



Speech by

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RACING AND BETTING AMENDMENT BILL [No. 2]

Mr LEE (Indooroopilly—ALP) (2.30 p.m.): The racing industry in Queensland is continually putting money back into our community. I would like to speak briefly about a sporting club in my electorate that has benefited particularly from the Queensland racing industry, the Western Districts Community and Sporting Club, which is on the corner of Queenscroft Street and Oxley Road, Chelmer. This is a club that makes use of profits derived from its TAB facility in its bar. They put the money that they get from the TAB straight back into our local community. It has been a great pleasure of mine to witness first-hand the very positive effects that this has had on the local community.

I have spoken in this House before about a group of Afghan refugees who formed a local soccer team. They are now playing under the banner of the Tiger 11 and are wearing Queensland maroon as their team colour.

Mr Briskey: They are going very well, too.

Mr LEE: The member for Cleveland is entirely correct; they are playing very well in a number of competitions. I am proud to say that I am a sponsor of the Tiger 11 and have been from the very beginning.

Western Districts Community and Sporting Club has also been a very big supporter of the boys. It provided a grant for the boys to play and also provides barbecue facilities after the game and change facilities. We look forward to very soon seeing a fully fledged Tiger 11 clubhouse on Wests' grounds in Chelmer. It is amazing to think that around six months ago the boys had nowhere to play and absolutely no equipment. They now have a home ground and uniforms. Moreover, they have somewhere to meet and they have somewhere to do what they really love doing most, and that is playing soccer. All of this would never have been possible had it not been for Western Districts Community and Sporting Club. It would not have been possible for Wests to help them the way they have if it were not for the Queensland racing industry.

Furthermore, the people at Wests have looked past racial lines. They have accepted the boys from the Hazara community with open arms. I am very proud of the good folk at Wests. Wests still allow the boys to use the ground for no charge. They even throw in a regular barbecue at the end of the each game for free because this is a club that is dedicated to putting something back into the community.

The racing industry has helped transform not only Wests but also a lot of other clubs and pubs throughout Queensland into very respectable establishments. I believe that having a friendly place to meet has been great for local community development. It acts as a means of unifying people. Residents have a chance to meet their neighbours and discuss the issues that are relevant to their local area while enjoying the facilities that are provided partly due to the racing industry. A number of other groups in my electorate regularly use the facility at Wests for their monthly meetings. It is a great saving to these clubs. Wests provides its meeting rooms free of charge to local community associations. It is a great saving to those local community groups to have the facilities at Wests provided to them for free.

Perhaps the best thing about clubs and pubs that operate in communities such as mine is the camaraderie that comes with these sorts of venues. Everyone likes to go to a place where people are not only friendly but also know how to enjoy themselves and the company of others. Without the support of a thriving and prospering racing industry a lot of these clubs would cease to exist. I think that

would be a really terrible loss to our state. The reality is that these days people often do not have the time to talk to their friends and neighbours over the back fence the way they used to years ago. That is why it is vitally important to me that clubs like this continue to exist and play a part in filling that void. I am not at all trying to suggest that clubs and pubs are everyone's cup of tea. However, I think their very existence plays a significant role in a number of communities throughout Queensland in binding our society together.

My electorate is also home to a number of people who own racehorses as not only a hobby but also a means of winning money. It is fair to say that they would like to join me in supporting this bill today. I think we all know that owning a racehorse is not cheap. As a matter of fact, a friend of mine told me a couple of days ago that—and I stand to be corrected on this—it costs around \$400 a week to pay the housing, feeding and training costs for a racehorse. You do not have to be a mathematical whiz to work out that that adds up to quite a bit of money. We are talking about \$1,600 per month to maintain a horse, or about \$19,000 or \$20,000 per year. That is a significant amount of money in anyone's book. When we consider that the average racing life of a racehorse is between two and four years, that puts the cost of maintenance of a racehorse anywhere between \$40,000 and \$80,000. So honourable members will start to understand that, when we are talking about those figures, it is very important for people who have invested significant amounts of money in the industry to have a lot of faith that the industry has been administered well and that the legislation that oversees the industry is the best that it could be.

That is not just the case for owners of horses. There are also a number of people in my electorate who like to make the trek over to Doomben or Eagle Farm and enjoy a day at the races. About six weeks ago I and some other locals made the trek to the Gold Coast Turf Club. It is a wonderful venue. We were happy to meet with the member for Southport, Mr Lawlor, while we were there. It was great to catch up with him. He is a great supporter of the turf club on the Gold Coast.

People in my electorate go to the races with the expectation that not only will they have a great day out but that the racing is honest and that the industry is operated in a fair and a just manner. Not only horse owners but also anyone who has anything to do with the racing industry needs to have faith that the industry has been administered in a fair and just way. Whether you are a punter at Eagle Farm, Doomben or at the Gold Coast, whether you are a punter through the TAB, whether you are a horse owner or whether you are a member of a sporting club like Wests at Chelmer, you need to know that the industry is in good hands.

During the minister's review of the governance of the Queensland thoroughbred racing industry, one message came through loudly and clearly, and that was that the racing industry should be run by an industry controlled body. The sale of the TAB has placed the industry in a commercial relationship as a public company. While the government supports the industry through a \$2 million annual Training Track Subsidy Scheme and grants via the Queensland Events Corporation for the Magic Millions Racing Carnival and the Queensland Winter Racing Carnival, there was a clear responsibility upon the industry to maximise its revenue from its commercial relationship with the Queensland TAB. Therefore, the industry requires a clear commercial focus while, at the same time, providing transparency in decision making to ensure confidence and integrity.

During the review, the industry signalled that an industry owned company limited by guarantee was the best vehicle to act as the control body for thoroughbred racing in Queensland. Implementation of this industry owned control body company will form stage 2 of the reform process. It will be the responsibility of the board of the QTRB to investigate and make recommendations to the minister within 18 months after appointment on the establishment of a company that will become the control body for thoroughbred racing. The QTRB will examine how a company can ensure that probity, integrity and public confidence in the industry can be maintained and that the interests of regional country racing are protected to an acceptable standard.

During stage 2 of the process adequate and effective consultation with industry stakeholders via the board of the QTRB will occur. The QTRB will make recommendations on the structure, membership, constitution and how the board will be appointed for this new company. As part of the process of moving the governance of Queensland racing towards a corporate structure, the QTRB will hold an annual meeting not later than one month after the QTRB's annual report has been tabled in parliament. All registered race clubs and licensees of the QTRB must be given notice of the QTRB annual meeting and may attend. This is another clear signal that transparency and accountability to the industry are a priority. I am very pleased to support the bill.
