




Speech by
Ray Stevens

MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

Hansard Wednesday, 28 November 2012

RACING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (5.38 pm): I rise today to speak to the Racing and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. I have been waiting a long, long time for this day. In fact, for the six years that I have been in parliament I have advocated strongly for this day to come. I congratulate the minister on the wonderful work that he has done in bringing this important bill to the House within the first eight or nine months of this LNP government. Being a brand-new minister for the racing industry, he has done a wonderful job in going out and assisting—and for once all three codes have been assisted—to get better legislation and to make a better life for those in the racing industry right across-the-board.

My humble experience with racing goes back to the first Melbourne Cup winner that I can remember, which was Lord Fury in 1961. That horse was an eight-year-old gelding—the last eight-year-old to win. That is why those people who this year backed American lost their money. In 1962, Even Stevens won the Melbourne Cup. For obvious reasons, I cleaned up in my primary school grounds. I think I won two shillings. From there I went on to be on the Richmond Diggers Race board in north-west Queensland as a 21-year-old. I loved and enjoyed country racing. I have been on the Gold Coast Turf Club racing board for 14 years. So I have an experience and a love of a sport that was absolutely decimated by the Labor Party and the cartel of Labor mates that it put in charge. They drove the industry into oblivion. It tore my heart out to see what the Labor Party did to the racing industry. When we had this marvellous clean-out of Labor members in March, I knew that, again, racing had a friend in the LNP government.

So from there we come to this legislation. While I was in opposition I advocated for integrity and having three separate codes. Those in the industry would know that thoroughbred racing, harness racing and greyhound racing are like chalk and cheese in character. I have been involved in both the greyhound industry and the thoroughbred industry. I have never dabbled in harness racing, but there is always tomorrow. Quite clearly, those three codes have a different clientele. They have different industry participants and they have vastly different interests. This new arrangement that the minister has put in this bill of three codes with an overarching board will undoubtedly deliver the best possible outcome for all three codes.

As we know, the codes are funded primarily by the gambling dollar. That is a fact. If there is no gambling, there is no prize money. If there is no prize money, there are no horses. It is a very simple equation. We have to have participants in the industry; otherwise, there is no gambling. It is noted that in New Zealand the gambling dollar is sliding away from the racing industry. People are gambling on rugby union and rugby league. People are punting on those sports, which means that there is not the money to put back into the three racing codes. So we have to start with a young Ray Stevens being at the races and other people enjoying going to the races with their families. Going to the races is not about the gambling; it is about enjoying the horses—those magnificent animals—the environment and the skills of the jockeys. That is what this racing bill is about.

This racing bill is very much about putting good people who understand racing and who are involved in racing in charge of racing. From the board's point of view, we have Kevin Dixon leading the way. He has done an excellent job, in concert with the minister's direction, in coming to this legislation today, which I

know will deliver a much better industry than we had previously under the last period of Labor government—from 1998 through to 2012.

A big winner out of this LNP government has been country racing. The Premier has gone to lengths to make sure that country racing has been reinstated. I think the member for Beaudesert probably thinks his area is involved in provincial racing. There is a thriving racing industry in the Beaudesert area. We want to see that particular area come back with major training facilities and major input from people involved with horses.

To me, as a person who loves the racing industry, as a person who loves the people in the industry, this bill before the House is a great joy. Yes, there are 30,000 employees in the racing industry, but many more people—in fact, hundreds and thousands of people—get involved in the industry as their sport, as their passion. The racing industry is not just a business; it is a sport that people feel passionate about, just as people feel passionate about netball and other sports. As someone who has funded racehorses, I can assure members that very few of them make money. In fact, the last horse that I had that was any good won seven races—\$90,000 and we broke square. So the racing industry is very much an industry that people have to love to be involved in and it has to be supported like all other sports and interests are in this great state.

As I have mentioned, right across Queensland hundreds and thousands of people are involved in the racing industry. For people in country areas, the racing industry is the lifeblood of their social life. In many cases it provides the only way for people throughout country areas to come together. To me, the way racing in Queensland was driven by the previous Labor regime was absolutely abhorrent and deserving of all the penalties imposed on those people should that be the case in the future.

I cannot say a lot about the bill that has not already been said. However, what I can do is implore all people involved in racing—all three codes—and particularly people who are involved in country racing, with whom I have great empathy through my upbringing, to get on board and be at one with the industry, because the racing industry has to survive in a very competitive market against other forms of gambling on other sports. That is where we are. We cannot go back. You cannot ban gambling on various interests. We have to involve people in the harness, the greyhound and the gallops industries to make sure that people want to gamble on the races because that is what they know. People tend to gamble on the things that they know. Obviously, I do not know enough about racing because I have not won very much lately.

Racing provides people with a wonderful opportunity to socialise and to be involved in a very rewarding sport. The thrills are there and, hopefully, one of these days we might even have an LNP syndicate buying a horse and winning the Melbourne Cup.