




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 21 April 2016

RACING INTEGRITY BILL

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (10.26 pm): I rise to speak in opposition to the Racing Integrity Bill 2015. This bill proposes to establish a new Racing Integrity Commission which dissolves the existing arrangements and separates the integrity functions of Racing Queensland from the commercial operation into a new separate body.

There is no question that racing codes all across Queensland are in chaos. My family have been involved in the racing industry for 50 years—indeed, we still own racehorses—and the feedback I am receiving from the racing industry is negative, negative, negative. The lack of confidence from owners and trainers out there in my electorate is alarming. It even extends to our local committees, who are now questioning the future of the industry in these country areas. The establishment of an integrity commission will add yet another layer of bureaucracy to an industry which is already on its knees. I acknowledge that the greyhound industry needed to be cleaned up, but to lump the harness and thoroughbred racing codes in with greyhounds is unfair and inappropriate.

I find it ironic that we are talking about a Racing Integrity Bill, and yet the integrity of the process in bringing this bill before the House is highly questionable, particularly given the lack of consultation in preparing this bill. I could not agree more with the comment in the report which said—

Consultation with the racing industry, community organisations and individuals should have been an intrinsic and routine part of the policy and legislative development process for the Racing Integrity Bill.

Country racing is the lifeblood of the Burdekin electorate, and indeed it is the lifeblood of other electorates across Queensland and this great country of ours. My electorate of Burdekin has three tracks: Cluden Park in Townsville, which has just had major upgrades completed thanks to the previous LNP government's commitment and investment in racing in Queensland; Ben Bolt Park in Bowen; and the Burdekin Race Club's track in Home Hill. All three tracks not only significantly contribute to the racing industry but are major contributors to our local economies. The Burdekin certainly comes alive each May for Growers Race Day, which last year attracted a crowd in excess of 4,000 people. Everyone is currently gearing up for this year's event, which is scheduled in a few weeks time on 21 May.

We also have a passionate group of locals who are interested in bringing greyhound racing to the Burdekin, and there is no doubt that the uncertainty which currently exists within that industry is not helping their cause. I certainly hope they receive the appropriate support from this government and the industry to bring it to fruition.

These country race meetings are so much more than simply horseracing. They are an annual get-together that brings together communities. They are social events, fundraisers and networking opportunities. More importantly, they bring much needed money to these communities. Bowen in particular has experienced a significant downturn, and the loss of even one race meeting from this town would have devastating consequences. We used to have owners, trainers and of course the associated

strappers and jockeys training out of the Burdekin and Bowen, contributing much needed employment and revenues for these communities. They may not have been big on numbers, but they were an important part of the community.

I note that, apart from not agreeing that this bill should be passed, the committee also shared my concerns, those of my colleagues and those in the racing industry that there have been no costings provided.

The bill also proposes to implement a new seven-member board, with three industry members—one from each code—and four independent members. This has been seen as a deliberate shift of board power away from industry participants. We have already witnessed the controversy entwined with the minister's interim board appointments, and there has been considerable industry opposition to the changes in the bill from those in the thoroughbred, harness and greyhound codes. There cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach to the differing codes. If you want to establish and maintain a successful racing industry, the best people to have on the board are those with industry experience. As they say, you need to have some skin in the game.

This bill before the House is deficient and obviously needs a lot more work before it meets the needs of our racing codes in Queensland. It was rushed and ill-conceived, and I cannot support it in its current form.