy, we must stand still and not look at them, keep our head down and not look at them'.

Mum and the child did exactly that and the three dogs came rushing up — they were not supposed to be on the street but they were — and they went, 'You're not very interesting', wagged their tails, walked away and went back into the house. I think that is a really important story of how much that education, that single moment that was informed by the child having received that at preschool, can make a difference in people's lives.

While there is a lot of information out there about how to actually act around dogs — what parents and children, the elderly should be doing — the truth is it is not applied uniformly. It is hit and miss, and that is what I think we need to fix.

Mr EIDEH — We understand that the American pit bull terrier is perhaps the breed most commonly affected by our law in Victoria. There is no known nationally accredited breed standard in Australia. Would the development of such standard by the Australian National Kennel Council improve the operation of our current law satisfactorily?

Dr MAASTRICHT — I think that a breed standard is just that. It gives you some guidance about what a breed may look like. It tells you nothing about how they behave. That is it in a nutshell. It tells you nothing about how they behave.

Dr MARTIN — Further to that I would add that it is not a measurable thing in that if we want to look at a specific breed for the purposes of legislation, you clearly have to be able to measure it. You must be able to define that this is the limit, whether it is a speeding limit or an alcohol limit. That is what changes human behaviour. In regard to the pit bull, it is a type. It is probably a type of crossbreed which has come over a long period of time. Whilst we are at that very point, the statistics show, from a survey in New South Wales that compared the types of dog breeds that were responsible for dog bites and followed it from 1990 through to 2000 and listed the dogs that were the most predominant, that in 1990 the top dog was a German shepherd. I would suggest that if you went back to 1980, it might have been a Doberman and in the year 2000 it was a Staffordshire terrier.

I would further suggest to the committee: do you actually believe, if it was possible, if it was theoretically possible, to go around Victoria and claim every pit bull dog and remove it from the community, does anyone think that in five years time there would not be dog bites? That there would not be serious dog bites? And potentially there could still be children put at risk, because those dogs would just be replaced by other dogs, and unfortunately, as Mr Finn alluded to earlier, it is big dogs that cause the most damage.

Mr EIDEH — I have just another quick one. Is the DNA test available today adequate to identify breeds?

Dr MARTIN — No.

Dr MAASTRICHT — No. When they do the DNA testing, the markers that they use are too few to absolutely, categorically be able to say that it is a specific breed.

Ms HARTLAND — I have got several questions. When we talk about deed versus breed, my problem with that is that obviously this legislation came out after the death of Ayen Chol in Brimbank, and that was not a dog in that child's house. It was a dog that came into the house and attacked the child, that killed the child. Clearly

the legislation is not working well from everything that we hear, but how do we protect children in those situations when we are talking about dogs that, as other people have given evidence, can cause extreme damage because of their jaw, because of their size — all of those things. How do we actually deal with the fact that small children in parks, in their own homes, are actually being put at risk?

Dr MAASTRICHT — I think that what we need to do is we need to start. I think we cannot procrastinate any longer. We have to get going on this, we have to start implementing all of these things, because if we do not do that, then in five years time we will be having the same conversation. We know that just focusing on breed is not sufficient to actually fix this. In fact it probably creates a situation where the community is more at risk because if we say we will get rid of this and that will fix it, then they are not looking at the rest of the dog community.

I think that what we need to do is just get going. It is time to stop thinking about it. It is time to start. It is time to find the solutions, find the resourcing, get everybody together, all of these various parties — everybody from our councils, welfare organisations, the Australian Veterinary Association. We need to get together, and we need to get going. Not everybody will agree with the process, but if we actually have a process of review, refine and improve, if we do it in this way, then we can start to make a difference. Doing nothing will not do it.

Ms HARTLAND — I understand your point, but I still have this extreme problem where a child has died, and obviously that is why the legislation was set up. What you are talking about is something that would take several years to set up.

Dr MAASTRICHT — Correct.

Ms HARTLAND — How do we protect children in the meantime?

Dr MAASTRICHT — Let us take a look at what the options are. If we are wanting to make sure that we are going to in fact protect children first, then let us focus on this. Let us make sure that the things that we implement first are going to get the information into the community about how everyone can protect their children. There is a lot in our solution. There is a lot in it, but let us make sure that we can get something out there immediately that is going to give people the right information. I said before that there is stuff out there, but it is hit and miss. Let us make it not hit and miss. Let us do that first, but let us go. Let us not wait; let us go.

Ms HARTLAND — Who would pay for that? My problem with that as well is that in the evidence that we have received from Knox council, they spent \$600 000 on one court case, which took a huge amount of their budget to do the kinds of more progressive things that you are talking about. Several councils have spent massive amounts of money in court cases after this legislation. Who funds that? We also have to remember that councils are about to have their rates capped, so they are also going to have even less money. How is that going to be managed?

Dr MARTIN — I believe that your question just clearly highlights why the current approach is not the best way. The amount of money which has been wasted by various councils is really horrific. The people who have benefited are the lawyers. They have clogged up VCAT, and we have had case after case go on over things that are really an opinion and cannot be proven. How much better would it be if that council money was spent on a regulatory and cohesive framework, as was detailed to you under the Calgary model where everyone in the community gets involved?

As an aside, talking about individual councils, I have been a practitioner in the Shire of Yarra Ranges for 35 years. Not once in that 35 years has council approached the local veterinarians in the shire and said, ‘Can we work together to improve greater observation of dog leash laws? Can we do a program to encourage increased registration of dogs?’. So I think that really and truly the question absolutely highlights where the solution should be aimed at.

Ms HARTLAND — I will just add some information on the Knox council case. They were not the ones who escalated it through a range of court cases. They were the ones who had to pay for it, because they had to keep on defending their position. It was actually not the council that kept escalating that court case, which did, I understand, end up in the High Court. That is a real problem for councils if they are spending that money instead of the kind of money that needs to be spent here. I will leave it at that the moment.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Paul, you said in your contribution and also in your document that identification and registration of all dogs is important. You made a comment around the fact that a certain percentage of dogs that come into your clinic are not microchipped. Given that the AVA has that position, why does the AVA not just adopt an industry standard that every dog that comes in gets microchipped?

Dr MARTIN — The AVA cannot enforce any particular point of view upon the animal-owning public. As veterinarians, we are not the ones who set the regulatory framework. Microchipping came into Victoria a number of years ago and so the only dogs now that are not microchipped are dogs that are at the end of their life cycle or dogs that have been obtained in a non-regulated manner — in other words, from a backyard breeding situation. No dogs get released from pounds now that are not microchipped. No dogs get released from registered breeders and sold on to people without being microchipped. No dogs get released from any of the welfare agencies that are not microchipped. So we are very shortly going to be presented with the fact that 95 per cent or 98 per cent of the dog population of Victoria is in fact microchipped.

There is a disconnect between that statistic and then the tie-up between council registrations. It seems to me that councils, through legislation, could be enabled to and could very easily data match with that which is held by the microchip registries in Australia and then council would actually know that there is a dog at a particular place.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Sure. That is possible. My only other point was that in terms of the AVA's concern for this issue if a dog presents at your clinic and it is not microchipped, why would you not say to the owner, 'It's not microchipped. Why don't we microchip it now'?

Dr MARTIN — I would suggest that most veterinarians would in fact say that.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Why would the AVA not just adopt that as an industry practice?

Dr MAASTRICHT — We should take it on notice.

Dr MARTIN — Yes, we will take that on notice.

Dr MAASTRICHT — We will take that back with us.

Mr ONDARCHIE — I am just looking at some consistency between practice and what you are saying in your submission. My final question is you said the breed specific legislation has clearly failed. How has it clearly failed?

Dr MARTIN — There are still dog bites occurring in the community, and there have been so many court cases and so much waste of public money that could have been spent on other alternatives. The specific legislation that we currently have, whilst it was enacted with the very best of intentions, gives the community I believe a false sense of security in that certain breeds are the only ones that are responsible for dangerous dog bites, when the evidence clearly shows the opposite to be the case.

Mr ONDARCHIE — How do you know that the community has been led into a false sense of security because they think only certain breeds are the ones that enact dog bites?

Dr MARTIN — Making generalisations about the community's perceptions would be an individual perception that I have.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Okay. So it is your view?

Dr MARTIN — It would be my view.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Okay. Thanks for that.

Dr MARTIN — But I would also like to just make mention of the fact that with the large amount of social media that appears now, there are so many examples of where people put photos of cute dogs with babies into social media, and that absolutely horrifies us. It absolutely horrifies anyone and should horrify anyone who knows that all dogs can bite, all dogs can potentially cause serious harm.

Mr ONDARCHIE — That is fair enough. Does the AVA respond to that on social media?

Dr MAASTRICHT — I do not know.

Dr MARTIN — I am sorry, I do not know the answer to that specific question. We tend to put out media releases, but we do not tend to respond to Facebook posts and things like that.

The CHAIR — Thanks, Dr Martin and thank you, Dr Maastricht, for your testimony here today.

Dr MARTIN — Thank you.

Witnesses withdrew.