

BETFAIR — COURT COSTS

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

How much did it cost the government to unsuccessfully defend in the High Court its legislation effectively banning Betfair from operating in this state; and will this amount be funded by Western Australian taxpayers, or will the costs of the failed legal case be passed on to the racing industry?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH replied:**

I did not receive any notice of this question, but I thank the honourable member for the question in any event. The honourable member, who obviously takes a keen interest in racing, would know that this issue started some time ago. In fact, we dealt in this place with legislation covering the question of betting exchanges and the rights of people to place bets in other jurisdictions. There is no doubt that the appeal against the Betfair decision was very strongly favoured by the industry, and the industry had an expectation that it would be appealed. The State Solicitor also held the view that it should be appealed because there were issues about jurisdiction. Quite rightly, the state appealed the decision. Unfortunately, the case was unsuccessful. As is usual, the court action will be funded by Western Australian taxpayers, and the industry will not be asked to foot the bill for the Betfair challenge. The final cost of the appeal is yet to be determined. I have certainly not seen the final figure. I am quite happy to supply the member with that final figure when it becomes available.

**Hon Barry House:** Can you give a rough estimate?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** I would say that it would be in the order of around \$500 000, if that. It will probably be less than that. It will be anything from \$200 000 to \$500 000. I have not yet been presented with the final figure, but I will be quite happy to make that public. When the government goes to court to appeal a decision that is a matter of public interest, naturally the involvement of lawyers means that it will be costly. I am quite happy to make the cost public; it is no state secret. As is usually the case when the government mounts a challenge on a matter of law in the courts, the cost is picked up by the state government or, by extension, the taxpayers, as opposed to being passed on to individuals or organisations.