



Speech by

HOWARD HOBBS

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Hansard 11 April 2002

QUEENSLAND THOROUGHBRED RACING BOARD

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (7.04 p.m.): Racing in Queensland has been put through unnecessary angst with the restructure of the governance of racing in Queensland. The industry was prepared to work through the proposals put forward by the minister, even though there would be some changes to the administration over two years. However, the sacking of the QPC overnight signalled an irrational attitude by the Minister for Racing.

Quite clearly, the QPC was sacked because it defied the minister's instruction to bury the investigation into the expenses of the chairman of the Toowoomba Turf Club and to sack the CEO of the QPC. When I tabled a letter to be forwarded to Mr Stewart launching an official investigation by the QPC, the minister spat the dummy and sacked the board. It was important that this matter be investigated independently, properly and fairly for once and for all to resolve the issue. Unfortunately, this was not the case. Only the new ITRB viewed the matter. Legal advice was provided by Mr Stewart to support his case and the treasurer of Mr Stewart's club participated in the decision-making process of the Interim Thoroughbred Racing Board. The decision that was made was in accordance with the minister's wishes. However, most importantly, the issue was not resolved. This is a most unsatisfactory position for the Toowoomba racing fraternity.

The minister was not satisfied with the decision of the independent selection panel for the members of the Thoroughbred Racing Board and appointed a second panel headed up by Mr Longland, the minister's appointee to the Interim Thoroughbred Racing Board. The second panel, which was not officially formalised by the Interim Thoroughbred Racing Board, selected Mr Bob Bentley as chairman. Mr Bentley was not on the original independent panel's nominated list, nor was he on the reserve list.

The minister has made a serious error of judgment to try to bypass the independent process as advised to this parliament. She has also misled parliament and deceived members of this House and the racing industry. She has placed Mr Bentley in a terrible position. It is most unfair on Mr Bentley for him to be tangled up in this ministerial stupidity. Because the minister has bypassed the system, she has allowed herself to be an active player in racing politics, which in recent years had settled down.

Two new chairman now run our two metropolitan race clubs and they are now working together for the betterment of the industry. The minister should have known that, to have a successful QTRB to work with Queensland clubs, we needed someone who would be acceptable to as many as possible of the clubs throughout Queensland. The court case of Q-Promotions v. Queensland Bloodstock Breeders Sales Pty Ltd involved Mr Baxter, Mr Bentley and, of course, Mr Stewart and Mr Needham. Interesting comments arising out of that case are worth noting. The TAB is taking the race clubs to court to stop casino sponsorship in race meetings from Cairns to the Gold Coast.

Time expired.
