



Speech By
Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Queensland Racing

 **Mrs STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (12.45 pm): Under the Palaszczuk government, and under a minister who has frequently been described as invisible and incompetent, Queensland's racing industry has been unjustly and deliberately turned on its ear. Since the inquiry into live baiting in the greyhound industry, all we have seen from this Labor government is the creation of an environment of fear, intimidation and stagnation across all three racing codes: thoroughbreds, harness and greyhounds. Labor's handling of this inquiry has negatively impacted on the entire industry, as well as damaging our reputation across Australian racing circles.

This year's budget papers note the service area objective for racing is to—

Maintain public confidence in, and ensure the integrity of, the Queensland racing industry.

But where is a single shred of evidence that this objective is the objective of the minister and this government? Delay after delay has harmed Queensland's racing industry immeasurably. The first delay occurred in the calling of a commission of inquiry into live baiting in the greyhound industry, with the racing minister initially announcing a review, which had limited powers. Further delays occurred in appointing the Integrity Commissioner, as per the MacSporran report—recommendation No. 1, which was to create a new statutory authority QIRC as soon as possible with a full-time racing integrity commissioner. On 2 June this year, Minister Byrne said—

The first step is to start with a clean slate.

But instead, this minister accepted the appointment of a former chief steward of greyhounds to the position of acting head of integrity. Regardless of Mr Dart's capabilities, the fact remains that he oversaw an industry blighted by the live baiting issue. Why was this position not advertised? Why did the minister not open up the selection process where he might just have had some interest from experienced people from interstate or elsewhere? I ask members to look at what this minister did first. He had his staff sack all of the racing boards.

Recommendation No. 2 is for an all codes board to be established with seven members, four of them entirely independent of the racing industry. But what is not specified in Mr MacSporran's report is that three of the seven members must be women, which is what I am advised prospective board members are being told. The racing reform discussion paper has been slammed as poorly drafted and full of loaded questions.

Delays into hearing appeals of greyhound trainers caught up in the inquiry are unacceptable. It goes without saying that the practice of live baiting is abhorrent, but considering the result of a guilty finding would end careers and income for families, surely this process should have been done in a more timely manner. Months after lodging appeals, trainers still await their fate.

However, it is the ever-growing concerns of country racing stakeholders, who are worried sick about this government's threats to destroy it, that deserve urgent attention. This government simply cannot turn its back on country folk. Extra funding for tourism campaigns means very little if this government is giving with one hand and taking with the other. The 2015-16 budget papers state the provision of \$1 million to fund 20 additional country race meetings to contribute to regional economies and support the long-term sustainability of the industry. So just how do plans to cut the number of race meetings in regional areas support this statement?

Will the minister stand in this House and give a guarantee today that he will not cut any current country race meets? The LNP recognises the critical importance of these meetings, from economic and social benefits to the local jobs that they create. Most Queenslanders are well aware of the widespread and long-running drought facing many of our bush communities, stories of farmers destocking, water and stockfeed shortages and no income. Country race clubs tell me they fear this government plans to take the axe to country racing. Towns like Longreach, Emerald and Mount Isa are being forced to wait anxiously to learn their fate. Currently, over 270 meets take place each year, with more than 11,000 horses facing the starter, providing work for jockeys, trainers, stablehands, track work riders, fuel retailers, vets, feed merchants to name a few. Within the next 12 months the supposed \$28 million cost blowout in Racing Queensland's budget will be proven to be little more than a smokescreen for Labor's own agenda. The LNP had a plan to grow this industry, to proudly compete with other Australian states and to provide jobs, not to crush it to make cheap political points. The harm this minister and the Palaszczuk government have already inflicted is unforgivable, but what they intend to do in the future is even worse. Our jockeys too have legitimate concerns, as do breeders and other industry associates, as Labor plays out a divide, demean and conquer attitude towards all of them.