



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

Bills – Second Reading

4 April 2017

GREYHOUND RACING BILL 2017

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) (17:12): I make a contribution to debate on the Greyhound Racing Bill 2017. At the outset, I acknowledge the members of the industry who are seated in the gallery and for whom it has been an extremely stressful nine months. We hope for a better and brighter future for them. When I first spoke about the greyhound racing industry I demanded an explanation for the Government's response to the McHugh report. What I got was an indefensible Liberal plan to shut the industry down. The McHugh report contained workable and sensible suggestions. It weeded out offenders—reprobates who brought shame on this good industry with their cruel and greed-fuelled practices. Mike Baird got it horribly wrong. Instead of seeking a simple solution to a complex problem, he banned the industry without any consultation.

It was impossible to make Mike Baird listen. Thousands of good Australians were thrown under the bus and their cries fell on deaf ears or went unheeded. However, a petition containing 37,000 signatures—which the community rallied to gather over a two-week period—got the Government's attention. The Government's response to the recommendations in the McHugh report involved an unprecedented misuse of \$1.6 million of public funds for advertising. That media brief insulted the intelligence of a vibrant and diverse community of dog breeders, racers and racegoers, and completely disregarded legislative and parliamentary practices, including the sidestepping of necessary peer review processes for all commissions and inquiries. It is a nice change to have this legislation in front of us, rather than the partisan extremism of the ban. I might, if I dare, even commend Mr Baird for admitting his Government's mistake. I may even thank the Government, under Premier Berejiklian's leadership, for tabling this legislation.

The bill marks the decision by the Government to acknowledge the pain and hardship that banning this industry would have caused to thousands of people—it has already caused stress. The bill acknowledges that the greyhound racing industry brings people together—be they trainers, punters or social members. More than 6,000 people in Wallsend alone will be very relieved that the industry on which their livelihoods are based will continue to exist beyond July 2017. Clause 11 of the bill states:

The principal objectives of the Commission are as follows:

- (a) to promote and protect the welfare of greyhounds,
- (b) to safeguard the integrity of greyhound racing and betting,
- (c) to maintain public confidence in the greyhound racing industry.

The heart of the problem lies in the "confidence in the greyhound industry". The banning of the greyhound industry in response to a story that appeared on the Four Corners program did more than just cause financial damage. The greyhound racing industry's social licence was damaged by the intolerable and unforgivable actions of a few rogue breeders and trainers. The Baird Government refused to implement the recommendations contained in the McHugh report by instating regulatory infrastructure, as this bill suggests, and chose instead to ban the industry outright. In so doing, the Government singlehandedly dismantled the greyhound racing industry's already damaged social licence. Clause 23 of the bill states:

The principal objectives of GRNSW are as follows:

- (a) to be a commercially viable entity,
- (b) to exhibit a sense of social responsibility by having regard to the welfare of greyhounds,
- (c) to promote greyhound racing in the State as a competitive and sustainable industry with a high of public trust.

That is what the people in the industry wanted and had been trying to implement when the report was handed down. At that time, local journalist Kat Ernst said:

The greyhound industry admits its faults, but right in the middle of reform we are shut down—just as the bad apples were being weeded out! The good people in this industry deserve a chance to show everyone that we love our dogs and treat them right!

She is right. As for a high level of public trust, how can the public trust a government that has spent well over \$1 million vainly attempting to gain public support with inaccurate and false information to defend its indefensible position? The Government then insulted and denigrated people in the industry by referring to them as "illiterate".

It painted them as incapable and unwilling to reform. The good men and women of the greyhound racing industry will continue to work hard to rebuild the public's trust after it was trashed by those opposite.

The greyhound racing industry is made up of ordinary people. Within our local greyhound racing industry and community are newsagents, plumbers, painters, plasterers, concreters, tilers, miners, upholsterers, mechanics and many others. They should not be demonised or set apart from anyone else. The Wallsend greyhound community are not stuck in the past; the people embrace change. These men and women were rightfully worried about what the previous Government's Twitter announcement would mean for them and their families. Our people were asking for a chance to be heard, a chance for our community's stories to be told. Too much was at stake for the Wallsend community and other regional communities as well. They did not want the Government to approach the industry with a closed mind.

I agree with the member for Maroubra, who made some very good points. He said that the Minister and the Treasurer must give the community and the industry a clear indication of their funding timetable, funding must be front-loaded rather than back-loaded and the industry needs a fair share of funding. I certainly agree with that. The member for Orange made a very good point and, like him, I do not want the industry to collapse. I am determined that this honourable industry thrives and survives. The Government must look at the Coonamble track. After living in Walgett for four years I know the Coonamble track well and want to see tracks like it survive. I am proud to have stood up and fought for the members of my community—particularly the Gardens at Wallsend—and look forward to working with them to ensure that we have a viable, socially responsible industry with a very high level of trust.