



Speech by

## John-Paul Langbroek

**MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE**

Hansard Wednesday, 30 April 2008

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### RACING AMENDMENT BILL

**Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (4.39 pm): It is my pleasure to rise to speak to the Racing Amendment Bill 2008 which I note, as other members have, the coalition will be supporting. I note also, as other members have, that the objective of the bill is to amend the Racing Act 2003 to facilitate the transfer of employees, assets and liabilities and ongoing responsibilities for the Queensland Harness Racing Board and the Greyhound Racing Authority to the new control bodies for harness and greyhound racing respectively from 1 July 2008.

We last debated this issue in relation to the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board on 21 April 2006 in the last parliament when I was the shadow minister for public works, housing and racing. So it is my pleasure to rise to speak to this bill. At that time when the previous legislation was introduced it was decided that harness racing and greyhound racing needed more time for maturation, I think were the words that the honourable the Treasurer used in his second reading speech. But it was always intended that these arrangements should come into place by 1 July 2008.

I note the member for Chatsworth had some words to say about what he perceived were negative comments from this side in the debate on that bill on 21 April 2006. I point out to the member for Chatsworth that the concerns raised by the coalition at the time were that a company limited by guarantee is usually elected by its members. That amendment bill created two different classes of members: class A and class B members. The class A members were being denied the right to appoint the directors of the company, who were class B members. The class A members were owners, trainers and jockeys. They were the ones who did not get a say in who was telling them how to operate. But I note that this bill proposes a more traditional form of structure. The coalition is supporting this bill. I would like to ask a couple of questions and I seek clarification, if possible, by the honourable the Treasurer in his response.

I note that the second objective of the bill is to ensure transparency in ownership of licensed animals by executive officers of a control body. I think it is important that I advise the House that, although I do not perceive it to be a conflict of interest, I hold some shares in some greyhounds with some people on the Gold Coast. I have previously had a share in a greyhound. The previous minister for racing was at pains to point out the relative lack of success of that animal. But it is certainly a lot cheaper than having shares in a horse. So I am happy to have a share in a greyhound—

**Mr Mickel:** It's a bit hard when they stop in the middle of the straight for a feed, I'll give you the drum.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** There are lots of ways to lose your money and that is certainly one of them. So I make that clarification.

I note that the bill contains some other minor amendments to clarify the provisions of the Racing Act. One amendment that I would like some clarification on from the honourable the Treasurer relates to section 249, titled 'When a racing bookmaker may make a bet with a person who is not present at a licensed venue'. The explanatory notes state that this amendment—

... provides practical examples of the details of the bet to be confirmed with the bettor before the betting transaction ends, including the name of the bettor, the amount, and type of bet.

I am interested in what bookmakers have been doing which would necessitate that change.

I will return to the specifics of the greyhound and harness codes. As I mentioned, I note in this bill that those bodies will be electing their control body boards through their stakeholder groups. As I said, that is the usual thing to happen in a company limited by guarantee. I want to speak a little bit about the Greyhound Racing Authority's Phil Bennett, whom I spoke to a couple of times when I was shadow minister. If I had queries, I was happy to go through Mr Bennett to get answers to those queries. He had the interests of the industry at heart. I note that this inaugural board will serve for a period of two years, following which members will be progressively required to stand for re-election. I note there was a concern when the previous bill was debated that those members of the new board would be there for quite a long time before there would be a rotation.

In the previous parliament I had some queries about cutbacks in prize money to greyhounds. Under the current negotiated agreement, I think greyhounds are hard done by. The member for Bulimba suggested that greyhounds are more popular for betting because the ratings system means that backing a greyhound is more consistent. I respectfully suggest that it may just be that greyhound races are over a bit quicker and you get a chance to have a bet on something else again very quickly. I have a feeling that might be—

**Mr Dempsey:** If you've got any money left.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** That is right—if you have any money left. But I can say that when I first went to the greyhound races at Parklands I found that it is one of the few places where you will still find people looking for 5c pieces on the ground. It can be pretty rough out there with people looking for small bets.

I note other members have mentioned the members of the current inaugural Queensland Harness Racing Board: Bob Lette, Janice Dawson, Kevin Seymour and Dave Knudsen. I also want to acknowledge how hard and how passionately they have contributed to their particular industry. One of the great tips that I got from Kevin Seymour when my wife, Stacey, and I were at the races is that you just have to look at breeding. Artificial insemination, which is not allowed in thoroughbred racing, has been allowed in harness racing. As I recall, Kevin Seymour was instrumental in bringing out a horse called Fake Left, the sire of Blacks A Fake, which the member for Chatsworth mentioned. Basically, if you just looked for anything sired by Fake Left and backed it, you probably had a pretty good chance of collecting, because it would come first, second or third. Unfortunately, Fake Left is dead now and no more of those horses will be produced. I am not necessarily saying that as a commercial endorsement; it was just a good tip on the night and it certainly seemed to come up pretty consistently.

I note that the bill provides for the harness and greyhound codes to take ownership of their future. I would also like some explanation if possible from the honourable the Treasurer about the consultation that has taken place with the stakeholders. When we debated the last bill, Bob Bentley briefed me about the extensive consultation that had taken place in the thoroughbred racing industry. As I said, there were concerns raised about the structure of those companies, but in the case of the greyhound industry I would be interested to hear whether Queensland Racing Ltd has held similar forums with the clubs and the on-the-ground stakeholders.

I would like to note that on 13 March I asked questions on notice about the Gold Coast Greyhound Racing Club, which was having to vacate its Parklands site in mid-August to make way for the university hospital. I asked—

- (1) Will he advise details and the status of the compensation package being offered to the club?
- (2) Is the compensation for the Gold Coast Club linked in any way to the proposal from the Logan City Council and the Greyhound Racing Authority of Queensland for an all purpose greyhound track and facility in Logan?

I received the following answer—

This issue remains the subject of discussions between the Government and the Greyhound Racing Authority, the control body for the greyhound racing code in Queensland.

If I were a stakeholder, and a more active on-the-ground stakeholder, such as an owner or a trainer, or someone whose employment relied on the fact that I was at the Gold Coast Greyhound Racing Club at Parklands and I knew that in four months from now—in August—I was going to be out of there, I would like to think that there has been some consultation and some advice as to what my future was going to be. I think it is important that that issue be clarified, because I know many greyhound trainers are concerned about what is going to happen to them. Are the meetings going to be transferred to Albion Park? As the honourable member for Clayfield has already mentioned, there are questions around what is going to happen to Albion Park. It is now over a year and a half ago, maybe two years ago, since I was at Albion Park. At that time I saw some extensive plans for the redevelopment of Albion Park but, as the honourable member for Clayfield has pointed out, there will be numerous development problems related to the redevelopment of Albion Park. With those words, I again thank the honourable the Treasurer for his explanations. I look forward to his responses to my questions.