



Speech by

Mark Ryan

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

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RACING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr RYAN (Morayfield—ALP) (5.05 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Racing and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I have a strong interest and attachment to the racing industry. My grandfather was a bookie and during my time at university I worked as a tote operator at Corbould Park racecourse at Caloundra. Many other members of my extended family continue to work in the racing industry and they have strong connections with the industry. What is more, my father and I responsibly enjoy a punt down at the local TAB at Burpengary.

All of those people involved with or connected to the industry would agree that the Queensland racing industry has a history of continual reform. All of those people would also agree that the industry needs further reform to address the challenges presented by a changing wagering landscape driven in part by the advent of online wagering, changing customer preferences and other technological developments. Unfortunately, the one constant in the reform of the racing industry has been the scaremongering and misinformation perpetuated by opponents. Unfortunately, today we have heard the rot of dissent continue from members of the opposition. These opponents have opposed every reform in the industry and they have always done their best to undermine any initiatives that benefit rank and file industry participants.

Despite the squawking and the exaggeration by opposition members, this bill will ensure the long-term future of the racing industry in Queensland. This bill favours the entire industry over the self-interest of one specific individual race club. This bill is about the longevity and viability of the whole industry, not just the interests of one specific individual race club. Reform of the industry is essential so that the industry as a whole can plan its future from a single viewpoint rather than the fractured and piecemeal approaches that have operated in the past. To say that reform is not essential is to deny the realities and challenges faced by the industry today and into the future. To say that reform is not essential is to condemn the industry to a void of uncertainty and instability.

Some opponents have been responsible for much of the scaremongering and deliberate misrepresentation about the provisions in this bill that clarify the control body's power to impose conditions on any approval it grants to an individual race club to dispose of an interest in real property. Those opponents may be surprised to hear that that power has always existed. The control body's approval to dispose of real property has always been required and the control body has always had the power to impose conditions on any approval given. All that the amendments in this bill do is clarify that existing power. All that the amendments in this bill do is provide certainty for the racing industry.

Some opponents also deny the fact that over many years the state government has transferred freehold land worth many tens of millions of dollars to individual race clubs. These contributions, combined with the additional public money and control body money, have been invested in improvements in the land owned by those individual race clubs all around Queensland. An amendment in this bill ensures that if any race club decides to dispose of any race club a proportion of any proceeds received from the sale may be used for the benefit of the whole Queensland racing industry. It cannot be any fairer than that. The people of Queensland, through public moneys, and the control body, through control body moneys, have made significant contributions to these race clubs. It is only fair that some portion of the proceeds of land sales be returned to the industry for future development and growth.

We have heard some wild allegations from opposition members about the lack of support for individual race clubs. This could be no further from the truth. The fact is that in the past decade the state government has transferred much freehold ownership of racecourse property to many individual race clubs. What is more, the industry, through the control body, provides significant funds for prize money, capital development and the day-to-day operations of individual race clubs. Surely, with this information in mind it is impossible to say that there is a lack of assistance for the racing industry in regional, provincial and metropolitan areas. This bill provides a framework for a strong, vibrant and stable racing industry into the future. This bill is about the longevity and viability of the racing industry as a whole. I take this opportunity to commend the minister, his staff and departmental staff on their hard work in respect of the bill and I commend the bill to the House.