




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Agriculture and Environment Committee, Report

 **Mrs STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (7.45 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Agriculture and Environment Committee's consideration of the Appropriation Bill 2015. May I thank the committee for permitting me to attend. The estimates process for 2015 was, according to this already arrogant Labor government, going to be an open and transparent exploration of the state budget, but it was more of a truth evasion exercise by an incompetent sport and racing minister. The racing service area objective is to 'maintain public confidence and ensure the integrity of the Queensland racing industry', but nothing could be further from the truth. Right now the industry is in limbo. The minister has no plan. He had upstanding individuals sacked by phone calls from staff and sacked his own DG. Revelations of abhorrent live-baiting practices in the greyhound racing industry led to the Queensland greyhound commission of inquiry. They had to be investigated swiftly and stopped. However, it is little wonder that wagering revenue was not increasing because right from the start the member for Rockhampton savaged the entire Queensland racing industry and its reputation, continually talking it down and refusing to meet with stakeholders—unless, of course, they were a Labor or union mate.

The unannounced online release of a discussion paper by the minister on the evening prior to the estimates hearing was another example of his ongoing determination to prevent disclosure of the figures that he is using to defend numerous negative statements he has made about the finances of Racing Queensland. It is therefore no surprise at all that respected industry commentators have scoffed at its merit and the loaded questions that it contains. When I asked if the minister would table the draft document shown to the interim CEO of Racing Queensland, Mr Hall, by the chief financial officer that purportedly reflected the size of the cost blowout, he tried to pass off the newly minted discussion paper as containing the financials and then point-blank refused to table the draft budget documents that Mr Hall used to accuse the former Racing Queensland board of massive cost blowouts. Despite the minister's comment at the hearings that 'every single piece of information we have has been made publicly available', it became clear that the minister and the government did not want Queenslanders to see these documents.

I am told of numerous Racing Queensland meetings being held around the state with racing industry stakeholders who are shown a PowerPoint presentation. But when they have asked to have a copy of what they have seen, the request is denied. In the parliament on 16 July the minister said—

Later today Mr Hall and I will be outlining in detail the current extent of the expected losses in Racing Queensland.

But he did not, did he? He put some figures on a graph and blamed them on somebody else. Why would he not hand the graphs to the media? Why would he not table them in public back then? What did he want to hide? Wasn't the truth of the matter that there was no budget document when the

former chairman and all three racing code boards were shown the door? Wasn't it the case that discussions were due to start with departments and agencies the following week?

I am not the only person who finds it highly suspicious that this government seized upon an opportunity presented by the greyhound live-baiting inquiry to tear down Racing Queensland. With the release today of Racing Queensland's 2014 annual report, now we know the reasons. The unqualified accounts show a \$23 million profit and some \$3 million in the bank, exposing this minister's and the Palaszczuk government's scandalous concerted agenda to discredit the former board. Sadly, the axe looks set to fall not only on country racing in Queensland with the four-year funding commitment set to end this year but also the future of our bookmakers and prize money facing a severe slash and burn. The LNP recognised that country racing is the lifeblood of so many regional communities across Queensland, but Labor does not.

The minister's aloofness about key areas such as the cost of transitioning Racing Queensland out of administration arrangements was unacceptable and his failure to answer important questions about the high cost of Mr Hall's services was inexcusable and highlights Labor's poor form in fiscal matters. Likewise, the minister's total lack of knowledge regarding costs incurred through the greyhound inquiry was unsatisfactory and withholding details in the questions taken on notice lacks integrity. Not only has Minister Byrne shown that he has no understanding of an industry that generates \$855 million but also he has eroded confidence, instilling in people a fear of losing their jobs and their livelihoods.