



Speech by  
**Jarrold Bleijie**

**MEMBER FOR KAWANA**

Hansard Thursday, 20 May 2010

---

## **RACING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (2.40 pm): I rise this afternoon to add my opposition to the Racing and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, which was introduced into the House by the Bligh government. The contents of my speech will be contained to a short period because, once again, as I said last night, democracy has been slapped in the face by the Bligh Labor government. Again, the people of the Kawana electorate say that the member for Kawana should have his right to stand up and speak for 20 minutes, but they have been guillotined. They have been cut down.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** To have government interjections when I am talking about the 20 minutes of time that members of this House get is completely frustrating. I look forward to the opportunity in 1½ years when we, the LNP, become the government. I say to the shadow minister that, on watching his performance and listening to the contents of his speech, I think he will make a tremendous minister for tourism and fair trading come the next election. I look forward to the member for Mermaid Beach becoming the minister for tourism and fair trading in 1½ years because no-one in this House knows the racing industry like the shadow minister knows the racing industry. I welcome the member for Everton on this side of the House. This is the good side of the House—

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** It is okay in opposition, but we would prefer to be on that side of the House. We look forward to that in 1½ years.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Wendt): Order! Member for Kawana. You have wasted two minutes. I would ask you to come to the clauses of the bill.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. The bill before the House is poorly constructed legislation that clearly was rushed and reiterates my point that this government is a crisis government that makes policy on the run. It is continually short focused in that it reacts to issue after issue without long-term vision.

This bill amends the Racing Act 2002, the Racing Regulation 2003, the Gaming Machine Act 1991, the Wagering Act 1998 and the Wagering Regulation 1999. Firstly, I wish to concur with the statements made by the shadow minister and the member for Mermaid Beach that essentially this bill will destroy the racing industry in Queensland as we know it. Industry consultation for the bill has been extremely scarce and heavily criticised by the industry stakeholders.

The first thing that any government should do when attempting to reform or overhaul any area of interest or industry is to sit down with all the relevant stakeholders and openly discuss ways and means of simplifying the operation. In no way should any government reform undertaken lead to a worse model than was the case previously. This bill does that. This government is out of touch and rather than listening and discussing the issues and ideas with the people of Queensland, it continues to govern by some sense of dictatorship.

In correspondence that I received from the Chairman of the Brisbane Racing Club, Mr Kevin Dixon, he expresses his strong disappointment in the formulation process of this bill. Mr Dixon stated further—

... a vote in favour of the legislation will establish an unelected and unrepresentative Control Body to be given decision-making power over the three codes of racing.

He stated further—

... they are the hub of thousands of jobs in this state.

The establishment of one control body for the industry will be achieved by the amalgamation of the three existing bodies: Queensland Racing Ltd, Queensland Harness Racing Ltd and Greyhounds Queensland Ltd. I have to say that I am not an avid racing enthusiast or punter of any esteemed ilk but, from the outside, even I can see the difference that is required to manage each three entities under a much broader umbrella. I do not understand this government's fascination with amalgamation. We saw it with the forced council amalgamations in 2008 and those councils still struggle to provide solid local government representation in many areas of the state. Now we see the same principle applying to the racing industry. All that amalgamations seem to do is reduce services, increase regulatory provisions and administrative costs and ultimately spread the same resources across a larger area. Put quite simply: it is less bang for the ratepayers' buck.

The explanatory notes to this bill detail the reasons for the forced creation of a single racing control body in Queensland. Those reasons include reducing the duplication of effort, preventing coordinated decision making in the best interests of the entire racing industry. All this amalgamation seems to do is centralise control of the industry so that fewer people at the top have more power over the entire industry, all to the detriment of the three specialised areas of the industry: horseracing, harness racing and greyhound racing. The one-size-fits-all approach will not work in an industry that has been well established. The LNP believes that each sector should have its own control as part of the entire racing industry. Specialised people understand and know what is required to run their specialised sectors of the industry.

I am not sure of the government's reason for the big push against having specialised groups in the industry but, given its track record on centralising power, it is very concerning. The industry, which is being ransacked by the government, is responsible for generating upwards of \$855 million in economic spend and employs 30,000 full-time, part-time and casual employees. My concern is that the creation of this centralised body of control in the industry will lead to an overall downgrade in the industry and, as a result, jobs will be jeopardised. Too much power in one particular body in an industry as prosperous as the racing industry is extremely dangerous. As the British Lord Acton famously said—

Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

All power to one body is extremely dangerous and the government's introduction of this legislation shows complete contempt for those bodies that are currently in existence.

This legislation is yet another backflip from the Bligh Labor government. Labor has consistently stressed the importance of keeping the management of the industry through the existing three bodies: Queensland Racing, Queensland Harness Racing and Greyhounds Queensland. What has happened to bring about the sudden change of heart? Wider industry representation is crucial to racing in Queensland, particularly to protect the industry and its many employers in rural and regional Queensland.

In my own electorate, the industry is not as prominent as it is in other parts of the Sunshine Coast region, but just on the border of the Caloundra and Kawana electorates is the location of the Sunshine Coast Turf Club, which is set to celebrate its 25th birthday in July this year. In its short existence, the club has grown to be a dominant regional club in Queensland. The club is now a first-class racing and training facility. The grass track is now accompanied by a synthetic cushion track which, I am told, is one of the first of its kind in Australia. Last year the club installed 40 light towers, with race meetings now able to be held at night as well as during the day, increasing the capacity of the club. My concern is that this dictatorial legislation will damage the regional clubs by reducing their representation and ability to be heard in the broader racing industry. It was through Queensland Racing that the Sunshine Coast Turf Club was able to fund its new track and this new centralised body of power over the industry will ultimately affect the smaller regional clubs and those jobs linked to the industry across rural and regional Queensland.

The Racing Act 2002 contained significant measures to protect and enhance regional racing in Queensland through five separate regional racing associations consisting of elected members from regional clubs. Country racing will suffer the most from this bill, as the regional representation on the Queensland Regional Racing Council is reduced from five to one. But when has this government stood tall for rural and regional Queensland? Unless you live in the area that lies between Coolangatta north to Pine Rivers and west to the Lockyer Valley, the Bligh Labor government considers you to be a lesser part of Queensland. It has even looked at separate time zones for daylight saving that are intrastate rather than interstate, which was the case previously.

I support the comments of the shadow minister in relation to this bill and the LNP's support for the racing industry in Queensland as a whole rather than the Labor Party's position of centralisation of power and a reduction of rural representation in the industry.