



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

Hansard 2 April 2003

BURRANDOWN RACES

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (10.37 p.m.): Queensland Racing administered the kiss of death to the annual Burrandown races, wiping out a proud tradition that has stood the test of time for 80 years with one stroke of the pen. The Burrandown race club has one race a year, which was fast becoming a second Birdsville race, and as they did for Birdsville, so too they did for Burrandown. People travelled from far and wide to attend this wonderful community bush race day.

In the past, buses on the way to the races would be met by bushrangers or Bonnie and Clyde, who were in fact members of local charity groups such as the Lions Club, local schools or other charity or community service groups raising funds for those in the community in need. This was a complete community event. Along with the excitement of the thunder of hooves as the races were run, there were clay pigeon shoots, the inevitable fashion-of-the-field contest and old-fashioned bush hospitality. All of this was topped off by a beautiful evening of entertainment with a pit-fired barbecue dinner and dancing late into the night under the stars. It was great fun.

That this tradition could be ripped away from a small rural community because it was not considered important enough to host a race day is a reflection on just how little those who make the decisions know about or understand how hard the small clubs and their members work to keep their communities united. Those communities have fought the natural enemy of fire and are still fighting what could very well become the longest drought in history. They take the losses from those natural disasters in their stride. However, to have to fight the greed of a racing industry that penalises small racing clubs while larger racing clubs feel relatively little pain is reprehensible.

At the same time, Queensland Racing virtually wiped away half of the racing events in the Burnett. Nanango was cut from eight days to six, Wondai was cut from six days to three and Kumbia was cut from three days to one. The total costs will run into millions. The mayor of Kilcoy stated that \$100,000 would be lost from the local economy because of that decision.

The cutbacks do not affect just the actual racing club that suffers the loss but also all the associated industries, retailers, accommodation providers and myriad other businesses. The utter disinterest of Queensland Racing, the minister and others who made these decisions is nothing more than a callous move, as no consideration was given to the community benefit that the race days offered isolated communities.

It is my hope that the Burrandown race club and other clubs that have lost days do not take this lying down. So many events in rural areas have been affected because of the liability fiasco and now this act of betrayal—which is what it is seen as—is just another kick for rural communities. Funding of half a million dollars will now stand idle. That money was raised over the past five years by volunteers and government grants. For the want of \$20,000, a community asset and its one major annual event are lost.

I would like all clubs that have lost race days to follow the lead of the Cooktown Amateur Turf Club by holding similar days to the one it proposes. Cooktown Amateur Turf Club has initiated a goat race, with each goat representing a government or Queensland racing industry representative. President Graham Elmes stated that the goats were Beattie's Blunder, Bentley's Axe, Silent Steve and Miss Merri Muddler. If all race clubs held a memorial race to ensure that this diabolical act against rural race clubs is never forgotten, perhaps the government will think twice in the future.

Time expired.