



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
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Bills - Second Reading Debate

18 September 2019

Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2019

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) :

In speaking on the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 reforms I reflect upon the announcement of former Premier Mike Baird in 2017 that the greyhound racing industry would be shut down within 12 months, which sent shockwaves through the Wallsend electorate. The Gardens greyhound track contributes a great deal to the local economy of Wallsend. Greyhound racing enthusiasts include representatives from all walks of life. The announcement endangered their hobby, their social network—the network that the member for Tweed mentioned—their livelihood, their way of life and their jobs.

Through large-scale community action, including a petition I launched which attracted 37,000 signatures in two weeks, we managed to halt that unfair knee jerk decision. Yes, there were bad apples in the industry, I agree—as in any industry—but the industry was making the effort to clean itself out and the people who loved their dogs and raced for fun were caught at the time in the Liberal Government's crosshairs. The entire community was denigrated and attacked for the barbaric and inexcusable actions of a few. We know that these monsters are criminals and should be treated as such, but they were not and never will be representative of the industry as a whole. Even the Government's expensive propaganda campaign at the time was insulting, with a creative brief drafted by the Department of Justice strategic communications director stating:

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

Now, two years and the resignation of a Premier later, I am glad to see that the Government is making efforts to ensure that the rest of the racing industry is brought into line with the expectations placed on the greyhound racing industry. I acknowledge that the industry's social licence was badly damaged by the revelations in a 2017 edition of Four Corners. I acknowledge that reform needed to come. I, and many supporters both internal and external to the industry, welcomed the powers granted to the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission to make sure that the industry complies with the law and community expectations. Steve Noyce, General Manager of the NSW Greyhound Breeders, Owners & Trainers Association, said:

Integrity—

which has been a word that has been used often today and is very important in respect of this bill—

is the not negotiable foundation for the on-going success of the entire racing industry and any steps to further enhance this component are fully supported.

We agree. I applaud the efforts to amend the Harness Racing Act and the Thoroughbred Racing Act to bring into effect the recommendations of the Armati report. As the Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation pointed out in the second reading speech:

Under the Greyhound Racing Act 2017 inspectors of the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission already have extensive investigation and enforcement powers, including to require any person ... to furnish information or records and to attend a hearing and answer questions.

It is important that Harness Racing New South Wales and Racing NSW are similarly empowered and that people who fail to attend a special inquiry after being compelled are met with the same penalties as those who fail to do so for the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission. I note that the Government will be winding up the Tax Reduction Trust Fund. Mr Noyce said:

Whilst we fully understand and appreciate the reasons why the Tax Reduction Fund was established, it is now very appropriate, and a statement of the health of the greyhound industry, that the Fund be wound up which would then place the Greyhound industry in the same position as the other two NSW Racing codes.

However, I urge the Government to ensure that the legislation is proclaimed and commences as soon as possible. The racing industry, the community of Wallsend and the rest of New South Wales have waited long enough for the implementation of the Armati report. I return to my comments that are in agreement with those of the member for Wollondilly and the member for the Tweed. We talk now about the integrity of the racing fraternity and the racing industry, and that is important. I believe the racing industry had integrity two years ago. It is just a pity that these events have happened.

The member for Wollondilly and the member for Tweed talked about the economic benefits of racing to rural areas, in particular. I certainly know that because if Wallsend had lost The Gardens greyhound track at least \$2 million every year would have been lost to the community. In fact, at least 40 jobs would have gone from the area, not to mention the supplementary jobs associated with food, canteen facilities and those who work on the field or on the track. Racing is important not only for people's enjoyment but also for our local economy. I could foresee a downturn for Wallsend and I am so pleased that did not happen. I encourage the Government to act as soon as possible. I commend the Minister for making sure that this bill was expedited. I commend the bill to the House and say it is about time. I know members of The Gardens at Wallsend will be deeply appreciative of this bill being commenced.