



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Queensland: Regional Racing

SPEECH

Thursday, 13 February 2003

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Entsch, Warren, MP

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Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources) (9.49 am)—I would like to bring to the House's attention a scandalous situation that is occurring right around Queensland at the moment in relation to the death of the regional racing industry. It was a very greedy decision made by the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board—a quango of the state government always looking to squeeze an extra dollar wherever they can—to reduce racing dates throughout regional Australia.

What prompted me to comment today was an article in my local paper, *The Cairns Post*, with the headline 'Race meet scrapped'. It said that the Chillagoe Turf Club, which was to hold a race meeting on 17 May, has decided to scrap the program for 2003-04, which effectively puts the club into recess, with the potential of closing down completely. It is a very old, established club which has played an important role in social interaction in that remote area. It will be shut down because of a decision made by the thoroughbred racing association to focus on the metropolitan areas to bring in the dollars. They are saying, 'Stuff the social fabric and that type of consideration—let's bring in more dollars.'

It is not just affecting regional areas. We have lost the Mount Surprise race meeting and we have lost the meetings at Coen and Georgetown. It also looks like we might have lost the one at Chillagoe. Race meetings at Laura, Mount Garnet and Oak Park are all very much at risk. And Cairns has gone from 38 race meetings a year down to 12. You can imagine the impact this is going to have on trainers and other people involved in the racing industry. It is absolutely ludicrous. In my view, it has come about because of mismanagement by yet another state government quango. Rather than deal with the real problems, they have set about shutting down race meetings in regional areas, with no consideration for these communities.

Once a year, these people come together for this race meeting at Chillagoe. The social fabric of their community is being decimated in the interests of the state government's beloved TAB, which wants to squeeze out a few more bucks. I am calling on the Queensland Thoroughbred Racing Board to stop this insanity. I call on the Queensland Minister for Tourism and Racing, Merri Rose, to get off her butt, challenge her quango, and tell them to stop this. It is not just about dollars; it is about the social fabric of these areas. She must get out there and do something about it before we lose the race club at Laura, which has been operating for over 100 years. That club operates in the middle of the mustering period so that a maximum number of people come together for the meeting once a year. That is not good enough for this mob in Brisbane who want everything for themselves; they want to squeeze it out. And the minister just sits on her behind and does absolutely nothing about it. (*Time expired*)