

The Queensland Racing Integrity Commission Bill

Submission to the Agriculture and Environment Committee.

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PREAMBLE

The Queensland racing industry is the third or fourth largest employer in the state. It is not unreasonable to estimate that it provides direct and indirect employment to 50 000 people. Indirect employment includes veterinarians, veterinary products suppliers, suppliers and manufacturers of animal racing tack, horse fodder producers, manufactured animal feed suppliers, transport operators, yearling sales agents, wagering organisations as well as the many who supply goods and services to the regular and carnival race meetings. There is also an unknown number of volunteers who contribute their time to this traditional Australian past time. The people involved directly and indirectly rely on a strong industry for their income, careers and maintenance of their private racing investments.

The industry provides a genuine social purpose especially in country areas. It also contributes substantial tourist income especially from its major tourism events – Brisbane Racing Winter Carnival, Gold Coast Turf Club Magic Millions race-day and yearling sales, the Birdsville Cup and the Cairns Amateurs.

The Queensland Racing Unity Group (QRUG) currently represents the majority of race clubs, 6 supportive racing associations and 140 supportive individual racing participants. This group represents the vast majority of Participants in the Queensland racing industry. QRUG is in the process of being incorporated. Pending incorporation, this submission is on behalf of supportive clubs, racing associations and individual participants.

THE McSPORRAN ENQUIRY RECOMMENDATIONS.

The Terms of reference are explicit and are described in items 75 and 76. They are limited to practices in the greyhound industry. Therefore the Executive Summary must be similarly limited. It must surely follow that his recommendations can only be addressed in that limited context.

The recommendations have unjustifiably, and without substantive evidence presented to the enquiry extended into the harness racing and thoroughbred industries.

QRUG respectfully submits that the drafting of legislation encompassing the harness and thoroughbred industries was conducted without cause and without the benefit of any submissions from anyone representing those industries. The Bill should therefore be withdrawn.

The Premier and the Racing Minister have stated that the Bill is in response to Recommendations 1, 2 and 3. Recommendations 32, 33, 34 and 35 should also be taken into account. These recommendations make it quite clear that the Four Corners program was broadcast nationally and exposed issues in greyhound racing in NSW and Victoria as well as in Queensland. The recommendations also make it clear that enquiries have been established in those states and because the greyhound industry is a national industry an account needs to be taken of interstate trends and activity to be effective.

Recommendations from those enquiries and government responses are at this date still not public.

The Bill should therefore be withdrawn. QRUG respectfully submits that the drafting of any legislation to eliminate the unacceptable practices in the greyhound industry is premature and cannot be done effectively until the NSW and Victorian government's response to their enquiries into the greyhound racing industry is made

THE PROPOSED BILL Itself

Section 319 9AI Members: (Racing Queensland All Codes Board members). The proposed 7 member board of which only 3 have racing experience essentially removes from the Participants any effective influence on the business of racing. This may have been the intention. It is unacceptable to QRUG.

Section 321 Amendment of s 9 AL (Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of All-Codes board). This clause, by appointing non racing people to these positions totally removes from the Participants any effective influence on the business of racing. This may have been the intention. It is unacceptable to QRUG.

QRUG respectfully submits that these clauses be deleted.

Section 53 Part 7 Administration Clause 56 Funding: This section provides for the cost of the Integrity Commission to be charged to the racing industry. Every industry in this state is supervised for compliance with the Acts and Regulations under which they operate. For example the Construction Industry, the Meat Processing Industry and others are subject to Occupational Health and Safety Legislation. Every person in the state is subject to the provisions of a relevant section of Environmental Legislation. The Mining Industry is subject to the provisions of the Mining Act. All are effectively policed by the relevant Ministerial Department. The various pieces of legislation have no capacity to pass on any costs of compliance to industry. The racing industry should not be treated differently to every other industry in the state.

QRUG respectfully submits that this section be deleted.

Section 315 4 Main Purpose of Act (2) (b)

Section 30 Assessment if 2 or more approval applications (1) (a) and (2) (c).

Section 31 Assessing applications for approval applications (2)

These clauses infer that the intention of the Act is to appoint corporations as the control bodies for each code of racing. If this is the case it will potentially remove industry participants from influencing the decision making for their particular code of racing. There is no reference to payments, if any, that are to be enjoyed by an appointed corporation.

This potential exclusion of participants from code control boards together with the above exclusions from the proposed Queensland Racing Board will totally isolate racing participants from any influence, let alone control, of the very industry that is sustained by their endeavours. It means that the control bodies will be devoid of any current industry expertise or experience. This is unacceptable.

You are reminded that participants have already had the experience of a corporation controlling our industry. Mr. Bob Bentley was the controlling shareholder in Racing Queensland Ltd in the period 2007-2012. That experience resulted in the Commissioner Margret White enquiry which resulted in 10 people being referred to ICAC. QRUG is particularly sensitive to corporations being appointed to positions of authority or control.

QRUG respectfully submits that these sections be redrafted to make their intentions clear. If the intention is to isolate current participants from the decision making processes of the Code Control Boards then it is rejected by QRUG and should be deleted.

Part 2 Standards Division 1 General provision about standards.

These clauses do not recognise that there are a range of circumstances under which racing is successfully conducted. For example, harness racing is not only conducted on city tracks it is also conducted on country tracks and at a number of agricultural shows – thoroughbred racing is not only conducted at metropolitan tracks by TAB race clubs but also on a range of country tracks as well as at one day a year non TAB meetings in remote centres around the state. The concept of “one standard fits all” can only be applied if the intention is to eliminate a significant section of country racing. There is nothing to protect race clubs from vindictive action by the Integrity Commission or its staff. There is evidence that this type of action has been taken since the sacking of all racing boards in June 2015 with the inference that it is being done to reduce, if not eliminate country race clubs.

QRUG respectfully submits that it does not support these sections without them specifically recognising that the principal of one standard fits all cannot apply in most circumstances. The particular circumstances of all racing codes operating remote to metropolitan centres must be recognised in the Bill.

IN SUMMARY: THERE IS SUFFICIENT CONCERN REGARDING THE MATTERS RAISED ABOVE THAT QRUG RECOMMENDS THAT THE BILL IS WITHDRAWN.