

NATIONAL COMPETITION POLICY, LIQUOR LICENSING GUIDELINES

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

- (1) Does the minister agree with the National Competition Council's view that Western Australia's liquor licensing guidelines are anti-competitive and not in the public interest?
- (2) Are federal funds at risk if these concerns are not addressed by the end of June of this year?
- (3) How much could be lost to Western Australia if the June deadline is not met?
- (4) What action is the Government taking on this matter?

Hon NICK GRIFFITHS replied:

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)-(4) The National Competition Council is an interesting beast; it is unelected and it makes recommendations to the federal Treasurer, Hon Peter Costello. If any circumstance gave rise to Western Australia losing any sum of money because of National Competition Council considerations, it would be as a result of the decisions of Hon Peter Costello and no-one else, because it is his responsibility to make those decisions.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon NICK GRIFFITHS: My recollection, which I regret very much, is that Hon Peter Costello has been the Treasurer of Australia for about the past seven years. In that context, I am very pleased to note that this is the twentieth anniversary of the election of the Hawke Government - an event for which Australia should be most grateful.

The member would be aware that the National Competition Council has a view of the world which is not shared by every Government in Australia on every issue on every occasion.

Hon Dee Margetts: Which Western Australian Government has ever gone to the federal Government and said that it is wrong? Not one of them.

Hon Kim Chance: Come on! How do you know that?

The PRESIDENT: Order! Members, this is not yet a debate; it is still question time.

Hon NICK GRIFFITHS: Perhaps we should have a debate about national competition policy and the Opposition's views on the National Competition Council's requests for expressions of interest in respect of the liquor industry. Perhaps the member may be aware of the fact that this Government made an election promise on liquor licensing laws, and this Government keeps its promises.