




Speech By
Mark Boothman

MEMBER FOR THEODORE

Record of Proceedings, 25 October 2022

RACING INTEGRITY AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Theodore—LNP) (12.25 pm): I rise to speak on the Racing Integrity Amendment Bill. This bill was referred to the committee on 24 February 2022. This is a very important bill because this affects a very important part of an industry in Queensland, especially in those rural areas where this industry is very important for bringing tourism out to those country towns. Therefore, it is critically important that we have a system put in place to ensure that there is fairness and integrity in the system itself. Whilst the committee only had six submitters who made comment on the bill, I want to highlight what the Australian Jockeys Association said. It stated that the original bill that was brought in had good intentions but was unworkable. The system that we brought in in Queensland was unique compared to other jurisdictions and it is quite ironic that we are now using pretty much a carbon copy of other jurisdictions to ensure that there are processes in place to bring fairness and accountability into this very important industry.

I want to talk about the objectives of the bill. One of the main parts of the bill is replacing the current internal and external review process for decision-making by racing stewards under the rules of racing with an independent panel. As the member for Surfers Paradise stated—and this is very important—the people on the independent panel should have some extensive racing knowledge to ensure that decisions are made in a timely manner and decisions are made very fairly for that industry. Most importantly though, it needs to ensure that decisions are finalised within a reasonable time frame. One of the biggest issues that we heard about through the committee process was the length of time that some decisions took. These decisions involve family businesses. These businesses were left in limbo. They were literally going to the wall.

The member for Surfers Paradise highlighted some of the instances where these individuals had to get out of the industry and seek other employment because what transpired destroyed them. At the same time there were individuals who were well versed at working the system and using stay notices, and the member for Southern Downs and the member for Surfers Paradise spoke about Ben Currie. I want to read into the *Hansard* record a press release from QRIC about what transpired. The first paragraph states—

The Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal ... granted Toowoomba Trainer Ben Currie a stay of proceedings against a February 18 2019 Stewards decision to refuse to accept nominations of horses trained by Currie Racing.

He received a stay notice. It was proven by video that he was giving substances to horses yet he was still allowed to participate, as the member for Southern Downs highlighted, for about 2½ years.

Mr Krause: So much for integrity!

Mr BOOTHMAN: I take that interjection. For 2½ years this individual was able to participate in race meets because QCAT gave him stay notices. As the member for Surfers Paradise highlighted, it is important that we have experienced, independent people on these tribunals to ensure that this type of behaviour does not happen again. For 2½ years this individual continued to operate, yet other people who were not as unethical as he was or who were innocent of their crimes had their careers destroyed.

We need to ensure this never happens again. The LNP will not be opposing this bill. It is four years overdue. This is critically important for the continuation of race meets and the integrity of the racing industry in Queensland. As I stated, it is critically important that we have strong regional race meets. I commend the minister for this legislation. We need to ensure that we have strong race meets because these are on the tourism calendar throughout Queensland.

As the member for Everton highlighted, the number of individuals participating in race meets is about 43,000 people and they employ about 13,500 individuals. It is a big industry and we need to ensure that it goes forward stronger than ever. The committee made six recommendations. The member for Redlands highlighted those recommendations and I will not go over them. I feel we have taken a long time to get to the position we are in at the moment—four years. We should have acted a lot sooner. The member for Surfers Paradise highlighted the harrowing stories of real people whose lives were destroyed by a system that did not work. It should never have been implemented. Looking at best practice in other jurisdictions, why did we not implement a system like theirs, similar to what we have in this legislation? This is long overdue. This situation should never have happened. This legislation will correct the wrongs of the past, but for those families who have been destroyed there is not much justice.