



Speech By
Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

Record of Proceedings, 21 March 2018

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Eagle Farm Racecourse; Racing Industry

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (10.04 am): Mr Speaker, I am fed up. As I rise in this House today—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Minister, please resume your seat. Members to my left, I find your interjections to be quite childish.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: As I rise in this House today, the jewel in Queensland's thoroughbred racing crown sits idle at Ascot in the electorate of the member for Clayfield. Owners, trainers, jockeys and the racing public are all being denied an opportunity to participate in the wonderful experience that is racing at Eagle Farm. That facility—a 150-year-old Queensland icon—has been out of action for far too long. There have been too many excuses from Racing Queensland and others, too little clarity about what exactly are the impediments to finishing the job, and, quite frankly, too little clarity on what it will take to ensure that the track at Eagle Farm is once again ready for racing.

As racing minister, one of my very first actions was to seek assurances from Racing Queensland that the organisation had this sorry matter in hand. I asked whether the track would be ready for the Winter Carnival. 'Possibly', was the answer. Faced with such uncertainty and knowing the impact a wrong decision would have on trainers' preparation for the Winter Carnival, I supported Racing Queensland's decision to once again hold the Winter Carnival at Doomben. Twelve weeks on, with 700 metres of track still not laid, the prospects of Eagle Farm being ready for racing in spring appear slim. And that is simply not good enough.

Today I stand in this House and say that it is time for the blame-shifting and finger-pointing to end in favour of working together. This sorry saga is trying my patience and the patience of the racing industry, while causing serious angst for Eagle Farm's neighbours. They have borne the brunt of too much noise, dust and smells, and they have my sympathy.

In ongoing discussions with Racing Queensland chair Steve Wilson, I directed him in the strongest terms to do whatever it took to see Queensland's most significant racing facility once again operational. The ball is now firmly in the court of Racing Queensland. I have demanded weekly briefings from the board on the progress being made with the track remediation and I have also directed RQ to keep the industry fully informed.

Despite my frustration, there is also good news for an industry that employs tens of thousands of Queenslanders and contributes \$1.2 billion to the state's economy. Working with the Palaszczuk government, RQ has completely turned around the organisation's finances and, as a consequence, improved the industry's long-term prospects. It has worked with the government to put together the immensely popular \$70 million country racing package. It has overseen significant prize money increases, making Queensland more competitive. I will finish by saying just one thing: fix the track!