




Speech By  
**Deb Frecklington**

**MEMBER FOR NANANGO**

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### **RACING INTEGRITY BILL**

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (8.53 pm): I rise to speak against the Racing Integrity Bill. I want to follow on from the member for Mermaid Beach and say how true it is in the difference of governments to understand who likes racing and who does not like racing. In terms of Melbourne Cup day for country racing, is there a better race day than the Kumbia race day on Melbourne Cup day? When we were in government the entire cabinet went to Kumbia on Melbourne Cup day and it was a fabulous day. The reason it was so fabulous was because we as the LNP government reinstated country racing codes after the debacle that was the Labor government. Instead, we now have a Labor government in Queensland that has put a parliamentary sitting day on the one sacred day for country racing—Melbourne Cup. I say this to the Kumbia Race Club: unfortunately I will not be able to attend the races as I always do when I sponsor a table or sponsor a prize. I will obviously still be doing that sponsoring, but it is just ridiculous that I will not be able to attend.

This bill was reviewed by the Agriculture and Environment Committee and the members of that committee could not agree that this bill should be passed. At this juncture I want to congratulate and thank the shadow minister for racing, the member for Currumbin, for her hard work all around the state in alerting this issue to the people of Queensland. Through this bill Labor wants to establish a new Racing Integrity Commission, dissolving all of the existing arrangements and separating the integrity functions of Racing Queensland from commercial operations into a new separate body. The estimated cost is said to be somewhere between \$16 million and \$20 million per year. However, these costs have not been clarified. The committee noted that this breached section 23 of the Legislative Standards Act and the fact that the explanatory notes do not provide an assessment of the costs to government of implementing this bill is completely unacceptable.

**An opposition member:** It's a breach.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** It is a breach; I take that interjection. The bill also proposes to implement a new seven-member board, with only three industry members and four independent members. This deliberately shifts the power of the board away from the people who know about the industry, the people who are passionate about the industry. Over the past 18 months I have been watching this issue with massive interest. I have seen the three codes be completely attacked off the back of the greyhound scandal. On 29 February in a Radio 4TAB interview the racing minister of Queensland attacked all three codes by accusing them of having serious integrity issues. She said—

You will now have an integrity commissioner if this bill becomes law, of the absolute highest quality you could ever imagine driving the integrity in an industry that is facing very big integrity issues. Not just in greyhounds, but I get the weekly reports and there's integrity issues across the three codes, and our message is very clear. We will be having a very good look at integrity in the racing industry ...

I am happy to table the remainder of that quote from the radio because it is clear that it sets out that the minister is attacking all three codes.

*Tabled paper:* Extract of transcript of Radio 4TAB interview on 29 February 2016 [\[575\]](#).

**Ms Grace:** I'm stating a fact.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I take the interjection from the minister, who is saying that there are issues of integrity, for example, in the thoroughbred industry, and that is why we are here tonight so passionate about this industry. I have loved country racing. It is one of the main issues that I campaigned on in 2011 and 2012. When I took on the role as local member one of my priorities was to support the rebuilding of country racing and it was wonderful to feel that positivity and excitement back in the sector. My electorate has so many country race meetings. I have already talked about Kumbia. Kilcoy has the great Anzac Day meet on this Sunday. Esk has its meet on 7 May. The Nanango and Burrandowan Picnic Races are on the same day as the Crows Nest show which is the following Saturday. These are all run by dedicated volunteers who do a suburb job. I should also mention the two little race clubs that are Bell and Wondai, because the Wondai Digger Club has its race meeting on this coming Monday.

Sadly, since the Labor government was elected all I have seen is the return of concern, angst and worry amongst this wonderful industry. We have seen an industry that feels so worried about its future that it has had to form a new group—the Queensland Racing Unity Group. This group has held countless meetings and rallies and it is fighting tooth and nail to save its industry. The group is ably led by Mr Ian McCauley and Mr Con Searle, both constituents of the Nanango electorate. I am proud to have such dedicated, committed and passionate people representing the concerns of the racing sector and I want to publicly congratulate them for how hard they and their group have worked to establish the Queensland Racing Unity Group to bring together the industry to fight various attacks by this government.

The member for Mermaid Beach in his speech talked about the politics in the racing industry. Over Christmas that group whom I just talked about held their rally at Doomben. That rally was incredible. All three codes were at that rally. It was wonderful to see the unity of those codes in rallying against these changes that this Labor government is planning to introduce. One of the flyers that this group sent out states, 'Why does the Queensland government hate the racing industry?' This group has used the strong word 'hate' because that reflects how strongly it feels. They have asked us not to support this bill, because it was drafted without any consultation with the greyhound, harness or thoroughbred racing sectors. They have asked us not to support this bill, because it gives extraordinary policing powers to the proposed commission's own laws with individuals and entities subject to adverse findings denied access to common law. They have asked us not to support this bill, because the cost of the commission's functions is to be funded mainly by the racing industry. They have asked us not to support this bill, because it removes racing participants from the operational control over their own industry.

I have also received correspondence from the Somerset Regional Council, which specifically wrote to me about this bill. The Somerset Regional Council felt so strongly that this bill must be voted down that it spoke about it at its general meeting on 10 February. Councillor Bob Whalley noted the following—

As a councillor with a keen interest in growing our economy which in turn strengthens the social fabric of our Somerset region, I feel compelled to speak out.

Our region is home to thousands of horses, standard bred pacers, thoroughbred gallopers and greyhound dogs whose owners and trainers, service providers, feed suppliers and local farmers will be directly affected by the merit, or lack of merit, of the Queensland Racing Integrity Bill.

The Bill in its present form must be defeated. The Bill provides for a lopsided seven member board and an independent chairman who do not have any industry experience! Legislation does not allow for the separation of the three codes, but if this Bill is passed it will kill off separation altogether, and this will have dire consequences for all racing codes, in turn affecting the region enormously.

The proposers of the Bill are very mischievous in their approach, saying a vote against the Bill is a vote against integrity, but the devil is in the detail. We all want integrity for each code, but this Bill needs to be amended, revised or thrown out! The present proposal is fundamentally wrong and will be detrimental to the codes and the lion's share of the stakeholders do not want it!

Governments are elected to represent the people, consult—

and we have seen in the House tonight that this government does not do that—

and make the fairest decision possible in the interest of the people involved. I ask, is the Palaszczuk government really listening and representing the best interests of the racing codes? I think not!

I do not think that anyone can sum up this legislation better than Councillor Bob Whalley. The racing industry does not deserve this sort of treatment. This bill is not the result of consultation with the industry. This bill has shattered the confidence of the racing industry and must not be allowed to be passed.