



Speech by

RACHEL NOLAN

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

Hansard 30 October 2002

RACING BILL

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (12.16 p.m.): Before I start, I also want to acknowledge Jennifer Howard and welcome her to the gallery.

I rise to speak briefly today about the Racing Bill and to perhaps put an alternative view to much that has been said during this debate. For months now, we have heard an almost incessant whine from the opposition about the potential impact that this bill and other changes to the racing industry will have on country racing clubs. The whine is only paused for the grubby rumour mongering that the members opposite have otherwise engaged in. The shadow minister has not for a moment paused to apologise for the corrupt and unsustainable administration of the racing industry by the previous National Party government and by Russ Hinze in particular.

Mr HOBBS: I rise to a point of order. I find the member's words offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mickel): Order! The member finds the words offensive. I am at a loss as to whether he is personally offended.

Ms NOLAN: I am sure he does. I withdraw.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member is personally offended.

Ms NOLAN: The members opposite have also failed to put up an alternative policy. For all the whingeing, for all the whining and for all the rumour mongering, the members opposite have never, ever come up with a better idea for the racing industry. There is a reason why they have not done that. The bottom line is that reform of the racing industry, and in particular this legislation that is before us today, is absolutely essential for the future of racing in Queensland.

Racing is not at all what it used to be. Racing is no longer a mass-attendance sport, and numbers at the weekly meetings are way down on what they once were. Racing relies not on attendance but on offcourse betting through TAB shops, the telephone and the Internet, and racing revenue comes not from gate takings but from the TAB and, to some extent, other revenue sources such as Sky Channel. Queensland racetracks compete for revenue with other forms of gaming and with more efficient industries interstate and, to some extent, overseas. If the industry is to avoid disappearing into its own navel, it must be transparently reformed. This bill is a significant part of that process.

The reform of the racing industry is having a significant impact on the Ipswich community. The Bundamba race track is in my electorate, and many of my constituents are employed in the industry or involved in the turf club. The Ipswich Turf Club is one of the real successes of Queensland racing. For many years it has been professionally managed as a business—not as a vehicle for grumpy old men's nostalgia. Unlike many clubs, it has returned an operating profit for the last 10 or 11 years and turns over about \$50 million a year. The club employs 12 permanent staff and 32 casuals, most of whom work on race days. The member for Clayfield spoke strongly yesterday of the successes of the QTC and the BTC. She should also be aware that the biggest race day in Queensland this year was Ipswich Cup Day. There were 22,500 people at Bundamba on Ipswich Cup Day, more than the attendance at Doomben for the whole winter racing carnival. The Ipswich Cup and the Bundamba race track are successes because they engage the community and because the community gets well and truly

behind them. At present, Ipswich holds 40 race meetings a year, although the club would like to hold around 55 and certainly has the capacity to do so. It is the committee's preference to specialise in holding the major metropolitan meet on Wednesday. The existing Wednesday meetings in Ipswich are a proven success and the club certainly has the capacity to hold more.

The Ipswich Turf Club is in a strong position to make the most of changes in the industry, because it has been well run by committee members like Ray Leschke and chairman Wayne Patch for many years. The club has been run with professionalism and probity by a group of people smart enough to look forward and not backward. There are some really nice people involved in racing in Ipswich. Jo-Ann Miller's uncle, George Kitching, is very much one of them. And those good people who support racing in Ipswich are very well led by the Ipswich Turf Club committee. The most important issue in this process of reform is that Queensland Racing continues to consult well and broadly with the stakeholders in the industry. To this point, that is happening. The Ipswich Turf Club is satisfied that it has a good relationship with Queensland Racing, and I am sure that that will continue. I am pleased that the Ipswich Turf Club is fully supportive of racing industry reform. I commend this bill to the House.
