



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

Hansard Wednesday, 17 October 2007

COUNTRY RACING

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (10.34 pm): I bring to the attention of the House the plight of country race meetings and the cancellation of the prestigious Moranbah North race meeting. It was cancelled by Queensland Racing for greed and profit for TAB meetings. While every race enthusiast acknowledges the cancellation of race meetings in the red zone due to equine influenza, Queensland Racing has cancelled all country race meetings, non-TAB meetings, and increased the number of TAB meetings in the green zone on the racing calendar all in the name of profit.

These decisions have devastated country race clubs. These clubs have not only been affected by EI and maintained all stringent requirements to ensure the disease is contained within the red zone but are being punished at the expense of TAB profit-making meetings. The Moranbah race clubs were advised yesterday to forget about their meeting as the TAB is more important.

Moranbah North's November meeting attracts at least 1,600 people annually. It is not just for the dedicated punters but for the entire community. Fundraising assists local charities and sporting groups. It is a wonderful social day out that brings people together from all different walks of life and backgrounds.

What is shattering is that this meeting has been guillotined for a TAB meeting that is flat out drawing a crowd of 20 people. Queensland Racing needs an overhaul. It does not recognise or understand the importance of country race days to small communities. It has prioritised TAB meetings at the expense of non-TAB meetings and needs to be held accountable for its decisions. Country race clubs are continually kicked in the guts by the hierarchy at Queensland Racing. It is a disgrace to see the complete disregard of country race clubs by Queensland Racing.

The whole organisation is governed by the mighty dollar with little regard for the future of the industry. Trainers, jockeys and strappers are leaving the industry in droves in country Queensland because they recognise that there is no future for the industry while the current hierarchy remains in control of Queensland Racing. I urge the minister to intervene and allow country race clubs to host their race dates in November. Commonsense must prevail to ensure the future of this industry. Country race meetings are the feeder to TAB meetings. If they are neglected and forgotten this will be the death knell for racing in Queensland.