



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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TOURISM, RACING AND FAIR TRADING [MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS] BILL

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (12.42 p.m.): I rise to support this Tourism, Racing and Fair Trading (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2003. I note also that it amends 15 bills, which is a lot of bills. I note also that it has been the way of this House over the past few weeks to amend quite a number of acts in one hit.

With regard to this bill, most of the other members who have spoken have brought up the insurance debacle and how it has impacted very heavily on communities. I support everything that has been said. I know that in my own area the effect of the insurance premium increase has been horrendous. Many events that were once free now require a gold coin donation to try to cover costs. In many instances, that stopped people from even patronising those events simply because money was very tight at the time. I think that one of the sorriest things that has come out of the insurance debacle is that it has emphasised people's greed, their lack of responsibility for their own actions, and their willingness to bring other people or organisations down in the process.

I also remember that the government came out all gung-ho with a scheme saying that it was going to be the saviour of all of these small community groups that were going to close due to the pressure that the insurance premiums put on them. Unfortunately, that did not happen. It would have been a wonderful thing if it had. Perhaps the scheme was poorly thought out. It could not be implemented in the way that everybody hoped. It is sad, because I believe that the people who bear the brunt of this are those who live primarily in small rural communities. These small rural community groups thrive on holding public functions where they raise money for a charity in the area. Since time immemorial they have tried to help those who are less privileged than themselves.

Most people would recognise that in rural areas people's incomes are a lot lower, people have a lot less to give and any little bit that they give needs to go 100 per cent to the organisation or the charity. Unfortunately, that did not happen. Groups such as CWA would go out and hold a function and almost the entire year's fundraising money would have gone to meet the insurance premium for the event. So they just said, 'We can't do it. We will just have to close it, forget it this year and hope somewhere in the distant future we can resurrect this fundraising event.' That has not happened and a lot of people have suffered. I remember also that a lot of the events closed for what people thought would be just once, and they were quite major events. At Burrandowan, the race day was going to be their last event. They had a bit of a reprieve. They had a little bit of money left and thought that they could get through another year. But the axe hangs over their head all the time. Again it has come up in conversations and the Burrandowan racing committee has the concern that it might never actually be able to hold the races in the form that they were held in the past. That is a really sad thing, because the Burrandowan races is like a mini-Birdsville races held in my electorate. It involved the whole family—mum, dad and the kids. It was part of a way of life in rural areas where people came together. That tradition has been lost to the community. Part of our heritage has gone and that should be mourned by everybody.

Insurance premiums have not gone down. They continue to rise. I believe that more and more charities will lose out. People will close down their fundraising events. Those people who were supported by small community groups will turn to the government for financial assistance. The government will fork out more and more. It will be forever handing out dollars to support what the community used to support.

I am a member of Zonta. In the past, we have held fantastic fundraising events such as air shows. In the process, we were able to spend up to \$20,000 or \$30,000 to hold events. At the moment, it is impossible for us to do that. We are—and proudly doing so—making things like breast cancer cushions so that women who have had their breast removed can use a cushion to hold themselves. But that is a far greater change to fundraising than we would have liked. We were making thousands and thousands of dollars, but we are now just making cushions that cost \$10 or \$15 each. It is an horrendous thing for us and our morale that we have not been able to host these huge events to make the large amounts of money that we used to. What we can no longer raise, the government will pick up. It is as simple as that. In the long run, the government will always have its hands in its pockets to try to make up for the shortfall created by charities not being able to raise funds. That is very, very sad.

Many of these incorporated associations cannot survive. They hang on because they have that little bit of spare cash. They will fade away and the Public Trustee will have to pick up the ball. It will go on and on until we become a community that relies on itself, takes personal responsibility for itself and just keeps moving on.

This bill seeks to amend the Classification of Computer Games and Images Act 1995. I think that is excellent. It amazes me how we have become desensitised to horrific things that happen in the world. I know that these images are just computer generated and that they are not the real thing, but they might as well be because kids' imaginations just pick them up. Often they do not see the differences between the computer generated image and the real thing. I really do appreciate and welcome these amendments to that act so that there can be some form of monitoring of the process and some sort of control and so that the government is able to enforce those controls. I really appreciate that.

I note that the member for Gaven said that he cannot see how racing has gone backwards. Recently I went to the Nanango centenary races. They have lost a number of races from their calendar. They would argue very strongly that they have gone backwards. I think a lot of clubs around the area would also say that they have gone backwards. It is not just the racing community that is affected; it is everybody who is associated with it. It affects the people who cart the horses, if they do not go on their own horse floats, and the people who supply the feed. It affects every single person who is involved—the people who make the cups of tea and even the bookies, to a degree. They suffer, too.

I spoke to Bob Bentley at the races. It was the first time I had actually met the gentleman. His belief about the way racing has been affected is so far opposed to what the people who are running the races around my area think that it is like they are speaking two different languages. Obviously there needs to be a major effort put in to getting them together to mull over these differences, because people are really hurting. It is no use sticking your head in the sand and saying that racing has not gone backwards. Maybe it has not gone backwards in the cities, but all of the local people in my area who are involved in it would argue the toss at every opportunity.

Overall, I have no real worries about this particular legislation. I commend the minister on some of the parts that I have mentioned. As with many bills that have passed this House, I believe that this bill will enjoy unanimous support. I commend the bill to the House.