



Speech by


**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE**

Hansard Wednesday, 28 November 2012

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

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (5.17 pm): I support this legislation. The policy objectives of the bill state, in part—

remove Racing Queensland Limited (Racing Queensland) as the control body for the thoroughbred, harness and greyhound codes of racing;

I never thought I would see the day. I think that is great news for Queensland Racing in general but especially for country racing. I believe deep down that when I was elected in 2004 it was partly due to starting a petition supporting country racing. Back then I saw many country race clubs in my electorate such as the iconic Mingela close due to funding being cut. Over 2,000 people attended that race meeting. Likewise, Georgetown held three race meetings a year but funding was cut for Georgetown and it closed down. Also Capella had its great race meeting closed. Jericho's great race meeting closed down as well. Alpha, which held another great racing meeting, closed after funding was withdrawn. I say to the minister that the good news is that Alpha is now setting up another meeting. A bloke named Kevin Wiltshire, who was a former president of the Jericho race club—and Jericho is right beside Alpha—is kick-starting that club. They are hoping to hold a race meeting by next year, which is good news.

I believe that the previous board, particularly under Bob Bentley, completely gutted country racing—full stop. The devastating effects on country racing will take a long time to recover from. There was a network of race meetings that jockeys and trainers would attend year in and year out and they could travel from one meeting to another. When the number of meetings was reduced and there was less funding provided, the jockeys and trainers started to lose heart. There was no incentive for them. Even the local graziers played a big part in ensuring there were horses to train for that special event every year—year in and year out.

In relation to country racing, I can honestly say that in the past the support from government was absolutely pathetic but the support from the people is alive and well. People want to go to race meetings. I cannot speak for city racing, but I see the races in Brisbane and I see the Melbourne Cup on TV. The support from the people for country racing is alive and well. For example, this year 3,000 people turned up for the amateur races at Charters Towers, 6,000 people turned up for the Mount Garnet races and last year there were 2,000 people at the race meeting in Moranbah. The social interaction and the economic spin-offs keep those communities alive. They thrive on it and look forward to those special events, year in and year out. Take that away and you take away the lifeblood of those rural communities.

I alert the minister to something we have to be very careful of. The Moranbah North race meeting attracts 2,000 people. Anglo coal provides great sponsorship. Previously, Queensland Racing would see that there was a race meeting in Mackay on the Thursday and would not allow those horses to race at Moranbah on the Saturday. The Mackay race meeting is important, but it is held on a Tuesday and is attended by about 30 people whereas the Moranbah meeting attracts 2,000 people. We had to fight extremely hard to change that situation.

One of the policy objectives of the bill is 'to ensure that the minister responsible for racing has more involvement in, and power over, the operations of the control body'. I believe that that should carry some weight. As a result of unfavourable decisions made by Queensland Racing in the past, many communities were completely kicked in the guts. A racing event that attracted 2,000 or 3,000 people would suddenly be cancelled for particular reasons. I cannot give all of the reasons of the previous racing body that completely discriminated against country racing.

One of the things hurting country race meetings is security. Country race meetings cover a broad area. There is a lot of area to manoeuvre. The cost of providing security for a race meeting is sometimes \$30,000 to \$40,000. The clubs just do not have the funds to provide that, especially when they have to put up railings and comply with other types of regulation. As a result, special events such as Dog A Hog and the Pearamon pig hunt are lost. Organisers struggle to stage those events because of security issues. In the same way, it is hurting many race clubs. I commend the minister on this bill. It is good legislation and I fully support it. It is about time it happened.