




Speech By
Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

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CORRECTIVE SERVICES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (12.32 pm): I rise in support of the Corrective Services and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. The bill includes amendments to the Racing Integrity Act 2016 to relocate section 98A. I thank the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services for allowing the bill to carry this important clarification. Section 98A allows the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission, QRIC, to enter into information-sharing arrangements with other relevant agencies to assist with investigation and compliance activities.

The current location of this provision may be interpreted as being restricted to information only about racing bookmakers and associates. However, the intent of this provision was for it to apply to all functions of QRIC. I think it is very important that we have that capacity in the legislation. This vital amendment clarifies this intent and removes any doubt or confusion.

The amendments contained in this bill give me the opportunity to speak about the exemplary work that QRIC have undertaken since the commission was established by the Palaszczuk government in 2016. Those opposite have been very quick to criticise QRIC but do so while being very selective about the facts. This gives me an opportunity to clarify some of those.

The member for Surfers Paradise tells all and sundry that QRIC's budget is far too big and that money is not being spent effectively. I can inform the member and the House that the reason QRIC has the budget it does is that the amount of work and the responsibility of QRIC are larger and broader than comparative jurisdictions. Doing comparisons with other jurisdictions is meaningless because they do not have the structure that we currently have.

Take, for example, the stewards on race day. In other states the stewards are not employed and paid for by the integrity arms. Comparing Victoria's racing apples with Queensland's racing oranges is not the way to do it. In 2018-19, QRIC staff supervised 1,571 meetings around Queensland. QRIC staff conducted nearly 20,000 animal samples over the same period. Are the opposition suggesting that we run unsupervised meetings or would the opposition, if in government, sharpen the LNP's axe and cut the number of meetings and cripple country racing? That seems to be the logical conclusion you would reach.

I also take this opportunity to bring to the attention of the House some of the figures that show how effective QRIC is in terms of the decisions it makes. The statistics for 2018-19 show that 1,525 decisions were made by QRIC staff. Of those, only 102 were subject to internal review. That is 96 per cent of original decisions standing as they were made. Only 40 of those 1,525 decisions were subject to an appeal to QCAT. Twenty-seven matters were finalised and QCAT found in favour of the applicant six times—so six out of more than 1,500 decisions were altered. Those opposite claim that there is some sort of crisis or failure of decision-making, yet that is 0.39 per cent of decisions being altered by QCAT!

The opposition need to come clean on a few things. What is their plan? What are they funding? Are they planning on dismantling QRIC or cutting their funding? Will they explain to Queenslanders in the racing industry how they plan to supervise their race meetings or is the real plan just to have fewer race meetings to supervise in the first place?

The last time those opposite were in power they left the racing industry in an appalling state, resulting in Eagle Farm being put out of action, the greyhound live-baiting scandal, the dissolution of all the racing boards and the control body being placed under administration. As the 2015 MacSparran inquiry into live baiting in the greyhound industry showed, the control body could not adequately assess and deal with risks to integrity and animal welfare and a new distinct authority needed to be established. This resulted in the creation of QRIC in 2016. Perhaps this is why the member for Surfers Paradise so fiercely attacks the good work of QRIC, as QRIC's successes are a continual reminder of the many failings of the Newman government.

As I have outlined, the Racing Integrity Act 2016 established the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission with the responsibility of imposing a strict integrity regime and implementing an agenda to keep racing animals safe on and off the track—a key recommendation of the 2015 MacSparran commission of inquiry into greyhound live baiting. When the act was first introduced into parliament, the government committed to review the act in response to the agriculture and environment committee's report on the Racing Integrity Bill 2015. The review was to include consultation with control bodies and industry regarding implementation issues associated with the new legislative regime.

I am pleased to advise the House that the racing industry and the community have had the opportunity to have their say through a public discussion paper, *Racing integrity reforms: review of the Racing Integrity Act 2016*. Consultation closed in August 2019. The discussion paper was viewed 746 times with 27 online responses, and seven written submissions were received. Shortly after the consultation on this discussion paper closed in October, the ABC 7.30 program aired 'The final race', outlining animal welfare practices on the after-career care of racehorses. The Palaszczuk government takes the responsibility for the welfare of animals at the heart of the three racing codes very seriously.

On 22 October the Premier acted immediately and announced an independent inquiry into the operations of abattoirs and other facilities accepting horses for slaughter and the management of retired racehorses in Queensland. The inquiry, known as the Martin inquiry, was headed up by retired District Court judge Terry Martin SC, with the support of equine veterinary surgeon and Australian Veterinary Association representative Dr Peter Reid. The final report of the Martin inquiry has been considered by the government, and all 55 recommendations have been fully supported, supported in part or supported in principle.

The Palaszczuk government has provided almost \$6 million to support the implementation of the recommendations. Racing Queensland and the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission are working to implement the Martin inquiry's recommendations into the management of retired thoroughbred and standardbred racehorses, including collaborating with QRIC to establish and govern a Queensland Off the Track program to retrain and rehome retired racehorses.

This is a new chapter in the racing industry for its 40,000 participants and the more than 830,000 people who go to the races each year. On 1 January 2020, Racing Queensland began implementing a one per cent prize money levy on thoroughbred and harness racing that will build better futures for Queensland's retired racehorses. This is vital to the continuing success of the racing industry, which pumps \$1.5 billion into the Queensland economy and sustains almost 11,500 jobs. Findings from the Martin inquiry that affect the Racing Integrity Act will also be addressed when changes to the Racing Integrity Review are considered.

QRIC has continued compiling those two significant pieces of reform work through the COVID-19 pandemic whilst also performing increasing compliance checks to help enforce the vigorous restrictions that Racing Queensland and QRIC put in place to enable patron-free racing to continue through the lockdown. I want to acknowledge and thank both Racing Queensland and QRIC for the amazing work they have done to support the industry through this challenging period. I am committed to ensuring that the commission's legislative powers are efficient and effective in delivering a robust integrity scheme for the Queensland racing industry. The amendment to the Racing Integrity Bill in this legislation will assist the ongoing and invaluable role the commission performs in overseeing integrity and welfare standards for racing animals and racing industry participants in Queensland.

While I am on my feet and we are hearing the debate going on around a range of other matters that are dealt with in the Corrective Services and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, I want to come to the matter of gel blasters. In the contribution prior to mine we heard the member for Lockyer say, 'Don't let their appearance fool you.' That is the very point. The grave danger, the great risk with this is that the very appearance of some of these gel blasters can fool people and cause great concern and great

fear. In his contribution the member for Lockyer said, 'Don't criminalise people who own these products by having a system of regulation around how they are kept and how they are held by people in the community.' If you use the same logic he would be saying you should dismantle the Howard legislation in relation to firearms, because I am absolutely certain that the owners of firearms in our communities are not all criminals. He has said that the fact there is a regulatory provision in place is making criminals of those people. That is clearly not the case and clearly not the intention of the government. I urge people to support the legislation before the House in the way that it supports and sustains public safety in our community.