




Speech By  
**Christopher Whiting**

**MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA**

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**RACING INTEGRITY BILL**

 **Mr WHITING** (Murrumba—ALP) (9.54 pm): I rise tonight in support of the Racing Integrity Bill. This bill is crucial to this critical industry because, as we have heard the member for Rockhampton say, self-regulation has failed. As we have heard in this debate, we can see that failure—and I think the minister outlined this quite well—in three examples of self-regulation in the MacSporran report, and these three stood out clearly for me as well. Firstly, the 2014 wagering deal delivered an extra \$17 million in funding yet not one cent went into initiatives that increase protections for these animals. There is more money in the industry but not a cent is invested into the welfare of the horses and dogs that generate the wealth of the industry. What was revealed on *Four Corners* about the fate of so many greyhounds shows what folly it is to ignore the welfare of these animals.

Secondly, the chairman of stewards for the three codes had no role description outlining their responsibility. Even though they had a salary of over \$300,000 there was no job description that every other worker must have. It is concerning to me to learn that someone in this executive role is not required to meet an executive standard expected elsewhere. Three, the conflict of interest stood out for me as well.

Racing Queensland has oversight of the commercial aspect of the industry. It is in charge of generating more income and lowering costs. It is also looking after the financial wellbeing of stakeholders, yet it was also tasked with the integrity oversight role. It needed to look after the welfare of the animals. It had to take to task those members who were breaching regulations or norms of decency. It had to pull into line stakeholders who were crossing the line as they strived to generate extra income.

That is a model that we have seen throughout this state and throughout this nation that has been proven to work only in very unusual or special circumstances. These are some of the reasons why I think we very much need this act. With no oversight or regulation and a conflict of interest hampering Racing Queensland, we risk a failure of public confidence in this pivotal industry that employs nearly 30,000 Queenslanders. It is an industry where trust and confidence in the overseeing bodies is of utmost importance. Without that confidence, people do not wager, they do not participate and they do not bother to reinvest. You get people drifting away and a frittering away of employment opportunities.

We can help restore that confidence by creating the QRIC. There are a number of initiatives in this bill that I think make the QRIC a much needed saviour for this industry. It will be an independent body entirely responsible for integrity and animal welfare in the sport. It will be an entirely separate entity. That is the way to ensure confidence in this fine industry of Queensland racing. I note that it will also be responsible for the police task force. It will have the power to investigate, prosecute and stamp out those practices that we saw in the media that brought shame on Queensland racing.

QRIC will be the employer of the stewards, not Racing Queensland. I think that is a big plus for increasing the independence of, and therefore confidence in, the industry. QRIC will have to make strategic and operational plans the first time and they will have to report quarterly. All this adds up to effective, efficient oversight of this crucial industry.

In the debate we heard a few comments about cost. The member for Broadwater talked about it, and the member for Moggill said tonight that the industry cannot bear the cost. If they listened to what the minister has said, they would know that the racing industry will not be required to provide additional funding to establish the QRIC. The racing industry, the minister said, will not be out of pocket.

**Ms Grace:** In fact, they are going to save money.

**Mr WHITING:** Exactly right; the minister set out how they would save money. The minister was also very direct in laying out the costs in her speech last night. I refer to the *Hansard*, where she said—

\$1 million for accommodation and basic utilities; \$1.2 million for information technology; \$1.5 million for staff migrating to public service award rates; \$1.2 million for corporate management positions ... \$1.75 million for corporate services staff ... \$0.4 million to cover the costs of the police task force going forward. ... \$1.5 million for corporate operating costs ...

There were many more there but it was a very specific outline of the costs. I would certainly tell members on the other side that they should take a good look at that because I think the minister has done a tremendous job.

We have also heard a constant theme throughout the debate that we on this side are not looking after country racing. Let me be specific on this. This bill does not relate to the allocation of race dates. These will continue to be decided by Racing Queensland. Let me stress that there will be no cuts to the country racing package—no cuts. In fact we have delivered a \$21 million country racing support package that will build the capacity of country racing and support it.

**Mr Costigan** interjected.

**Mr WHITING:** The member for Whitsunday can go and visit those many and varied racecourses. The package will run for at least two years. The remaining purses will remain untouched, yet the opposition has been ignoring this. What we have seen is another scare campaign. Scare campaigns are all they have to offer to the people of Queensland. They are telling Queenslanders that family electrical businesses will be put out of business and they are terrifying them, when there is not even a proposal on the table. They are telling families with children with an ECDP that they will lose their programs under this government in 2020, when in fact they would have lost them in 2017 under the LNP. Now we have this scare campaign over country racing.

The member for Currumbin intimated that we wanted to 'cripple the industry'. The reality, as the member for Rockhampton said, is that the LNP caused this problem. Let us look at the financial record that happened under their watch. Queensland Racing losses were as follows: \$4.5 million in 2012-13; \$3.9 million in 2013-14; and \$1 million in 2014-15. There were no cash reserves for Queensland Racing. The government had to stump up \$32 million to cover their losses. If that is their record, how can they say that they can look after country racing? They cannot do this. All they can do is run scare campaigns and run around peddling fabrications. I believe mightily in this bill and I commend it to the House.