



Speech by

Michael Caltabiano

MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

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RACING (RACE FIELDS) AMENDMENT BILL

Mr CALTABIANO (Chatsworth—Lib) (8.23 pm): I wish to make a contribution to the Racing (Race Fields) Amendment Bill 2006. I congratulate my colleague and friend the shadow minister for public works and housing, the member for Surfers Paradise, John-Paul Langbroek, for addressing what I have heard every member in this place say is an agreement in principle that something must be done about Betfair.

However, that seems to be where the cooperation ceases. It is almost like we are in the twilight zone this evening. Each successive Labor member, including the minister, has stood up and said that it is a terrible thing, that it is a parasite, that it is this and it is that, but they will not do anything about it. Betfair brings all these bad things to the industry and to the state, but they will sit on their hands and do nothing about it.

In fact, the member for Southport—as is usual for the member for Southport—said that it is all the federal government's problem. It is the same old, same old from the Labor Party. If there is an issue with the health system it is the federal government's problem because there are not enough training places. If there is an issue with the road system the minister always says that we do not have enough money. If there is a problem with the electricity system, the southern states must not be taking enough power off us to pay our way. If there is a problem with the racing system, the federal government is not legislating.

It is time for the Queensland government to face up to some of its responsibilities as a state legislative body and deal with this matter. It is no longer any good for it to wash its hands of the serious matters facing us and which have been brought before this parliament in this bill by the member for Surfers Paradise. It is no longer any good just to oppose the bill, as the government proposes to do, on the basis that it has been brought forward to this parliament by a member of the coalition.

Sixty-seven private members' bills have been brought before this House since 1998. To date, only one has been passed through this House. That record speaks for itself. The government cannot be right on 66 out of 67 occasions, with 89 individuals in this place making decisions about important matters for the state of Queensland. I reinforce that point by citing all of the speakers this evening who have said consistently that the principles of approach are right. Why can they not just support the bill?

I challenge the minister to table the legal advice that he claims to have regarding this bill so that we can all see it and make an independent assessment of that legal advice. I notice that he did not wave it around, so I was unable to call on him to do that.

Mr Copeland: They use that excuse all the time.

Mr CALTABIANO: I take the minister in good faith. I am sure that if he has the legal advice he will table it this evening so that the shadow minister can have a look at it and make some concluding remarks about it during the course of this debate—if, of course, he is a man of honour, which I have no doubt he is.

We heard from the minister on more than one occasion about how disastrous this would be and about 'parasites' on the racing industry. We all know what we should do with parasites. We should squash them and get rid of them, as they did in Victoria and as they have sought to do in New South Wales. In fact, the library research report prepared for this debate states in section 6 on Queensland—

In July 2004, the Queensland Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing, the Hon. Robert Swarten, stated, 'As far as I am concerned, betting exchanges are a roort waiting to happen. The Queensland government has maintained its stance on betting exchanges.'

What stance is that? The stance that we have heard of today is that the government will sit on its hands and do nothing while the other states legislate. It will wait until the federal government does something. The minister has already indicated that the federal government has said that this is a singular state responsibility because they are state based racing organisations. The Queensland government's response, as usual on matters of importance to industry and matters of importance to the community, is to do nothing. The research report goes on to state—

The Queensland government has always strongly opposed Betfair from setting up base in Australia because it makes profits without contributing any money to our local racing industry.

That was the position in July 2004. Here we are in February 2006 with no action from the government and the shadow minister presenting a perfectly reasonable bill, based on the Victorian model. The member for Nudgee is absolutely right that Victoria and New South Wales have taken two different approaches. Victoria has sought to define a wagering service provider, including a betting exchange, and define in the act that those activities need authorisation. New South Wales has taken the approach of a copyright for the actual racing guide so that they have maintained intellectual property. They are two different approaches to solving the same problem but, nevertheless, are approaches taken by state governments to actually do something.

The member for Nudgee said that the other states are doing something and the logic is that we should not have to do anything because, again, we need to have a federal government approach. Whether we are talking about water, roads or whatever, all we ever hear from this government is that it is somebody else's problem. Tonight the government and the members of this House have the opportunity to actually do something about a genuine problem that has been recognised by all members in this place.

The member for Toowoomba South was absolutely right when he said, 'Integrity is the absolute essence of racing'. Betfair destroys the integrity of the business. It destroys the integrity of racing in Queensland. In a business like racing, once integrity is destroyed there is nothing left. The time to act is right now. All members in this place must ensure that we pass the legislation that is before the House tonight so that we have a genuine approach to deal with the problem on the books. We do not want a situation where, once again, Queensland is the odd state out because we have refused to do anything and are sitting on our hands.

Once again, I congratulate the member for Surfers Paradise on having the intellectual horsepower to bring into this chamber something that will make a difference to and do something for the racing industry of Queensland.