




Speech By  
**Barry O'Rourke**

**MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON**

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Record of Proceedings, 25 October 2022

### **RACING INTEGRITY AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr O'ROURKE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (12.03 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Racing Integrity Amendment Bill 2022. The racing industry in Queensland is worth approximately \$1.2 billion annually and it is essential that we protect the integrity of this industry. We need to ensure that we have an industry that people can have confidence in and that the racing industry is held to the highest level of integrity. Whether someone is a horse owner, a trainer or a punter, they have to have trust that the racing business is free from corruption.

Racing plays a key role in Central Queensland. On an annual basis it contributes more than \$55 million to the local economy while providing more than 450 full-time jobs, so it is essential that we protect the integrity of this industry. Currently under the act a wronged person can request a review. The person can request an internal review of the steward's decision and then an external review by the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal, QCAT. Going to QCAT can take months and it is likely that a ruling will be made by a person with no or very limited knowledge of the racing industry. This is just a way to deliver a very delayed decision and a way of playing the system. Someone can spin this out for months before a suspension comes into place.

Within racing circles many have criticised this review process as being not fit for purpose for the rules of racing and a way to try to beat the system or, at a minimum, delay the process. Some of the concerns raised include the timeliness of decisions, the lack of racing expertise at QCAT and, as they say, abuse of the process where those before QCAT are able to continue to participate in the industry while the cases are drawn out due to the review processes. It can be some months before the case is finalised.

The Racing Integrity Amendment Bill 2022 will put in place an independent racing appeals panel to replace the internal and external review of the stewards' decisions under the rules of racing. The process will be streamlined to reduce the risk of abuse by ensuring that a review request must be lodged within three business days. Many of the decisions will be reviewed within a further seven business days, and in more serious cases the panel will finalise its review within 20 business days.

To ensure the integrity of racing, the panel chairperson will be required to have at least five years legal standing and, for most hearings, two members will be selected from a panel of people with racing or other relevant expertise. Most matters will be finalised by the panel. Appeals to QCAT would only be permitted on a question of law relating to the extent of a disqualification action of three months or more. Stays pending a QCAT appeals tribunal decision will not be available where the panel has determined the breach involved a serious risk to animal welfare, human safety or the integrity of racing. Through this new process, which is also consistent with other states, particularly New South Wales and Victoria, there will be a review system that will see most reviews finalised in a much reduced time and that is better suited to protecting the integrity and the reputation of the industry. The bill also makes a number of other minor changes.

Having been the part owner of a couple of racehorses, Isis Turbo and SookySooky La La, I know personally of the importance of having a racing industry with a very high level of integrity and one that people can feel confident in investing in. As I said previously, racing plays a big role in Central Queensland; it supports about 450 jobs. Callaghan Park in Rockhampton holds about 41 race meetings throughout the year and we have a couple of really big carnivals. That then has benefits for the rest of our community, whether that is people getting dressed up, buying new clothes or things like that. Then after the race day there are always activities in and around town. Making sure we have a racing industry that is of a very high standard is essential. It is great to see. I commend the bill to the House.