



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

Motion

6 April 2017

GREYHOUND RACING INDUSTRY BAN ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) (12:59): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes Government advertisements claiming that greyhound racing is legal in only eight countries.**
- (2) Notes that information provided to Budget Estimates Committees shows that greyhound racing is conducted in 21 countries.**
- (3) Calls on the Government to be transparent and provide accurate information to the community about the details of the global and local greyhound industry.**

Last July Premier Baird ripped the heart out of many constituents of the Wallsend and Cessnock electorates—and across the State—when it was announced that the greyhound industry would be closed down permanently in July 2017. Without any proper consultation and with flimsy justification, people involved in the industry would have been stripped of their livelihoods. In my electorate, the closure of The Gardens racetrack would have cost the local economy \$17.69 million every year. More than 6,000 individuals are directly involved with the industry in one way or another. That is 6,000 people whose livelihoods would have been impacted by the captain's call.

The decision taken by the former Premier was indefensible. What is worse, Mike Baird spent more than one and a half million dollars defending a decision he

ultimately backed away from. That money should have gone to schools and hospitals, but the Government spent taxpayers' money on defending its own bad decision. In the Government-funded propaganda entitled "What's the real cost of greyhound racing?" the Government stated a number of reasons why industry reform was not a realistic option: the special commission found the animal welfare issues so significant and widespread, the resistance to implement reform so pervasive, and the ability to enforce reform so difficult, that it was highly unlikely the greyhound racing industry could be reformed.

The Government stated it was a position supported around the world, with commercial greyhound racing legally permitted in only eight countries. That is a blatant lie. On 6 October last year, at a supplementary budget estimates hearing, the Government's advertising claim that greyhound racing was legal in only eight countries was exposed as misleading. The Hon. Lynda Voltz, MLC, grilled bureaucrats from the Department of Justice about the Government's propaganda defending the greyhound racing ban and the statement that it was a sport that was legal in only eight countries. Under sustained questioning by Ms Voltz, Office of Racing Executive Director Micheil Brodie admitted that the information in the Government's advertising propaganda was incorrect and that greyhound racing was, in fact, conducted in 21 countries around the world. The Government's advertising was misleading and insulting.

A creative brief drafted by the Justice department's strategic communications director was obtained and published by the Daily Telegraph. It reported:

Take into account the intended audience of the advertisements. A large number of the target group potentially have low levels of literacy.

When Brenton Scott, the chief executive of the Greyhound Breeders, Owners and Trainers Association was interviewed by Guardian Australia, he stated:

I cannot recall a government ever using public funds to protest against a community like ours in this way, we have every right to be stating our position for maintaining the industry, and for the government to use public funds to come out and reinforce information which we have said is false, is outlandish, outrageous and unprecedented.

The hundreds of people that I spoke to during this debacle urged me to oppose the greyhound racing ban. They were compassionate, intelligent people who felt let down by the Government. It bewilders me that Mike Baird thought it was acceptable to spend one and a half million dollars justifying an unjustifiable decision. It seems the former Premier was operating under a set of alternative facts.

I call on the Government to be transparent and provide accurate information to the community about the global and local greyhound racing industry. How can it justify the misleading facts and condescending attitude of bureaucrats towards those involved in the industry? How can it justify spending one and a half million dollars vilifying thousands of honest, hard-working people who love their dogs and just want them to race?

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (13:25): In reply: I thank the member for Camden, the member for Campbelltown, the member for Wollondilly and the member for Cessnock for their contributions. I first point out that it takes about 35 minutes for six members to make contributions to debate on a notice of motion and for the mover to speak in reply. I will be looking carefully at the Government's actions in future. It seems its strategy has been to take away the opportunity for debate on motions that have been submitted early in the morning via hard work by moving motherhood motions that are more like community recognition statements. In future when members seek leave to speak on those motions I might start saying no, which is my right. We all deserve a chance to speak. This is supposed to be private members' time, but it does not always work that way.

The member for Camden made some good points but it was not one of his best speeches. It was rather rambling, which is not like him. I understand that Government members are sometimes uncomfortable eating humble pie on this issue. He acknowledged that advertisements are important for governments. I agree with him. However, if the Government is going to spend \$1.6 million of taxpayers' money on an advertising campaign it has the responsibility to make sure the campaign is accurate because the community will find the Government out.

The crux of my notice was about the accuracy of the campaign, and the Government was caught short. Government members have acknowledged that and I hope it does not happen again. The member for Cessnock is right: no government should waste taxpayers' money. It should make accurate and fair advertisements when necessary and not take the community for mugs as it sometimes has. The member for Campbelltown highlighted the debacle and said he believed the advertisement campaign was a complete waste of time and money. He acknowledged that the industry provides jobs, particularly in regional areas. My colleagues in the Chamber are from regional areas. We know it is important to keep jobs in our areas because it is darn hard to get industries to regional New South Wales.

The member for Wollondilly also spoke well and talked about the procedural matter of conscience votes. If Government members were allowed a conscience vote in this instance we might not have got this far and the Government would not be having to back-pedal. The benefits of conscience votes might be something for all of us to think about. The member for Wollondilly also acknowledged the number of ancillary businesses in the greyhound racing industry. We do not want to lose those jobs. The member for Cessnock spoke articulately as usual about the lack of truth in the advertisement campaign. I would go so far as to say it was propaganda. He called on all governments and oppositions to acknowledge the lessons learnt and said that sometimes we all need to take a deep breath. I thank members for a sensible debate. I know that they will support this motion.