



Speech by

**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE**

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## **MOUNT GARNET RACES AND RODEO; COUNTRY RACING**

**Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—LNP) (5.52 pm): In fewer than three weeks the small township of Mount Garnet will come alive for its annual and iconic Mount Garnet Races and Rodeo. This is one of the supreme events on the country calendar throughout Queensland, if not Australia. This iconic event started more than 75 years ago and now has the reputation of being the bush version of the Cairns amateur races. The rodeo is also priding itself on the celebration of 40 years of rugged, tough competition.

The Mount Garnet Races and Rodeo is where the city meets the bush to renew acquaintances and friendships and for country people to share that social interaction that is lost through the tyranny of distance. This May long weekend provides an enormous financial boost not only for the region but also for Far North Queensland and has been an important fundraiser for the Royal Flying Doctor Service, sporting clubs, the School of Distance Education, local P&Cs and the list goes on. Praise must go to the continuous commitment and efforts of the hardworking members of past and present committees and supporters of the race club and the rodeo association who have made this event what it is today.

Unfortunately, a raft of problems loom arising out of issues to do with Queensland Racing and the Licensing Commission. These issues have come out of left field. Unreasonable demands and red tape seriously threaten the continuation of this iconic weekend event. New laws have created massive costs of at least \$60,000 alone to meet licensing laws that enforce heavy security measures and which are no more than overkill in the bush. Other requirements imposed are to provide street lighting to camping areas. Part of the ambience of camping is to sleep under the stars, cook a good feed and boil the billy.

On top of all that, Queensland Racing has forced country race clubs to erect inside and outside running rails, amounting to an extra cost of some \$30,000, as well as tens of thousands of dollars for special amenities. Licensing laws have forced heavy security measures. This is an overkill in the bush. These excessive rules and massive costs will overburden the clubs and could plunge this successful club into financial ruin. I believe that all agencies must sit down every year and thrash out workable and realistic solutions to prevent the demise of these rural events. The same rules that apply in Brisbane do not fit with country racing. It is a totally different environment. It is paramount that the minister for racing venture out and have a look at the uniqueness of the bush and the difference between it and the city.

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. Queensland Racing needs to be held accountable for its decisions. Country clubs are continually being kicked in the guts by the hierarchy of Queensland Racing. Rural communities need to be allowed to stage special race events, which were time-honoured traditions for many years before Queensland Racing took control.

Country racing and rodeos are the lifeblood of these rural communities. The government needs to protect their survival for future generations and not be responsible for their decline and ruination. The focus should be on fixing the issues and not being intent on working against the hardworking efforts of the race committees in these rural communities.