



Speech by

Terry Rogers

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

Hansard Friday, 21 April 2006

RACING AMENDMENT BILL

Mr ROGERS (Redcliffe—Lib) (4.29 pm): The Racing Amendment Bill aims to amend the Racing Act 2002 to facilitate from 1 July 2006 the transfer of the employees, assets, liabilities and ongoing responsibilities of the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board to the new controlling body, Queensland Racing Ltd. The minister's approved corporation, Queensland Racing Ltd, will then become the controlling body for the thoroughbred racing code in Queensland.

Queensland Racing Ltd, as the controlling body, will manage the code, allocate race dates and license animals, clubs, jockeys and venues. On top of that the controlling body will distribute money to licensed clubs for prize money, venue development and infrastructure for racing. The new thoroughbred controlling body, Queensland Racing Ltd, will utilise a corporate model in order to remove control of the industry from the people who know it best.

This is most unusual legislation as it proposes to develop a company unlike any public company or racing jurisdiction in Australia. There is no need for legislation such as this. Let us not reinvent the wheel. The success of the New South Wales, South Australian and Victorian racing codes shows that this legislation does not meet the standards or advances made by our Australian racing peers. This legislation fails at the expense of the people who participate in racing—the people who, as I have said, know it best: the clubs, the trainers, thoroughbred owners, jockeys and breeders. They will suffer a loss of representation and involvement in their own racing system.

The Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board was formed in April 2002 as the previous controlling body had not met industry standards. The Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board was said to have acted decisively to reform the industry and overcome the inevitable conflicts of interest of the previous structure. Now, the Labor government is implementing amendments that will put this progress in reverse by not meeting the industry's needs. But this is typical and, unfortunately, not unexpected of this government as it is unable to value progress and long-term reforms.

This legislation is set to impair the thoroughbred code and its ability to manage its own interests. It sets up the industry to repeat its pitfalls of the past. The intentions of these amendments are sinister and contradictory in terms of the proposed membership structure and voting rights. Although in his second reading speech the minister claimed to be concerned about the representation of stakeholder groups, this new controlling body fails to strengthen industry participation. Although it is said that the consultation process that allowed industry members minimal representation is driven by its need for independence, unless both parties can agree unanimously the controlling body, Queensland Racing Ltd, will cast the deciding vote.

It is hard to see why the company's so-called functions should automatically overrule suggestions made by members of the thoroughbred industry when they are the ones who will be directly affected by the decisions. It is hard to accept that the Beattie Labor government can validate introducing a structure and company like no other in Australia that will have immense negative effects on Queensland racing.

The paceway in my electorate is a harness racing track, so at the moment my constituents do not face immediate concerns. But the long-term effects of this bill may have various consequences for the

future of the racing industry in all of Queensland. Importantly, from 1 July this legislation will shamefully remove the management of the industry from the people who know it best. The Beattie Labor government has shocked us again with its disgraceful inability to manage this state proactively for the long-term good of Queensland.

This legislation proposes to set up a company that is unlike any company or racing jurisdiction in Australia. These amendments fail to provide the thoroughbred racing code with the opportunity to operate effectively as there is simply no way to prove that its system or function can work. I say again to the Labor government: let us not reinvent the wheel. Let us look at our state peers and follow the standards that have already been set and the advances that have already been made. Otherwise, the government may end up damaging Queensland's racing industry so extensively that the Australian Racing Board may end up removing Queensland's position altogether.