

BETTING TRANSACTIONS, MINIMUM LEVELS

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

- (1) Why did it take the minister so long to cut minimum betting levels for telephone and Internet transactions with Western Australian bookmakers?
- (2) What are the reasons for phasing in the changes and not immediately implementing the full reductions?
- (3) Why has the minister retained higher betting limits for bookmakers than for the Totalisator Agency Board?
- (4) Why did the minister not reduce the limits to zero, as recommended in two government reports?

Hon NICK GRIFFITHS replied:

- (1)-(4) Hon Barry House raised this issue in the House last year and I answered him at that time. Since this House last sat, I decided that I would move to reduce the rate for bookmakers. My concern has always been to do what I can to ensure that there is consistency across Australia. Frankly, a consistent approach is in the interests of the racing codes and the racing industry throughout Australia. That is why, when the racing ministers met in early November 2001, Western Australia continued to play a very significant role in dealing with the issue of cross-border betting, of which the matter of bookmakers is a part. The racing ministers were due to meet less than two weeks ago. I anticipated that all the matters dealing with cross-border betting and uniformity throughout Australasia would be dealt with at that meeting. I am looking for an Australasian approach, if that can be achieved. Unfortunately, for reasons beyond my control, the meeting was postponed. It is anticipated that it will now take place in April. I want to encourage uniformity across Australia, and I had therefore decided that that meeting would be an opportune time to move part of the way towards reducing the limits. I envisage that when the racing industry undertakes its major overhaul - again subject to parliamentary approval in the course of this session - Racing and Wagering Western Australia, the new racing governing body, will be in a position to assess the impact of the change in limits to bookmaker telephone betting on the industry throughout Western Australia. That relates to the revenues of the Totalisator Agency Board. I am sure the member would be aware that a major, if not the primary, area of income for the codes is their TAB distributions. If TAB revenues were put at risk, it would do the codes and the industry as a whole a disservice. That basically covers what the member was asking.