



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

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RACE DAY CUTBACKS, CHARTERS TOWERS ELECTORATE

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (12.33 a.m.): I would like to bring the attention of the House to the effects of racing cutbacks in my electorate. Sixteen race clubs in my electorate have been affected. Charters Towers, Moranbah, Clermont and Georgetown have lost three meetings. Hughenden, Aramac and Richmond have lost one meeting, while Capella, Alpha, Jericho and Mingela have had their only meetings taken away from them. Other clubs such as Einasleigh, Twin Hills, Oak Park, Kooroorinya and Towers Hill have lost significant funding.

I wish to bring to the attention of the House the fate of the community of Georgetown following cutbacks made to the regional racing program. Georgetown is located at the southern part of the Gulf of Carpentaria and the closest town north of Georgetown is Kowanyama. Many of the members of the communities in this area are extremely isolated and have few opportunities for social interaction outside of their families. There are at least four racehorse trainers in this area alone. Prior to the cutbacks, there were three annual race days at the Georgetown racetrack. The community was led to believe that they would lose one of these race days. However, they have lost all three. This has caused great heartache among the hardworking racing body, local businesses and the entire community and surrounding districts.

The minister must take into consideration that these race days in rural communities are eagerly anticipated as a major social, sporting and community event. They are historically well attended, with people travelling for hundreds of kilometres. These gatherings encourage and develop a great community sense of spirit. Removing these race meetings is akin to removing the Birdsville race meeting. These meetings are the lifeblood of small communities. Take them away and there is not much left.

I have been asked to bring this issue to parliament as the people of Georgetown and the surrounding district are very passionate about their racing and about the traditions that have been lost due to the cutbacks to regional racing. One of the biggest events was held on New Year's day. Generations of people have attended and it had become the basis for traditional family get-togethers. I request the minister to intervene and return this race day to the Georgetown community so that the significant benefit that racing and the race days has on a small community can be restored.