




Speech By  
**Jennifer Howard**

**MEMBER FOR IPSWICH**

---

Record of Proceedings, 21 April 2016

**RACING INTEGRITY BILL**

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (8.26 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Racing Integrity Bill 2015. Shortly after the Palaszczuk government was elected by the people of Queensland in January last year a scandal broke out in the greyhound racing industry, a scandal which required immediate attention, a scandal about the horrendous and inhumane practice of live baiting.

This government takes the issue of animal welfare very seriously. As an animal lover and supporter of animal rights, I was pleased to see the government act swiftly to establish the Queensland Greyhound Racing Industry Commission of Inquiry. I was also comforted by the speed with which the Queensland Police Service took action against those who were flouting the law and inflicting pain and suffering on animals in the name of their sport. The Queensland Police Service and RSPCA's joint Greyhound Racing Inquiry Task Force undertook considerable investigations under the relevant animal welfare legislation into all allegations of mistreatment. Those alleged to have taken part in acts of animal cruelty were thoroughly investigated and I understand many were brought before the courts. My own electorate of Ipswich was not immune to these acts of cruelty. In February this year one trainer pleaded guilty before the Ipswich Magistrates Court to 15 counts of animal cruelty. This man was featured in the ABC *Four Corners* program last year, which turned a spotlight on the unimaginable activities in the greyhound racing industry.

Like many in Queensland, I was appalled by what I saw but I was also buoyed by the public's response to these outrageous acts. I was buoyed by the fact that this government did not stand by and ignore what had obviously been happening in the industry for years. We acted immediately to investigate the practices of the industry and to see what could be done to remedy transgressions. Naturally, I was also pleased to read the recommendations of the commission of inquiry when its report was handed down in June last year. These significant recommendations lay the foundation for the future structure and management of the industry after self-regulation clearly failed to prevent animal cruelty. This government took decisive action. We immediately accepted all recommendations and introduced the bill currently before the House in December last year. I commend the previous minister for racing and the current Minister for Racing for their staunch support to ensure this industry lifts its game. I also commend both ministers and the committee for the work undertaken to ensure community and industry consultation was extensive and inclusive. My standing down as chair of the committee was just prior to the referral of this bill. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the member for Logan, who stepped in as acting chair and executed the role extremely well.

This bill forms part of the broader racing industry reforms being introduced by this government across the spectrum of the industry. I understand the main focus of this bill before the House is the implementation of recommendations 1 to 3 of the commission of inquiry's report. The new frameworks proposed by the bill are necessary for the ongoing protection of animals involved in racing. We have a responsibility as sports lovers to ensure that any animals used for the purposes of our entertainment are treated fairly and humanely.

We all know there are many, many hundreds of people working in the racing industry for whom this bill is unnecessary—many, many hundreds of good people out there who love their animals and have worked hard to maintain the integrity of their sport. One thing that both *Four Corners* and the commission of inquiry found was that despite the good efforts of a number of people there are some bad operators out there, and existing animal welfare laws did nothing to prevent these people from performing horrible acts for commercial interests. Once enacted, the Racing Integrity Bill will provide certainty to participants in the industry about their requirements. It will also restore public confidence in the racing industry.

In response to the findings that self-regulation did not work in this industry, the bill will establish the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission, a separate independent authority to Racing Queensland, which will oversee integrity and animal welfare. The QRIC will have its own powers and functions separate from any government department, and this level of independence is crucial to ensure that animal welfare is removed from the business operations of the racing industry. It is evident that a conflict can occur when compliance relating to the integrity of animal welfare and commercial interests are combined. The newly created commission will eliminate any potential conflict between commercial interests and the interests of animals. The standards, which will be set by the QRIC, are for the good management of the code of racing in the context of welfare and integrity. In the case of welfare, these standards will address certain risks associated with racing and ensure that an acceptable level of safety is provided for animals racing throughout Queensland.

It is envisaged that over time the QRIC will make standards for integrity and welfare matters. Naturally, to do this the commission will need to work with Racing Queensland and venues and individual clubs, vets and anyone involved in the racing industry to ensure these standards are sustainable and practical. I am also assured that some of the reforms being introduced will be reviewed after 12 months to assess their impact on animal welfare. This is good news for the industry. This review means that the government has not only consulted on the development of the reforms but is prepared to listen to the industry after 12 months of implementation. This review is good public policy.

By taking these actions the government will restore public confidence in the racing industry. We have ensured that high standards of animal welfare are at the top of our agenda. We listened to the public outcry last year and we took action. This bill forms part of the broader racing industry reforms being introduced by this government across the spectrum of the industry. This government is not only committed to maintaining public confidence in the racing industry in Queensland but it is also committed to the thousands of jobs and careers the racing industry provides.

In my own electorate of Ipswich the Ipswich Turf Club provides employment opportunities for my constituents in hospitality, racing and gaming, groundskeeping and event management. I recently met with the chairman of the Ipswich Turf Club board, Wayne Patch, and the CEO, Brett Kitching, to listen to some of their concerns and to talk about the work they are doing in their industry and for the community. They have some great plans for their club and the future of racing in Ipswich. The Ipswich Turf Club is the predominant midweek race club in Queensland and this year its signature event, the Ipswich Cup, celebrates its 150th year. We are looking forward to welcoming the member for Gladstone's horse Honey Toast, and hopefully some of my colleagues will be in attendance as well. This is a great milestone for a country race club. They worked hard to build this race meet up to be one of the best in regional Queensland. I commend them for their efforts, and I look forward to attending the cup race day on 18 June. There will be other significant events to commemorate the 150th birthday.

This government is determined to ensure that racing in Queensland has the confidence of the public and has integrity in terms of the management and welfare of all animals. For these reasons I am proud to support the Racing Integrity Bill 2015.