




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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RACING INTEGRITY BILL

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (9.07 pm): I rise to speak to the Racing Integrity Bill 2015. Before I go into detail about this bill, I want to commend and thank the shadow minister for racing, Jann Stuckey, for her work with the racing industry and for travelling the state to listen to the industry and the stakeholders. The racing industry is one of the most important industries in Queensland. It is a major employer across the state.

I note in Lawrie Facer's submission to the Agriculture and Environment Committee he stated the following—

The Queensland racing industry is the third or fourth largest employer in the state. It is not unreasonable to estimate that it provides direct and indirect employment to 50 000 people.

That is why I thought the government would have a strong desire to present credible and concise reforms that address fully the issues that provide confidence and integrity to the industry and country racing across the state. In previous years the racing industry has been subject to a succession of inquiries. However, under the LNP government, we invested in the industry, we increased the number of race days, particularly in my electorate, we increased the prize money and we helped grow the industry and the industry's confidence. This bill is not a solution for or an investment in the industry; it is a disaster and it further reduces the confidence in the industry.

It is disappointing that the government has not done a better job on the formulation of this legislation, given that it had a year to develop it and consult with the industry about it. I note in the amendments that there has been some consultation with the industry, but there are no details as to who has been consulted. I would really appreciate it if the minister could outline who she has consulted, because it is not detailed in the explanatory notes.

Recently I received a letter in relation to this bill from the Mount Garnet Amateur Turf Club, a non-TAB country racing club, which is very similar to the clubs in my electorate such as Tara, Warra, Jandowae, St George, Mitchell, Injune, Augathella, Morven, Cunnamulla, Charleville, Roma, Chinchilla, Miles, Flinton and Noorama where I recently attended their 50 years of racing celebration at their annual race meeting. There is something interesting about the Noorama races—they actually race anticlockwise. It is the only place in my electorate where this happens and it is because there are a number of horses that actually come up from New South Wales to that race meeting. It is unusual to find that in Queensland.

Mr Perrett: Gympie.

Ms LEAHY: I take the interjection from the member for Gympie. Apparently it happens in Gympie.

Mr Perrett: Occasionally.

Ms LEAHY: It might depend on whether it is the first race or the fifth race. Clare Cupitt, the secretary of the Mount Garnet turf club, in her letter to me said—

The proposed changes to country racing as outlined in the Racing Integrity Bill and the Tracking to Sustainability Plan would mean an end to the club and the financial support that it brings to the community

The clubs in my electorate tell me they share Clare's concerns. Most country clubs operate on a volunteer basis. They do the cooking for the day to provide the food, they clean the toilets—unfortunately, quite a number of them have toilet issues; one day we actually found a mobile phone in the pipework that caused some issues for the plumbing—they work the bar, they mow the grass, they man the gate, they run the fashions on the field, they renovate the jockey rooms and facilities and many, many other activities associated with running a country race day. Ms Cupitt advises that country race club volunteers are disgusted with the gross incompetence and disregard with which the thoroughbred code is currently being treated.

The live-baiting scandal in the greyhound racing industry has had widespread repercussions for all racing codes. Rather than dealing with the issue decisively in that code, thoroughbred and harness racing feel they have been dragged into the matter and have been marred by this incident. The result from this scandal is now the Racing Integrity Bill which came about, unfortunately in the beginning, with little or no consultation with the industry and it is an inconsiderate and uninformed view of thoroughbred racing and country racing in particular. I acknowledge that the government in its amendments has advised of some consultation but it would be interesting to see those details.

The move of country racing from Racing Queensland to Treasury is also detrimental as it has reduced the contact that country racing has with the other racing codes and the input of professionals with racing experience. Without a strong country racing sector where does the government expect that the racing industry is to source its up-and-coming jockeys, trainers and future class 1 winners? Thoroughbred racing is the social backbone of Queensland and country racing is its lifeblood. Country racing is where a colourful trainer by the name of Peter Moody started out—in my electorate. He went on to go to Ascot to meet the Queen. On that note I would like to wish Her Majesty a happy 90th birthday. Peter Moody grew up in Charleville and he went to every country race meeting that he could in South-West Queensland. Country racing is where he started and look at the affection that his horse generated for thoroughbred racing throughout the country. It was country racing that helped him with the grounding and experience and I have no doubt it was the background that helped him to develop that horse to become a household name, Black Caviar. I do not ever underestimate the input that country racing has to thoroughbred racing in this state or, for that matter, in this country.

I now turn to some of the comments in the Agriculture and Environment Committee report on this bill that were very, I think you could say, scathing of this legislation. I acknowledge that there has been some consultation. However, I am disappointed to read in the committee report that the Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing did not consult with the community, industry stakeholders or the public in relation to the provisions of the bill. As a result the racing industry participants such as the turf club, the animal owners, the jockeys, the breeders, the strappers, the trainers and the bodies representing them were excluded from the bill's earlier development. The department chose instead to rely on the consultation processes conducted as part of the commission of inquiry into greyhounds. That inquiry focused on the greyhound racing industry, not the entire racing industry, and did not consider the form or substance of the legislation proposed in the bill.

The government did not do its homework well on the bill and the department did not do its job well. The ministers should have insisted that they carry out adequate and comprehensive consultation with the industry. I encourage further consultation on this bill to ensure the Racing Integrity Bill is beneficial to the racing industry and there is opportunity for all to be involved, from the country strapper to the club's CEO. Without more consultation the bill cannot be relied upon to give good outcomes for the thousands of people who are employed in this wonderful industry across the state.

The lack of consultation at the early stages goes hand in hand with the lack of earlier costings on the bill. I acknowledge that the minister did outline some costings. Section 23 of the Legislative Standards Act 1992 asked for the estimated cost to government of implementing the bill to be in the explanatory notes. I agree with the shadow minister Jann Stuckey that the costs should be revealed at an early stage so there can be proper scrutiny of those costings. The government cannot on one hand say there is a massive deficit and that it has been badly handled and on the other hand not provide the costings for the Integrity Commission. The cost to implement the bill is a key issue for the racing industry.

I feel that I should conclude with an appeal which is echoed by racing clubs in my electorate and across the state and those who are passionate about the racing industry. Clare Cupitt's appeal and that of others is to all members of this parliament that it is our responsibility to do what is in the best interests of the people and the state. It is imperative that the racing industry bill before this parliament does not pass in its current or amended form. If it does it spells disaster for the entire industry.