

BETTING EXCHANGES

1044. Hon BARRY HOUSE to the Minister for Racing and Gaming:

- (1) Did the minister recently attend the traditional ministerial council of racing ministers' meeting, which is normally scheduled around the Melbourne Spring Racing Carnival?
- (2) In light of recent events involving betting exchanges in the United Kingdom, including the arrest of jockeys and accusations of race fixing and so on, was this matter discussed?
- (3) Is the minister any closer to reaching an agreement on reasonable controls and regulations for these activities while not denying the Australian racing industry the opportunity to share in some of the legitimate profits of international gambling vehicles?

Hon NICK GRIFFITHS replied:

- (1)-(3) A meeting of racing ministers was to be held on 8 October this year. Unfortunately, due to a gentleman in Canberra wishing to cause an event to occur on 9 October, the racing ministers decided that it would not be appropriate to hold the meeting on 8 October. The racing ministers of Australasia have addressed the issue of betting exchanges on a number of occasions. I inform the honourable member that Western Australia has been at the forefront of raising concerns about that matter, and I continue to pursue the issue. It is my view that betting exchanges are anathema to the Australian racing industry. They do not stand up economically and their existence encourages bad practice, which has the capacity to undermine the faith of the punting public in the racing industry. I strongly hold that view and it is a view held by most of the Australasian racing ministers. The Commonwealth Government should change its legislation to ensure that betting exchanges cannot operate legitimately in Australia. The sooner the Howard Government gets off its backside and does something about it, the better.