




Speech By  
**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE**

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**PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT**

**Racing Industry**

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (3.44 pm): Recently, the Racing and Other Legislation Amendment Bill was passed to set the framework to restore the damage that had been done to country racing under the previous government. Country racing has suffered terribly over the past decade, and this has had a massive impact on the social and economic benefits to many country towns. I have been approached by representatives of the National Sprint Racing Association for my support of a proposal which I believe will inject new life into country racing and reinvigorate bush race meetings. Sprint racing has been part of our national heritage since settlement. It is interwoven in the history of thoroughbred racing and enjoyed a heyday in the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s.

During the 1980s and 1990s, sprint racing was one of the fastest growing and most popular forms of racing on the Queensland racing circuit, but a lack of legislative backing, combined with an increasingly hostile thoroughbred industry hierarchy, resulted in Queensland sprint racing officially ending in 1993 under the Goss government. A major contributing factor to this was rule changes by the Australian Racing Board that demanded that any form of racing not sanctioned by the ARB, including races under 800 metres, must be under the management of the state principal racing authority. Since its demise, sprint racing has continued in a limited form mostly through memorandums of understanding with individual thoroughbred clubs as a novelty. However, there is a growing tide of support and interest in this alternative racing form both domestically and overseas.

I have been advised that there is a lot of money waiting to be injected into Queensland racing clubs that add sprint racing to their programs. However, to achieve the potential growth in Queensland racing that sprint racing could bring, legislative changes need to be made that will afford the industry the legislative framework needed to develop a professional model of administrative control.

Changes in legislation and attitude have allowed major changes to occur in the Queensland racing industry, and I know that many rural members in the LNP have already voiced their support of sprint racing and acknowledged the benefit it will bring to country race meetings. Under the now abolished Racing Queensland, country racing was gutted by decisions that favoured city race meets, and this has had a huge impact on the economy of towns struggling to survive. Meetings were cancelled for no good reason apart from being close to a city meeting, and many clubs were forced to shut down as costs of security and workplace health and safety requirements have become exorbitant and unrealistic.

Country race meetings are often the single biggest social and economic event in rural and regional towns. Last year 3,000 people turned up for the amateur races in Charters Towers, 6,000 people at Mount Garnet and 2,000 at Moranbah. Country racing is the lifeblood of rural communities. Sprint racing has the potential to create an alternative revenue stream for struggling clubs, and I encourage the minister to take advantage of the growing national and international support and provide the legislative framework to introduce sprint racing to Queensland country racing programs.