




Speech By
Tony Perrett

MEMBER FOR GYMPIE

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RACING INTEGRITY BILL

 **Mr PERRETT** (Gympie—LNP) (10.02 pm): I rise to speak on the Racing Integrity Bill 2015. This bill is flawed. It is really about a political campaign by the Labor Party to create problems in the regions. It had its genesis in the live-baiting excesses of the greyhound industry. However, in a heavy-handed way, the government has jumped in to damage the reputation of all the racing industry with the same level of suspicion. It will introduce a bureaucratic board to oversee all three codes, with little input from those who know the industry—a board which will probably compromise a union official and some hangers-on circling around ministerial offices. If this was about cleaning up or providing better governance, there would not be so many recommendations asking the minister to either answer or clarify what was intended. There are a lot of proposals with very little evidence to support why they are needed.

I speak as someone who represents a regional community which has a strong culture in support of local racing. Gympie is also home to many horse based activities, including campdrafts, rodeos, pony clubs, riding for the disabled, a school based equestrian program and Hope Reins, a program which connects horses with people who are experiencing difficulties.

Gympie has a vibrant racing culture. It provides economic activity in the racing and horse management industry, it draws visitors and tourists on special days and it promotes an uplifting atmosphere in the town which comes together for these events. The Gympie Turf Club has been conducting race meetings in Gympie for well over 100 years. The first meetings were held during the gold rush days of the late 1860s. Today it hosts nine race days a year, with iconic meetings including the Nolan Gympie Muster Cup and the Nationwide Civil Gympie Cup. As mentioned earlier by the member for Warrego, one of those race days is on the first Tuesday in November and it actually features camels. While the thoroughbreds run clockwise, there is an odd camel that believes they should run anticlockwise.

Mr Costigan: Two humps or one?

Mr PERRETT: Only one. The Turf Club operates from a high-class facility which it shares with the Gympie show society. Racing is one of Queensland's iconic industries and an important part of the social fabric of many country communities. It employs around 30,000 people, supports more than 130 mostly community based clubs and venues across the state, and embodies enormous social value. This is especially true in regional and country areas. As the saying goes, the best races are in country places.

Country racing is the lifeblood of racing in Queensland. It is a breeding ground for our racing champions, where horses and jockeys get a start with the support of regional racing clubs, trainers, owners and supporters. We know that racing provides a vital social outlet for many regional Queenslanders. It supports jobs and provides cash flow for community groups, vets, produce stores and saddlers.

This flawed bill will have a wideranging effect on how racing is run in Queensland, and some sections of the racing industry have major concerns over the implications of this bill. It extends the powers of authorised officers by mirroring those powers given to authorised officers and inspectors under the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001, the ACPA, in relation to powers of entry, seizure and the issuing of an animal welfare direction. It inserts new information-sharing powers with the ACPA which are mirrored in the proposed Racing Integrity Act. It has created serious concerns within the three codes of thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing about the proposed seven-person board's capacity to govern them.

It is concerning that an inquiry that started out as a result of animal cruelty has created a need to seek amendments to broaden the commission's function to include the promotion of animal welfare, the prevention of animal cruelty and the provision of training to the racing industry. It creates serious concerns about the establishment of a new Racing Integrity Commission, which dissolves the existing arrangements and separates the integrity functions of Racing Queensland into a new separate body.

The proposed racing industry integrity commission is projected to be a highly expensive operation with staff, accommodation and associated bureaucracy involving multimillions of dollars in expenditure. It is concerning that, in times of economic restraint, it is estimated to cost between \$16 million and \$20 million per year, whereas current integrity arrangements are estimated to cost approximately \$8 million per year. It is concerning that the cost to implement the proposed bill remains unanswered by the department even after several attempts by the committee to seek clarification of this important issue, with the department deflecting the issue back to the minister. It is seriously concerning that the committee investigating the bill raised concerns and flagged many possible amendments on every recommendation. This can leave no doubt that the bill is flawed and it should not be passed.