



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR CUNNINGHAM

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GOONDIWINDI POLO CLUB

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham—NPA) (11.42 p.m.): The area of concern I wish to raise here tonight relates to the Goondiwindi Polo Club and the improvements needed to the polo grounds at Goondiwindi. Members might ask why I am standing here in this House tonight seeking justice for a group which some people on the other side of the House wrongly see as being exclusive.

Let us examine the facts relating to the Crown reserve for which the council is trustee and which the polo club manages for its sporting and recreational purposes. The grounds have developed a drainage problem due to decisions taken both by Main Roads and by the council over a number of years. Due to various roadworks and the by-pass, drainage for the ground has been cut off and it is now much less able to rid itself of water after heavy rains, floods and so on. Quite frankly, in terms of suitability the grounds are no longer what they were. In fact, they are quite unsuitable for their original purpose.

Coupled with this is the problem of decisions which have allowed residential encroachment on this reserve. During drier times, match play creates a problem with dust being kicked up by the horses galloping around. That affects the residents in the area. All in all, this is no longer a suitable site for the Goondiwindi Polo Club.

There is a long history to this club. Polo is not just the preserve of some exclusive group. Historically, large numbers of people from the downs, around Clifton in particular, were the smallest dairy farmers on the downs. Some of them had as little as 80 acres. Perhaps they gradually managed to amalgamate with other places and get a little bigger. A lot of those people played polo. In fact, they made a livelihood from developing, training and breeding horses, playing polo with them and getting them up to a standard where people recognised them as being quite outstanding, and then on-selling to people the likes of Kerry Packer and a lot of people from the coast and from the city. Quite frankly, quite a few of those people were most certainly not in the exclusive mould in which the Government would like to try to put this club. They are very much battlers and they have done very well out of what they do. They are very good at it. They go out there and participate in this sport.

I made representations to the Minister for Natural Resources. Eventually he wrote back to me and said that the Government would not be prepared to give compensation to the club for its facilities. I think that is a tragedy. What does this club do? Does it have any detrimental effect on the community? Of course not! Tournaments bring people, resources and money into the town. It is only good for Goondiwindi.

The polo club is another sporting and recreational facility. It gets young people actively involved in the sport. Would people rather have these young people throwing rocks through people's windows or creating some other nuisance in the community? Surely this is a sport like any other that younger people can get involved in. As such, it can bring only good to the community. Tonight I ask that this club be given a fair go. Surely it is entitled to be compensated for its buildings and facilities, particularly water facilities, on this ground. I think the way the club has been treated is most unreasonable.
