

INTER DOMINION 2012 HARNESS RACING CHAMPIONSHIP

Statement

HON MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM (Agricultural) [9.58 pm]: I rise tonight to speak about the 2012 Inter Dominion harness racing championship. I would like to preface my remarks by declaring my interest in racing and wagering issues as, firstly, an owner-breeder of standard bred horses, and, secondly, a member of the Joint Standing Committee on the Review of the Racing and Wagering Western Australia Acts, 24 September 2009; I am also a member of a number of harness racing clubs.

In 2009, the joint standing committee, of which I was a member, travelled throughout Western Australia, as well as Queensland and Victoria, in an effort to review the operations and effectiveness of the Racing and Wagering Western Australia Act 2003. The information gathered proved invaluable in framing the many findings and recommendations contained within the 2010 report to Parliament. The report not only highlighted racing and wagering issues associated with the 2003 act, but also acknowledged Racing and Wagering Western Australia's great successes since its inception under the then minister, Hon Nick Griffiths. Racing and Wagering WA has given great certainty to Western Australia's three racing codes.

Those successes were clearly demonstrated last Friday night, 2 March, when harness racing held its Inter Dominion final at Gloucester Park. The racing series proved to all that Western Australian harness racing can stage a world-class event, with local wonder horse, Im Themightyquinn, taking out the \$1 million final. Horses, trainers, connections and devotees from all around Australia and New Zealand turned up in big numbers to continue the grand tradition that started in Perth in 1936.

Major sporting and tourism events such as the 2012 Inter Dominion series do not just happen. They require very detailed and lengthy planning, together with expensive and targeted marketing strategies. Coordination of the series was undertaken by Gloucester Park Harness Racing. I would particularly like to acknowledge the contributions of the president, John Burt; vice-presidents Gino Monaco and Bob Pettigrew; the committee; CEO Rob Bovell; marketing manager Michael Radley; various media outlets; and a big team of committed and hardworking locals and staff. Their combined efforts delivered a series and final the envy of all in the harness racing world in Australia and New Zealand.

Gloucester Park is a unique harness racing venue. Many interstate visitors, such as Ballarat and District Trotting Club's chief executive officer Paul Rowse, and Sky Racing's Adam Hamilton, were loud in their praise of Gloucester Park and the support of local fans. The comment was made that, whilst Gloucester Park attracted something in the vicinity of 20 000 patrons on grand final night, tracks in the eastern states would struggle to attract 10 000.

Gloucester Park can justifiably feel proud of its history and involvement in the Inter Dominion Championship ever since hosting the first series in 1936. My hope is that Gloucester Park is always the centre of harness racing in Western Australia. I would also like to think that, despite impending changes to the Inter Dominion format, Gloucester Park will one day resume its rightful place as home of the Inter Dominion Championship. The enormous success of the 2012 Inter Dominion would seem to demand a rethink on the proposed series change—something that will not be decided for another four years or so. In Western Australia we can only hope that is the case.

The PRESIDENT: Members, further to that contribution I might add that I also had a passing personal interest. My eight-month-old grandson is named Quinn, so I was rather interested in the performance of Im Themightyquinn. I am delighted to see he is such a good winner.