

RACECOURSE INFRASTRUCTURE

**402. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Racing and Gaming:**

In 2010, the Liberal–National government established a program to assist racing clubs throughout the state to rejuvenate their racecourse infrastructure. Can the minister please update the Parliament on progress with supporting this important industry?

**Mr T.K. WALDRON replied:**

I thank the member for Central Wheatbelt for the question and for her interest in and support for racing over the last five years, and more recently with projects at York and Northam.

One of the biggest challenges that the racing industry faces is its ageing infrastructure. It is a real and ongoing challenge. As the member said in her question, we agreed back in 2010 to commit \$13 million over five years for metropolitan and country racing infrastructure. The initial amount was \$5 million in 2010 with a further \$2 million each year. To maximise the benefit from that grants program, the decision was taken to offer the grants on a partnership basis, and that has worked extremely well. In fact, by 2012, the program had worked very well and it became evident to me as minister and to everyone involved that we needed to keep this program going and expand it where we could because it was doing such a good job in our country and metropolitan race clubs across the codes. With the support of the Minister for Regional Development, we got a \$6.4 million royalties for regions boost to that funding to, once again, leverage that funding to gain other funding. The value of the program now is just under \$20 million over the five-year period, and about \$10 million of that has been accessed and spent so far. So, the program is having a great benefit out there. In fact, these grants have supported projects totalling \$16.2 million—that is, 129 grants to 51 racing and training venues throughout the state.

One focus has been on the health and safety issues that are very large in racing. I wanted to make sure that we addressed those issues initially, because the health and safety of participants, jockeys and horses are extremely important. I will not go into a whole heap of detail, but one initiative that is part of this program deserves a special mention—that is, the upgrade of running rails from the traditional aluminium running rail to the new plastic running rail. That works to provide a hell of a lot more safety for the horse and rider. With the support of these grants, new running rails have now been installed at 12 major metropolitan and country tracks. But the benefit does not finish there because where we have replaced the railing, we have utilised the old railing for a lot of our smaller race venues around Western Australia—even our picnic race venues. I think the Kulin Bush Races is an example; the head of that is so pleased now that he has a bit of security. We also coupled that with another program to fence the tracks in country WA. We were having some issues with runaway horses at some of the smaller tracks where horses were actually getting into the crowd and —

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** Did you have money on them?

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** I probably did! I saw it happen one day and it is pretty frightening. I am glad that we have now addressed that and I am sure the industry is a lot better for it.

The racing industry is really important to Western Australia. It generates about \$600 million each year. There is a lot of employment, a lot of people are involved and there is a lot of enjoyment to the community, so it is important that we continue to support and work with the racing industry to continually improve those facilities. I look forward to doing that more into the future.