




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MACKAY

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RACING INTEGRITY BILL

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (12.36 pm): I rise to support the Racing Integrity Bill 2015. This is an important bill. It protects the welfare of animals within the industry and also gives integrity and confidence to the racing industry. As the member for Burnett mentioned earlier, the industry needs to have stability and security, and that is what this bill will give them. The racing industry is a vibrant industry in Queensland. It provides thousands of jobs. The racing industry is intertwined with hundreds of small businesses in rural Queensland. The racing industry is an important economic and social element in Queensland. It is reported that the industry contributes about \$85 million to the state's economy and employs approximately 30,000 Queenslanders in the industry's three codes of thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing.

The racing industry was tainted by its lack of integrity and the live-baiting scandal in the greyhound industry. No-one wants to see the abuse of animals in industry. This bill will put protections in place for all licensed animals within the racing industry. Change is difficult within industry. There has been some strong opposition voiced from sectors within the racing industry, and we saw this throughout the inquiry. The status quo cannot continue if this industry is going to continue to grow, thrive with confidence and have the confidence of the community.

This bill's objectives are to establish a new Queensland Racing Integrity Commission which is responsible for the management of animal welfare and integrity matters within the racing industry. It will amend the Racing Act 2002 to reform the structure of the Queensland All Codes Racing Industry Board, including renaming the board as the Racing Queensland Board; dissolve the three individual racing code boards, the Racing Animal Welfare Integrity Board and the Racing Disciplinary Board; and amend the Care and Protection Act 2001 to provide improved information-sharing capacity and broaden authorised officers' powers to investigate and respond to animal welfare matters and breaches of the act which are related to the racing industry.

The committee took the issues of animal welfare very seriously and has recommended that clause 10(1)(l) of the bill be amended to broaden the commission's functions to include the promotion of animal welfare and the prevention of animal cruelty and that the function must include the provision of training to racing industry participants in these areas. It also recommended amending clause 68(3)(b) to stipulate that a licence application cannot be granted for an entity whose executive officer has a prior conviction for an animal cruelty offence in Queensland or another state.

Never again do Queenslanders want to see another episode of the ABC *Four Corners* program 'Making a Killing' being played out in our state. The uncovering of the alleged cruelty to animals through live baiting in the greyhound industry resulted in the Queensland Greyhound Racing Industry Commission of Inquiry. Commissioner MacSporran identified a significant loss of public confidence in the greyhound industry. He uncovered other animal welfare issues affecting greyhounds and other animals used for live baiting. The commissioner also highlighted the failure of self-regulation in the

industry to safeguard animal safety and welfare. This failure extended across all racing codes. He pointed out that there was a failure to manage risks by Racing Queensland, linked to inherent conflicts of interest in the industry's governance. Commissioner MacSporran reported that the live baiting could not have been engaged in without so many standing by—those who were not directly involved but who would have had to turn a blind eye.

This bill proposes to amend the functions and responsibilities of the racing control bodies and establish comprehensive corporate governance measures for the Queensland racing industry. There will be a new internal review process for administrative decisions made under the Racing Integrity Act relating to accredited facilities and processes for dealing with samples following race meets.

There was confusion on the part of some submitters, who believed that prize money and the number of race days would be cut. There are no provisions in this bill to make those changes. Prize money and the timetabling of race meets are not covered in this bill.

Some submitters were concerned that clauses 30 and 31 of the bill would remove industry participants from influencing decision-making for their particular code of racing. They believed that boards would be devoid of any current industry experts, with corporations put in place. This is not the case. The bill does not propose to appoint corporations as control bodies for thoroughbred, greyhound or harness racing. Queensland Racing will be the established control body under the amendments to the act. The approved corporations under the bill will be approved by the minister for new codes of racing. They will require a new corporation to be established when new codes emerge.

The making of standards for codes of racing also concerned some submitters. They were concerned that the code would not be suitable, with a one-size-fits-all standard for clubs—that the small country tracks would be disadvantaged and not be able to meet the same standards as the large metropolitan tracks. They believed that the bill did not recognise the range of circumstances under which racing takes place. They were concerned that country racing would be eliminated under this bill.

Advice from the department clarifies that the bill provides for the commission to set standards relating to animal welfare and integrity. The commission will work with industry and stakeholders to set standards. The commission has the ability to set standards that address animal welfare risk associated with racing and to ensure that acceptable levels of safety are provided throughout Queensland. The application of standards will not require all clubs to be the same, so there is no intention to exclude any size club from racing.

The new laws will have the ability to require the lifting of infrastructure and change procedures at tracks to improve animal welfare and safety. There will be a need for individual clubs, vets and other participants to work with control bodies to develop standards and licences that are both workable and represent best practice.

Country racing is steeped in tradition across the length and breadth of Queensland. In some communities, country race meets are the social lifeblood that brings the community together. Some of the country's race meetings in small centres are famous. The Birdsville race meeting, for example, brings tourism opportunities to the regions. I think I read somewhere the other day that it is already booked out. The Palaszczuk government is committed to country racing, aware that it provides jobs in regional communities. It does bring communities together.

On 3 December 2015 the government released a financial recovery plan, *Tracking towards sustainability*, after extensive consultation with industry during August and September 2015. This program commits a further \$21 million over four years to ensure racing in the regions continues. The funding will be directed towards supplementing the amended prize money structure for country racing. It will also be used to help country race clubs build capacity to improve their long-term financial position. The plan contains initiatives and strategies for Racing Queensland to operate a surplus from 1 July 2016. The government believes that financial recovery should not be to the detriment of country racing.

The racing industry is important to Mackay. The Mackay Cup will be held on 2 July. It is one of the most important race meetings in the Mackay calendar—a big TAB meeting. A big meeting like this helps the Mackay club keep financial. It also provides a great social day on the calendar of tourist events in Mackay. We hope we will be lucky enough to see Honey Toast make a start in the race.

When I recently visited the Mackay Turf Club with Minister Grace, the board members expressed their thanks to the Palaszczuk government for the support we have given the turf club. They are really pleased with the upgrades to the track. I believe we have spent over \$7 million upgrading the Mackay track. They were absolutely horrified when Campbell Newman announced to them when they were having difficulties that his plan was to sell it off. They are very pleased that the Palaszczuk government has saved their club. The Palaszczuk government supports the racing industry in Queensland—

Mr Dickson interjected.

Mrs GILBERT: I am not misleading the House. I should have recorded it; it was brilliant. I thank my fellow committee members for their work. They all worked very hard on this bill. I also thank the past acting chair, the member for Logan. I especially thank him for his support and commend him for the efficient and professional way he led the public hearings here in the chamber—a job well done. I thank the parliamentary support team, Rob and Paul, for their support. I also thank the minister for clarifying in her second reading speech the issues the committee had. That gives me a lot of confidence in commending this bill to the House.