



Speech by

Paul Hoolihan

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

Hansard Wednesday, 1 March 2006

RACING (RACE FIELDS) AMENDMENT BILL

Mr HOOLIHAN (Keppel—ALP) (8.36 pm): I rise to speak against this bill. Contrary to the experience of a few people who have spoken here tonight, I have a fairly substantial background in the racing industry. While the Queensland racing industry is an industry of high integrity, in this instance the proposed bill does not do what it is meant to do. There is no recorded instance in Victoria where the legislation that this bill mirrors has been effective in stopping any betting by Betfair. At no stage—not even tonight—has the minister indicated that he does not want to stop it. I know the minister's attitude towards the integrity of this industry, and if there was a genuine way that Betfair could be stopped, it would be stopped.

The member for Chatsworth has outlined his abysmal understanding of the relationship between state and federal authorities. However, one thing that he refuses to expound on is the fact that his Liberal Prime Minister, Mr Howard, was offered the chance to legislate this away but he did not do so. Do members know why he did not? Because the Packer family and their gambling enterprises are in his pocket. To say that it is blamed on the Commonwealth is quite untrue. The Commonwealth had the opportunity to stop it even in Tasmania, but it did not do so.

I have some difficulty with the wording of the amending bill itself. It uses the words 'without the approval of the control body under the control of which the race is to be held'. If the Tasmanian control body authorises a race and that race is then published in Queensland, does this bill stop it? Perhaps the shadow minister can tell me how it does. We are dealing with an industry that raises millions of dollars, yet the suggested maximum penalty is 80 penalty units. Members should bear in mind that a penalty unit is \$75. Six thousand dollars is a small price when one is making a lot of money.

One of the things in the explanatory notes that really concerns me is this. It says that the bill, if enacted, will not increase the cost of administration and will cost nothing to implement. How many people would have to be employed to read every newspaper and to look at every publication to ensure that there has been no breach of the proposed legislation? I have a bit of a problem with the idea of backing a single horse to lose. I usually back a single horse to win and it seems to lose anyway. I do not get any money out of that. People can do that without a betting exchange.

One of the things the minister suggested was that Queensland wait to see the efficacy of the legislation in other states. That way we may be able to implement legislation that will be effective and enforceable. One of the other things that concerns me in terms of the provisions of this bill is that it will conflict greatly with the contractual arrangements with UNiTAB.

At this stage I probably should indicate to the House that I hold UNiTAB shares. It was the only way I could get money back from the TAB after it was privatised. There are contractual obligations to UNiTAB. I believe it is incumbent on any government to avoid the necessity for costly litigation as a result of legislation introduced that is not enforceable, does not do what it is designed to do and really is a waste of time. I oppose the bill before the House.