



Speech by

Mike Horan

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EQUINE INFLUENZA, MELBOURNE CUP RACE MEETINGS

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (11.33 am): One of the most iconic sporting events in Australia is the Melbourne Cup and the Melbourne Cup race meetings throughout Queensland. Due to equine influenza, we will not have race meetings on Melbourne Cup day in the red zone in south-east Queensland at Eagle Farm, the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast, Ipswich and Toowoomba. But now Melbourne Cup race day meetings have been cancelled in the green zones in the state at Rockhampton, Townsville, Home Hill, Bundaberg, Charleville, Gladstone, Kumbia, Mount Isa, Longreach, Richmond and Thangool. We will have TAB coverage and Melbourne Cup rate meetings at Mackay and Cairns.

I understand very well the difficult task that Queensland Racing has to provide funds for the equine influenza problem and also for the future rebuilding of racing in Queensland. It has saved millions of dollars through the cancelled race meetings and the reduced prize money at all tracks, and that money will be used for those two causes. Country race clubs in Queensland have undergone enormous sacrifices. Clubs like Thangool, Bowen and Gladstone have had meetings cancelled so more horses can go to places like Rockhampton, for example, because the TAB meetings in the state now are in those major regional coastal areas, and turnover is important. But on this one most important and iconic day in Australia, surely we could have a heart and allow those country race clubs to have their particular race days.

I know why they are trying to cancel them. It is so that on the following Saturday they can have reasonable fields and volumes for the TAB meetings that will be in the major centres, but we should allow them to have their Melbourne Cup races. I call on the minister for racing, who does have oversight of racing despite the limited powers under the act now, to speak with Queensland Racing and see if these communities for this one day can have their very, very important community Melbourne Cup race day restored.

Time expired.