

RACING AND WAGERING WESTERN AUSTRALIA, BOARD

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

I refer to the minister's decision announced by a media release yesterday to alter the composition of the proposed board of Racing and Wagering Western Australia to now allocate the trotting industry two places on that board rather than one.

- (1) What role did former Premier Brian Burke and former minister Julian Grill, who had been hired as lobbyists by the Western Australian Trotting Association, play in the decision of the minister to change his mind?
- (2) As a result of the change, which was announced prior to the legislation's introduction into the Parliament, does the minister believe that the WA Trotting Association should pay Brian Burke and Julian Grill the \$200 000 success fee reported to be a condition of their consultancy?

Hon NICK GRIFFITHS replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1)-(2) The short answers are none and no. I point out in those answers that neither Mr Grill nor Mr Burke at any time presented a case to me on the issue on behalf of the Western Australian Trotting Association. The Western Australian Country Trotting Association has been supportive of the Government's policy on racing and wagering in Western Australia, the details of which will be presented to the Parliament shortly, although the policy was announced last year.

However, the Western Australian Country Trotting Association was concerned that harness racing was allocated one nominee while the thoroughbred racing codes were allocated two nominees, with greyhound racing allocated one and four other members, including a chairman, to be selected.

The Western Australian Country Trotting Association lobbied vigorously on this issue. Members would be aware that I am concerned about the state of the clubs that comprise the Western Australian Country Trotting Association. Members may recall that I was obliged to intervene because of the actions of the Western Australian Trotting Association last year. I was mindful of the view of the Western Australian Country Trotting Association, which played a key role in the decision that I placed before Cabinet to which Cabinet agreed early last week. I point out that Mr Grill attempted to speak to me late last week. I did not speak to him and, in any event, by that time Cabinet had already agreed to the proposition that I had placed before it.

I was mindful not only of the very strong advocacy of the Western Australian Country Trotting Association but also of the views of members of Parliament on the proposed change to the composition of the board, irrespective of their political colour on the issue. I was particularly mindful of the views of a number of significant members of the Liberal Party, the National Party and the Australian Labor Party, who over the years have shown an interest in this issue. I have therefore taken on board those considerations. However, the matter that was foremost in my mind was the strong advocacy of the Western Australian Country Trotting Association.

If it is true that the Western Australian Trotting Association has money to throw around, in my view it should provide that money to the Western Australian Country Trotting Association so that country trotting clubs can get a fair deal.