



Speech by

Ms Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Wednesday, 30 April 2008

RACING AMENDMENT BILL

Ms GRACE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (4.35 pm): I rise to support the Racing Amendment Bill 2008. This bill marks another move forward for the Queensland racing industry since the sale of the Queensland TAB in 1999. The harness and greyhound codes can finally say that they have grown up. This bill will give the two codes and their participants a direct say in how the industry is run into the future, with members of the company choosing directors rather than having government appointments.

This is not to denigrate the many people who have served as board members on the statutory greyhound and harness racing boards as they worked hard, and often with plenty of criticism, for the code they were serving. But the participants in the greyhound and harness codes can now take some ownership of the future direction of the codes. I believe this is a really important step forward. This is a great opportunity for these two codes, with wagering growth in Queensland amongst the highest in Australia. There are also going to be many hard decisions.

For the greyhound code, the loss of the use of the Parklands Gold Coast venue due to the construction of the Gold Coast University Hospital presents both a loss and a tremendous opportunity. The feasibility of a new facility servicing only the greyhound code opens up a number of possibilities for future growth.

The tremendous asset base provided by the Albion Park Raceway is a massive legacy bequeathed to the harness and greyhound codes by the government. It is a great venue. I have been there myself on many occasions. The harness and greyhound codes need to assess how to best unlock the value of that asset—whether that is to develop or sell—to provide for the long-term future of their respective codes.

The greyhound and harness codes need to look at what will encourage future participants to invest their money into those codes. Again, this requires some entrepreneurial flair as well as a relationship with the current participants to ensure those opportunities are exploited. I guess those with entrepreneurial flair are best placed to not only strategically look at those opportunities but also implement them at the same time.

The corporate control body model with an independent skills based board, which this bill endorses, is best placed to fulfil that role into the future for the harness and greyhound codes. I wish the harness and greyhound codes all the best in the future. I hope they take the opportunity to move the industry forward and grasp it with both hands. This is a great example of how the government is enabling these industries to grow and stand on their own two feet, giving them the opportunity to have control over their industry and determine the best way of taking it forward.

As I mentioned previously, wagering is growing in Queensland. Growth is amongst the highest in Australia. There will be hard decisions that this group will have to make. But I believe they are better placed to meet the challenges and to make the decisions with the passing of this bill. I therefore commend the bill to the House.