

Legislative Council

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ANIMAL WELFARE (JUMPS RACING) AMENDMENT BILL

The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON (22:47):

I rise to indicate my support for the Animal Welfare (Jumps Racing) Amendment Bill introduced by the Hon. Tammy Franks, and I will apologise to the Hon. Mark Parnell straight up for upsetting that balance that was so short-lived that he spoke of earlier.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON: 'The natural order; the planets are aligned.' Each time the news covers another horse falling as it crashes over the jump, often landing head first, before cartwheeling, I cringe, and I wonder how we can allow such gruesome deaths to occur in the name of sport and entertainment. It is a most harrowing spectacle we endure all too frequently during the jumps racing season.

Not only do we see the South Australian deaths—some five, I believe, this year received coverage—but the six from Victoria are also brought into our homes via the news. I am sure few of those behind the thousands of emails, calls and letters my office has received have recently attended a jumps race. Like me, their experience is through the horror of the news. I believe it is time for this state to join all but one of its counterparts who have successfully banned jumps racing.

As has been detailed, jumps racing has never gained a foothold in Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory or the Northern Territory. Queensland was the first to ban jumps racing in 1903. Following the Senate select committee in 1991, which recommended phasing out jumps racing over three years, New South Wales made jumps racing a criminal offence in 1997. Then in Tasmania, due to lack of popularity of the sport and the horror of the carnage, jumps racing ceased in 2007. Now only Victoria and South Australia remain.

South Australia very nearly stood alone when the Victorian minister, following the public outrage at the death of three jumps horses at the Warrnambool racing carnival, suspended jumps racing in that state in May 2009. The sport was allowed to resume after supposedly strict conditions were imposed. As has been demonstrated time and again, these conditions failed to significantly reduce the death toll, with a further five horses dying by the season's end.

As a result, Racing Victoria then announced, to the delight of those who brought the cruelty of this sport to the fore, that the 2010 season would be the last for Victoria. Their joy did not last long, however, and just seven weeks later Racing Victoria bowed to industry pressure and permitted the sport to continue provided certain key performance indicators (a euphemism for the number of falls and deaths) were met. Of course, they were not but, given the influence involved in this sport, jumps racing continues. But for this influence and for Racing Victoria's lack of integrity to see through its commitments to the Victorian public, South Australia would have been alone in allowing this sport to continue. I call it a sport very lightly.

I accept that jumps racing is a small part of the South Australian horse racing sector, with only 24 trainers practising the sport, nearly a quarter of whom are described as hobby trainers with few horses in their stables, and a quarter who, whilst registered, have not entered a horse

in a South Australian race. Further, it can only be described as unprofitable, given the limited prize money on offer, particularly if restricted to South Australian only events. From information provided to my office by the Hon. Tammy Franks, only seven of the 20 trainers took home any winnings in the 2010 season—that is, 13 won nothing.

Jumps racing also accounts for less than 1 per cent, I believe, of racing turnover, and the amounts wagered on jumps events is consistently lower than its flat racing counterpart, as already mentioned. A fact highlighted by Colin Thomas, the spokesperson for Citizens against Animal Cruelty, was that TAB figures showed that betting for this year's National Steeplechase at Adelaide's Morphettville Racecourse fell 34 per cent from the flat race that preceded it, before again rising 30 per cent for the flat race that followed. Mr Thomas concluded in an article in *The Australian* that:

TAB figures show that punters don't share the same delight about jumps racing that racing administrators do.

It is hard not to agree with him. Punters are clearly voting with their wallets. It is time that we, too, voted. Given the Law Society's advice, the government can no longer hide behind the suggestion that this is a matter solely for Thoroughbred Racing SA and cannot be legislated for. While this has always been plainly false to members, it is now also clear to the public.

While I do not consider them entirely comparable, it is time that jumps racing went the way of dog fighting and cock fighting and is specifically prohibited by the Animal Welfare Act. I do not consider this is a question of if but rather when. Given that it is clear that it will not be today, I encourage the industry to work towards a date of its choosing before public pressure becomes too great and members in this place and the other place take that choice away from them.

Occupational health and safety issues are of paramount importance, apparently, to this government, and I believe that should have been one of the main considerations in determining whether this bill was to have any serious consideration or not. I remind members here that it is a relatively short time ago that we used to think that it was okay—or humanity used to think it was okay—to tie up black people and get them to pull ploughs and whatever through the fields, and whip them and consider them to be less than human.

We evolve. We change. We become more respectful and we become more demanding of ethical conduct. People are demanding that governments take ethical stands on certain issues. I believe that jumps racing is one of those issues. I congratulate the Hon. Tammy Franks on bringing this bill to us and opening up this debate. I also congratulate the Hon. Ian Hunter on his contribution. Even though he is unable to vote for this bill, he has made it clear that he, too, is not in favour of this particular abomination of sport.

Members interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Order!