

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Queensland Parliamentary Service
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to the petition headed "Continuance of harness racing at the Redcliffe Peninsula Harness Racing & Sporting Club on a Friday night throughout the 2003/2004 financial year" and tabled in the Queensland Legislative Assembly as paper number 5213.

A key fundamental to the Queensland Harness Racing Board's strategy is that the product fee received by the Racing Industry is directly proportional to the wagering revenue generated via the industry's racing program.

The extent of the subsidisation by the Board of Redcliffe and other clubs, was clearly not sustainable in the longer term unless action was taken to optimize the product fee revenue harness racing receives. Under commercial agreements with UNITAB Limited, this revenue source provides the vast bulk of the Queensland Racing Industry's total revenue. The Board has therefore developed the 2003-04 racing program to achieve wagering growth and therefore increase the industry's revenue.

The Board's decision to transfer the Friday night timeslot to the Gold Coast Parklands venue was made to achieve a better commercial outcome in the long term interests of the whole harness racing code.

It is disappointing that representatives of certain sections of the harness racing code have, for their own personal reasons, either been unprepared to fully explain the rationale or have circulated misleading information in relation to the changes.

I know that many residents of the Redcliffe area must feel disappointed by the Board's decision to transfer the Friday timeslot to the Gold Coast Parklands venue. However, the changes which are now being implemented by the Board will deliver additional prize money and other benefits for the harness racing code. The Board cannot autonomously make decisions for one club, one venue, one district or one group. There are compromises to be made to ensure the best overall outcome for the whole of the harness racing code.

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I encourage residents of Redcliffe and surrounding areas to go along and enjoy the excitement of harness racing on Wednesday nights at the Redcliffe Paceway.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely

Hon. Merri Rose MP
Minister for Tourism and Racing and
Minister for Fair Trading