




Speech By
Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Record of Proceedings, 20 April 2016

RACING INTEGRITY BILL

 **Mr BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (12.28 am): Tonight I rise to speak in support of the Racing Integrity Bill. I find it ironic that the member for Currumbin can stand here and talk about the Queensland racing board not having enough members from the racing industry on it but can say that my involvement in the committee can be seen as biased because I have an interest in a racehorse. Isn't that ironic? I believe that it is the total opposite. I believe that my involvement in racing and racehorses enabled the committee to make a more comprehensive report. To say that a committee chair cannot ask witnesses to make a brief opening statement is ridiculous. Witnesses are allocated a certain time in which to make a brief opening statement and then the committee members are given an opportunity to ask witnesses questions. That is why witnesses are asked to make a brief opening statement. That is common practice in most committees.

Mrs STUCKEY: I rise to a point of order. I find the member's comments untrue and offensive. I ask him to withdraw.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! I ask the member to withdraw.

Mr BUTCHER: I withdraw. Although the committee could not agree on whether the bill should be passed, I acknowledge the work of the committee in the formulation of this report. I would also like to like to acknowledge the previous chair of the committee, the member for Ipswich, Jennifer Howard, and the temporary chair, the member for Logan, Linus Power, for their work on this bill to reach the point at which I, as the new chair of the committee, could finalise the report and table it. I would also like to thank the committee secretariat, Mr Rob Hansen, Mr Paul Douglas, Ms Maureen Coorey and Ms Carolyn Heffernan, for their work in the preparation of this report.

I stand here tonight as the chair of the Agriculture and Environment Committee, as the member for Gladstone and as a participant in the racing industry to outline the reasons I support the passage of this bill and how I believe that it will strengthen the industry and assist in moving it forward. I believe that tackling the integrity issues in this industry is paramount to its continued success. I have two children aged 18 and 21 and they love going to the local races at Ferguson Park on a Saturday with my wife and me. I sincerely hope that they have the same opportunity to attend the races with their children in the future as I did with my father and my twin brother.

I understand that integrity issues in the sport seriously risks people's livelihoods. The government accepts that and will work with the industry to make sure that those who are doing the wrong thing are found and are dealt with so as not to damage the good work of others in the industry. With wagering, public confidence is an essential element of the financial success of the racing industry. When a punter places a bet on a Queensland Ubet terminal, a portion of that money goes to fund the operation of the industry. If integrity is compromised within the sport, it compromises wagering activity and, therefore, compromises the sport. It is because I am a racing industry participant that I wish to see this bill passed.

There has been much industry discussion around consultation on this bill. I wish to address that consultation, but also acknowledge some confusion around the *Tracking towards sustainability* report, the commercial decisions of Racing Queensland and its relevance to this bill. Alan MacSporran in his report presented a list of industry stakeholders with whom he met during the commission of inquiry. That document provides the structure for this bill. There were 74 stakeholder meetings in areas including Townsville, Cairns, Mackay and Brisbane.

I was the chair of the committee that considered the submissions to this bill. There was a committee hearing, which I did not chair, at which verbal submissions to the bill were made by members of the industry and recommendations were made to the committee. The recommendations in the report on this bill were accepted by the government and one was accepted in part. I thank the minister for that. I believe that, since being sworn in as minister, the Minister for Racing and member for Brisbane Central has had over 35 stakeholder meetings. Consultation on this bill has occurred, suggestions have been made by the industry, and they have been adopted by this government.

Another element of this bill that I wish to speak to is the composition of the all codes board. I note the committee's support of the composition of this board. The committee acknowledges the concerns raised by submitters to the inquiry about the membership of the Racing Queensland Board and the exclusion of racing industry members from holding the position of chair or deputy chair. The committee also acknowledges the findings of the commission of inquiry and the ASX Corporate Governance Council guidelines that support the predominance of non-industry members on the board as proposed in the bill. The committee was satisfied that the number of racing industry members on the board would be sufficient to ensure that the board is well informed of industry perspectives on issues while the remaining board members will provide critical expertise to ensure that the board operates effectively to discharge its responsibilities and provide strong strategic leadership to the racing industry.

With the separation of the integrity functions from the commercial body, Racing Queensland will be provided with the perfect opportunity to focus on making the racing industry more sustainable. Previously, managing both the integrity functions and the commercial aspects of the industry had been a challenging task for Racing Queensland. Therefore, the opportunity to split the functions and to have Racing Queensland focus solely on the commercial elements of the racing industry should strengthen its financial capacity.

The final aspect of the bill that I wish to address is the additional powers given to authorised officers, mainly with respect to the protection of racing animals. We must ensure that racing animals across all three codes are protected and this bill seeks just to do that. I was as outraged as many of us when we saw what happened just over 12 months ago with the live-baiting scandal. The government acted fast and we now have legislation before the House. I commend the former racing minister, Mr Bill Byrne, for acting swiftly to protect this industry. The increased powers for authorised officers will assist in discovering animal welfare breaches early, protect our animals from suffering further abuse and prevent abuse occurring at the outset. Last weekend I attended the Weetwood race meeting in Toowoomba—

An honourable member: You won it.

Mr BUTCHER: I will take that interjection. I am a member of the syndicate that owns the horse that won the Toowoomba Cup. I point out to the member who spoke before me that we own only 10 per cent of that horse. There are 10 members of that syndicate. My interest in this awesome racehorse, Honey Toast, is one per cent, which I think is the nose. I am a proud member of the racing industry in Queensland and I want to see this industry grow.

Whilst at that race meeting I met undoubtedly Australia's best trainer, Peter Moody. For those who do not know this gentleman, Peter Moody was the trainer of one of racing's greatest horses, Black Caviar. Unfortunately, Peter has been charged with offences relating to high levels of cobalt in one of his horses. Cobalt is outlawed because it is toxic. Racing authorities around the world are united in banning cobalt. Since 2013, racing jurisdictions have been setting cobalt threshold levels. Peter's story is one of the main reasons that I support this bill. It is the reason that the integrity side of the industry needs to be separate from the racing side of the industry. All punters expect the greyhound, harness or thoroughbred that they bet on to have an equal chance of winning on a level playing field, including the way the animals are trained and the way they are raced.

There is no doubt that there are alternative opinions in the industry, but I congratulate those who have worked with the government on this bill that we are debating this evening. For those who believe in integrity in sport, who want to see our racing animals protected and who want to see good financial outcomes for Racing Queensland, I suggest, as I am doing so tonight, that they commend this bill to the House.