

TAB — PRIVATISATION

772. Mr V.A. CATANIA to the Premier:

I would first like to recognise the year 5 and 6 students of St Mary's School in Northampton in the member for Moore's electorate. Welcome.

I refer to the Premier's comments on ABC news last Thursday, when he said that selling the Western Australian Totalisator Agency Board is "about making sure we have an industry in the future. If we don't do this, the TAB will die."

- (1) If the state government is not satisfied with the offer it receives for the TAB, will it be sold anyway?
- (2) If no to (1), what measures will the government take to ensure that the TAB and the WA racing industry do not die?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

- (1)–(2) The premise of the question requires the legislation to go through both houses of Parliament. We would like to see this legislation go through both houses of Parliament so that we can receive the best price for the TAB. When it goes to market, it will be by an open process by which we seek to maximise the value for the people of Western Australia. That is the arrangement we are putting in place. Whatever the market price for the TAB is—we have sought to ensure that there is the utmost probity and the best price received for taxpayers—that will be the market price that is acquired for the TAB. That is obviously our plan. I must say that I would have thought that that was the Liberal Party's inclination on this issue as well, because everyone understands that in its current configuration, competing with some of those interstate, international and online bookmakers, the TAB is simply going to fail and we will end up with nothing. Why not get a stronger TAB that makes a better return to the racing industry, more money for racing infrastructure, and a better return for health, education, community safety and the like out of an asset that is dying? That is our plan.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is our plan. When I was Minister for Racing and Gaming in 2005, the shadow minister, the member for South Perth, and I had a different point of view. We both had a different point of view back then. I must say that back in 2005, the member for South Perth was a little ahead of me—he was starting to move towards the idea that the TAB should no longer be in public ownership. But at that point in time we were both of the view that it should remain in public ownership.

Mr S.K. L'Estrange: In 2016, you said it was just ludicrous!

The SPEAKER: Member for Churchlands, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Can I just say to the Liberal Party that there are times when you need to act in the state's interests.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, I want to hear the Premier's answer. You asked a question; I am sure you want to hear the answer.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The relentless negativity that members opposite exhibit is unbecoming of them and it does not meet the state's interests. They had eight and a half years, with control of both houses of Parliament, to deal with this issue and they did not deal with it. In 18 months in office, we have come up with a plan, we have consulted with the industry and we are taking it forward. We are a proactive government that is getting on with fixing problems that were left to us.

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, I call you to order for the first time.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I think that is unparliamentary; the Leader of the Opposition should withdraw that remark.

The SPEAKER: I did not hear the remark.

Dr M.D. Nahan: I said, quite accurately, that he is being dishonest.

The SPEAKER: Are you going to withdraw?

Dr M.D. Nahan: Do you think that is unparliamentary?

Extract from Hansard

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Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr David Templeman

The SPEAKER: I think so. You are querying my decision.

Dr M.D. Nahan: Is that your advice?

The SPEAKER: I would not have asked you if I did not think it was.

Dr M.D. Nahan: In that case, I withdraw.

The SPEAKER: Also, member for Bateman, I call you to order on that last little exchange, too.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr M. McGOWAN: This is the plan that the last government wishes it could have brought forward, but it did not. We are bringing this plan forward in order to guarantee the future of racing —

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition!

Mr M. McGOWAN: It will also support taxpayers in Western Australia for the long-term future. I urge members opposite to act in the state's interests.