

HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY, PROFITABILITY

**1573. Hon BARRY HOUSE to the Minister for Racing and Gaming:**

I refer the minister to comments he made in the House last week during debate on the Labor Relations Reform Bill, when he said that the hospitality industry seems to thrive in other parts of Australia without the workplace agreement regime that Western Australia currently has. I also refer the minister to data released this week by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, which showed that the profitability of most Western Australian pubs and taverns had fallen from 5.8 per cent to 4.6 per cent. What does the minister intend to do to ensure the hospitality industry in Western Australia improves profitability and thrives, just as it thrives in other parts of Australia, as he pointed out?

**Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS replied:**

I thank the honourable member for the question. He notes what is occurring in Western Australia. Unfortunately, Western Australia has this workplace agreement regime, which the Government is in the process of getting rid of. As part of the Gallop Government, I am joining in that process so that employers and employees can enter into arrangements that enable the activities of the hospitality industry to prosper elsewhere.

The honourable member would be aware that this Government has given priority to matters affecting the hospitality industry, and particularly that part of that industry for which I have ministerial responsibility, liquor licensing. This Parliament passed legislation last year, early in the life of this Government, which tightened up the issuing of special facility licences. The issuing of such licences before the Government tightened up the legislation was a matter of great concern to the industry and, in my view, contributed to a lack of profitability in some areas. I am very pleased to be able to inform the House that the legislation passed late last year appears to be working very well indeed. A number of special facility licences have been issued since the legislation came into effect in early January of this year. Six licences had been granted up to the end of May, compared with a considerably greater number in each of the preceding years. I referred to the specifics in the estimates committee debates. The Government and I, with responsibility for liquor licensing, take seriously the concerns of the hospitality industry, as is evidenced by the direction and priority of the government legislation so far.

Under the previous Government a national competition policy review took place in the then Office of Racing, Gaming and Liquor. Early in the life of this Government I caused what was until then a secret document to be provided to the public and to those directly concerned in the industry. I sought and received comments on that document. The member may recall from the estimates committee debate that I have finalised my views in consultation with the industry on the national competition policy matters that affect the liquor industry. That is being processed through government. I trust that matters will work out well for the industry. I can assure the honourable member that, if the draft had prevailed, it may have caused a great degree of difficulty to the industry.

The PRESIDENT: I trust the minister is winding up his answer.

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS: I have been asked a question which I am very concerned to answer, but I do appreciate the time of the House. I will make just one more point, but I could speak for some time about what this Government is doing for the hospitality industry.

Recently, I announced that I had written to a number of stakeholders advising that I will examine the process of issuing liquor licences, with particular reference to the work carried out by the director and the Liquor Licensing Court, and the way they interact. I am in the process of settling the terms of that review, and I anticipate forwarding a discussion paper to relevant parties. In accordance with this Government's usual practice of openness, that discussion paper will be on the Internet at, or shortly after, that time. I take your point Mr President. I could speak for some considerable time on this very important issue, but I had better sit down at this stage.