



Speech by

PHIL REEVES

MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD

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RACING AND BETTING AMENDMENT BILL [No. 2]

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (3.52 p.m.): It is a great pleasure to speak on this bill. We have heard from many honourable members that the racing industry is the fourth largest industry in the state. It is very much part of the social fabric of Queensland and Australia. Everyone enjoys a day at the races. The Minister for the Arts is in the chamber. A day at the races is almost better than a day spent pursuing culture or the arts. We see all types of culture at the races, whether it be a day at Eagle Farm, the Rocklea trots, or the Bell races.

The members for Caloundra and Kawana mentioned Corbould Park, one of my favourite Queensland racetracks. In about three or four weeks time, I will be backing up a tradition of mine by going to the Corbould Park races on Boxing Day. It is truly one of my favourite days of the year. Corbould Park is a great day out. Traditionally, my friends and family have always gone to the races on Boxing Day, initially in Brisbane at Eagle Farm. Once people have been to Corbould Park on Boxing Day they will never go anywhere else. It has a really friendly, laid back and casual atmosphere. It backs up the good part of Caloundra.

Mrs Sheldon: I am pleased you appreciate my electorate.

Mr REEVES: It is very good. A few weeks ago, I was speaking to well-known Rugby League player Allan Langer. He is a regular on Boxing Day.

Mr Pearce: Ipswich boy.

Mr REEVES: Yes, he is an Ipswich boy. He is a regular there. One of his favourite days of the year is Boxing Day at Caloundra.

Mr Pearce: He would be interested in your tips, too. You're a good judge.

Mr REEVES: He would not be interested in my tips. We will talk about the member for Fitzroy later on.

The atmosphere at Corbould Park is great. There is always a breeze at Corbould Park. The staff are always friendly and it has a touristy feel. There are always big crowds, but it never feels like there are too many people there. It is a good day, even though people always go home with a lighter wallet. It is a good way to spend Boxing Day. That is what the races is all about—going to the races and enjoying ourselves.

The racing industry and especially some racing clubs need to be careful that they are not pricing themselves out of the market. I attended the Randwick race course on Epsom Cup day—the day before the grand final. Incredibly, it cost about \$25 to get in. They had a captive market; it was like Queenslander reunion day.

Mr Copeland: How much did you pay to go to the grand final?

Mr REEVES: I paid only \$50 to get into the grand final. The races were half the price of the grand final!

Mrs Sheldon interjected.

Mr REEVES: I will.

Mr Pearce: Did you see much of the game?

Mr REEVES: I saw plenty of the game.

I think it costs \$10 to attend the Melbourne Cup day races in Brisbane. I remember when that day was free in Brisbane. The crowds are getting bigger and bigger each year so I do not think the entry fee is a deterrent. Given that clubs are competing with airconditioned TABs and so on, the racing clubs need to make sure that they are not pricing themselves out of the market. I know they get a lot of revenue from TAB returns. However, the clubs should not lose their culture.

Mr Cummins: You are a very cultured person; as cultured as a pearl.

Mr REEVES: I am—when it comes to the races.

Bookmakers are a bit of a dying tradition. However, it is one that we must try to retain. I am a bit concerned about computer betting tickets. There is nothing better than getting a pencil-written ticket from a bookmaker. It is all part of the day out.

In my past life, before I came here, for about five or six years I helped a gentleman with a business called Phantom Race Calls.

Mr Pearce: An SP bookie.

Mr REEVES: No, he is not an SP bookie. He goes to clubs and pubs throughout Brisbane and south-east Queensland and provides entertainment. He has a betting stand, an umbrella and a betting bag. The winners get picked out of a hat and he calls the race. The regulars in the hotels and clubs really enjoy it, because it draws on the old tradition of racing. The look on people's faces when Mark Eaves, a good mate of mine, calls a race is something to see. His business is thriving. That shows us how important the culture of the racing industry is. I think he is doing about eight clubs a week. He started at the Yeronga RSL Club, in the electorate of Yeerongpilly. We started there about seven and a half years ago. He has been going there every week doing his Phantom Race Calls for the past seven and a half years. He has worked at the Carina Leagues Club for six years. He can be seen also at the Geebung RSL Club every Wednesday night. Mark and his Phantom Race Calls have attracted a bit of a cult following. That illustrates the strong support in the community for the racing industry.

In relation to the TABs, one of the best initiatives of the TABs was the improvement of their look and feel. I remember the days of punting when we would go into a local TAB shop and sweat like a pig for about two hours while watching the races. But they are now quite comfortable. At my local TAB, the Wishart TAB, Karen and Ian are friendly hosts and there is a real community atmosphere there on a Saturday, Wednesday or any other day of the week for those wanting to have a punt at their local TAB.

We see plenty of characters in there as well. I had great pleasure in opening the refurbished TAB on Bundamba by-election day. I remember that day because I had to rush from Bundamba to open the refurbished Wishart TAB, a place I grew up with. I was happy enough to be there to draw some raffles, but Karen and Ian from the Wishart TAB really made it a great day out.

Mr Pearce: Backed a winner that day, too.

Mr REEVES: I backed a winner twice that day actually, yeah. So, it was a terrific day out. As I said, the racing industry is part of our social fabric. When we talk about legends in sport we talk about Donald Bradman, Dawn Fraser and Phar Lap. To illustrate our culture, one of our legends of sport is an animal, not a human. But, as I said, the racing industry is strong. The member for Fitzroy referred to this great horse, but he did not talk about this great greyhound named after him, Fitzroy Jim. One can get many honours in life, but getting a racehorse or a greyhound named after oneself is probably one of the best honours. The greyhound was named after the member for Fitzroy by people at Rockhampton who really appreciated his efforts on behalf of the greyhound industry. Not only did they name the dog after him but it won a few races, and last week it won us a bit of money.

Mr Pearce: He's going around again tonight.

Mr REEVES: It's going around again tonight at Ipswich?

Mr Pearce: Race three, dog eight.

Mr REEVES: It is a pity we weren't on it the first week when it paid \$11.50, but that is another story. If anyone thinks they are doing a good job, they should always go to the races with Jim Pearce, because he knows how to back a few winners.

It is really important for us to encourage the racing industry not just in south-east Queensland at the big tracks. I remember spending a great day at the Bell races with a group on a football administrators trip at Dalby. I know the member for Darling Downs has a bit to do with that track. We backed a horse in the first race that was coming around the home turn five lengths in front, but it ended up in bunker number nine of the golf course right beside the track! That was the last we saw of it. But then its female jockey, who got a bit of a razzing after getting the horse out of the ninth hole bunker, won the next four races. That was a good comeback. I know the Bell races always have a big country festival afterwards, and it is always a big day out.

Mr English: The outback at its best.

Mr REEVES: It is the outback at its best. The racing industry is part of the fabric of our country.

I know how important the racing industry is. Unfortunately, my father had a stroke about four years ago. My father likes nothing more than putting on a bet at the local TAB; he likes to have a little flutter. He always backed horse number six in Melbourne races, and quinella numbers five and seven. But with his stroke, my mother has had to learn how to put on a bet for him. Ian and Karen look after him at the TAB. I shout my father Foxtel every year so he can watch Sky Racing at home. The first day Sky Racing was on at home, he started watching the TV at 11 o'clock. He watched all the Melbourne races and all the other races. He watched the greyhounds, but did not bother having his much-needed afternoon rest. He watched it until 11.30 that night. The next morning we had to attend a christening at a local church, but he collapsed because instead of having his rest he was watching TV all night! We have taught him how to watch the races, have a rest and still know who backed the winner the next day. It just goes to show what the racing industry is about. It provides entertainment to thousands of people. It is not just about the people who attend the races—it is about those who punt on the TAB and who are listening to races in cars or on the farm. What about Melbourne Cup day? It is one of the highlights of our country's existence. Everyone has fun on Melbourne Cup day, even if they do not have a punt. The amount of money and the number of jobs generated because of the Melbourne Cup is extraordinary. Think of all the fashion parades, the champagne breakfasts, the punting in the afternoon—

A government member: Taxis taking people home.

Mr REEVES: Taxis taking people home. Melbourne Cup day is always a great day. It is a great institution. Many still think that Melbourne Cup day should be a public holiday for the whole country. Many of the mothers do not want that, because then they would have to stay home and look after the kids instead of picking them up from school at 3.30 p.m. We should consider whether Melbourne Cup day should be a public holiday, because I do not think too much gets done that day anyway. The public holiday in June could probably be transferred to Melbourne Cup day.

Despite the doom and gloom portrayed by some sections of the media, the Queensland thoroughbred racing industry is in pretty good shape. While it is far from perfect, it has a great base upon which to build talent among participants to ensure it happens. It is a pity that the industry participants must continually read in the media the reports about how bad a job they are doing and about Queensland not being a good place to invest. The 2001 Queensland winter racing carnival was one of the best for the past 25 years. Any fair-minded person cannot deny the strength of the competition during the winter carnival. We had pretty good weather this year compared to previous years.

Melbourne and Caulfield Cup winner Ethereal first stepped into the big time in Queensland in June. We should have watched that form, Jimmy. I refer to multiple group one winner Shogun Lodge, Australia's sprint champion Falvelon, the outstanding Show a Heart, Sandown Classic winner Sky Heights—and the list goes on and on. Queensland horses trained and/or bred have never been stronger, as shown by the amazing results during the Victorian spring carnival. We saw the emergence of a new star. Amalfi became the first Queensland-trained winner of the VRC Derby in the prestigious race's 146-year history. I know that the minister was one of the few who backed the Queensland-trained winner. Not only is Amalfi a star but his young trainer, Peter Moodie, who hails from western Queensland, also created a huge impression.

Mr Pearce: A brilliant trainer.

Mr REEVES: Yes. Queensland trained and bred horses captured many of the feature races during the carnival. That is a great credit to the trainers and owners. Queensland's ability to turn out champion jockeys has long been recognised and was confirmed when last season's Brisbane premiership winner, Scott Seamer, took Melbourne by storm, especially with his partnership with Ethereal. Turnover on Queensland thoroughbred racing increased by about five per cent during the last financial year. This was a great result and a vote of confidence by the punters in the local industry.

The reforms introduced in this legislation will help to consolidate the success on the track and increase the success off the track. For the racing industry to flourish and be a major competitor in the sport and leisure sector, it needs strong and competent management and the cooperation of its stakeholders. Various sectors of the industry have been calling for change to the Queensland Principal Club, and it will be interesting to see how wholeheartedly it gets behind the new model. The QTRB will be an independent body with a charter to move the industry's peak body into a stage 2, which will be an industry owned company. It is incumbent on industry stakeholders to cooperate with the QTRB to ensure the best results. Queensland's talented and hardworking participants at least deserve that.

I congratulate the minister and her department on this excellent bill and these changes to the racing industry. They are no doubt well overdue. I think this will turn it into a vibrant and energetic industry—just like the minister. I congratulate her on the bill and commend the bill to the House.