



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR KAWANA

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TOURISM, RACING AND FAIR TRADING [MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS] BILL

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (2.51 p.m.): I rise to speak on the Tourism, Racing and Fair Trading (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, which affects 15 acts. The vast majority of the amendments are consequential in nature, and I will comment on the bill insofar as it amends the Racing Act 2002 to allow a member of a race club committee to be a member of an appeal committee. This will allow those persons to have the necessary skills and experience to be a member of an appeal committee. The previous speaker said what a terrible job we are doing with the racing industry. Obviously he is in the minority. I want to read to the House a letter that I received. It states—

In my 35 years as a trainer in Queensland I have never felt more contempt or dismay for some of my colleagues than I do right now.

It has reached the stage where I can no longer sit back and watch the damage that they are doing. I have to express my concerns to you and advise that I plan to go public on the issue.

...

It is my opinion and that of many other trainers and owners, that the new Board of Queensland Racing, under the leadership of Mr Bob Bentley, is heading in the right direction.

Unfortunately, there are individuals and groups within racing that only want to derail the process.

...

If we don't rationalise the number of race clubs and race meetings in Queensland the industry will struggle to survive.

...

What hope have we got of convincing the Government that we are a cohesive, united industry, that deserves to be listened to, when this will do nothing more than reflect just how divided our industry is?

I make this plea to the Government, the Premier, the Racing Minister, the Board of Queensland and all of those who follow this great sport of ours—don't be misguided by the ranting and raving of a few, many of whom have jumped at the chance to push political agendas.

That probably sums up the contribution of the previous speaker.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr CUMMINS: I regularly go to the Sunshine Coast Turf Club, and those people are very proud of one of the best turf clubs in Queensland.

Mr Reeves: It's terrific.

Mr CUMMINS: It is terrific; I take the member's interjection. I would invite all members and Queenslanders when they visit the Sunshine Coast to come to Caloundra, the home of the Sunshine Coast Turf Club—Corbould Park.

Mr Lawlor: The second best provincial track in Queensland.

Mr CUMMINS: It is the best provincial track. I take that interjection from the member for Southport.

Mr Lawlor: Second best.

Mr CUMMINS: I acknowledge his interest in the second best facility on the Gold Coast. The Sunshine Coast Turf Club under Les Geeves and his good wife, Daphne, and Mick Sullivan, who is a great general manager and CEO, has a marvellous board. I think Donny Jackson has retired to Pelican Waters. Other board members are Don Moffatt and Neil Mansell, the deputy chairman. It has great direction and great support from the local community. It also has great support from the Caloundra City

Council. I think that the Maroochy and Noosa councils should be a little more regional in their thinking and realise that this facility is for the whole of the Sunshine Coast.

The Caloundra council is still negotiating with the turf club regarding the buy-out of the actual turf club. Prior to the March 2004 elections I encourage the council to realise that this is a community facility. It does not need to be in the ownership of the Caloundra council. The council should be like Toowoomba, Bundamba and Ipswich and sign over the turf club for a minimal amount, a token amount—peppercorn as it is often said—because this facility is best in the hands of the turf club. It can be locked away under local government planning legislation that it will be nothing else ever bar a turf club, a racing track. The Caloundra council should also seriously consider rezoning land around the area to make it more trainer friendly and more horseracing friendly to encompass a true regional employment opportunity.

Racing and tourism on the Sunshine Coast are major employers and are very popular industries, realising that business tourism is a very high yielding market niche. It continues to show strong growth in Queensland under this minister and under our government. Business tourism is a very important market to continue to cultivate as we chase conferences and similar events. While I was on the board of Tourism Sunshine Coast we successfully pushed to be included with five other convention bureaus at the time—the Gold Coast, Brisbane, Whitsunday, Townsville and tropical north Queensland. The Sunshine Coast became the sixth to come on board and operate as part of a regional tourism organisation attracting the business tourism and convention market. Our focus then and still is—or should be—on marketing these areas to companies, professional conference organisers and incentive organisers to encourage them to hold events in our regions.

For the past few years the Queensland government has provided millions of dollars each year for the bureau for marketing activities which has been matched by industry investment. I commend the minister for being very supportive of Tourism Sunshine Coast, because it has had some issues over a period of time. We have to realise that Queensland has a network of regional tourism organisations that is recognised as the best tourism network in Australia. The new Tourism Sunshine Coast board and general manager are charged with rebuilding the organisation. Arrangements have been supported by representatives from the levy boards of Caloundra City Council, Maroochy shire and Noosa shire, local tourist organisations and mayors and CEOs from Cooloola and the councils I mentioned previously. The chairman and CEO of Tourism Queensland also lend their support to this rebuilding process.

I hope that Tourism Queensland will continue to work closely with Tourism Sunshine Coast through this rebuilding process. Tourism Queensland also provides financial support to Tourism Sunshine Coast as a recognised regional tourist organisation. That is what a lot of people have to realise—that is, this government is committed to funding RTOs. In 2002-03 this took the form of \$220,785 in RTO grant funding and \$306,476 in convention and incentive bureau funding.

That money ensures that young people, whether they be at the Mooloolaba strip, Noosa, the hinterland, Caloundra or Buderim, are working in a very clean industry where there are always bigger and better prospects. As part of the review process, Tourism Sunshine Coast is seeking long-term financial support from the Sunshine Coast councils of Maroochy, Caloundra and Noosa, which now charge a tourism levy on local businesses. I believe support is also being sought from the Cooloola shire. Mick Venardos was a director of TSC when I was there. He was very supportive. His is another area that has problems with unemployment. Cooloola and Gympie are beautiful areas to travel, as is much of Queensland.

In all seriousness, the importance of drive tourism to Queenslanders should never be understated. Councillors on the Sunshine Coast have realised the importance of tourism and the need for certainty in funding, marketing and product development through the introduction of these tourism levies. This has been very controversial. I remember the minister visiting the Sunshine Coast a few years ago and saying that it was extremely controversial on the Gold Coast. The levy is in now. I hope they are getting the runs on the board. I hope the businesses realise that they will make more money.

It is crucial that councils on the Sunshine Coast support Tourism Sunshine Coast, otherwise they will be seen to be undermining the outcomes that are able to be achieved by a proven, effective and cooperative approach to marketing and promotion. Overall growth of the Sunshine Coast's tourism industry can be achieved only through a cooperative effort between all tourism partners.

While I was on the board of TSC I had a very regional focus, much to the detriment of many of my critics who said that I was not parochial enough. I can remember many people on the Sunshine Coast saying that parochialism is good; when it gets to tribalism or cannibalism, it is being a bit silly. We have to talk as a region. Industry unity on the Sunshine Coast is critical for the tourism industry to meet its full potential, both now and into the future. Any reduction in support for the RTO, or regional tourism organisation, structure will only harm the Sunshine Coast. If the tourism industry on the Sunshine Coast is harmed, job opportunities are harmed and business is harmed. It is only through a cohesive approach to tourism that the coast will be able to maintain its position as a key player in the tourism industry.

I cannot stress enough how important it is for the TSC, local councils and operators to work cooperatively, both with each other and Tourism Queensland. I encourage all tourism groups on the Sunshine Coast to work cooperatively to achieve the best results for local industry and to continue to create jobs and make Queenslanders more prosperous.

I wish to touch briefly on the drive tourism market. Close to 10 million domestic visitors took a drive holiday in Queensland over the past year. Research shows that Queensland hosted about 19 per cent of the almost 50 million visitors who took a drive holiday in Australia. Drive holidays are back in vogue, and Tourism Queensland and the Queensland tourism industry are working hard to continue to woo this important market.

Queensland enjoyed the longest average length of stay, at four nights, just behind the Northern Territory, and short-break drive holidays, one to three nights, is the fastest-growing drive market segment in Queensland. I encourage all regions to not lose sight of this. People are tending to travel more in their own state and see what a great state and beautiful areas we have.

In summary, I believe these amendments in the bill will adjust operational difficulties that have been identified since the acts commenced operation. This bill strengthens consumer protection, as the amendments not only provide more certainty in the interpretation of sections but also provide additional requirements where required to uphold the purpose of the legislation. I commend the minister and her staff for being very competent and always very eager to assist whenever I have had issues on the Sunshine Coast, whether they concern the Office of Fair Trading, the racing industry or tourism. I offer my support to the bill before the House.