

TAB — PRIVATISATION

501. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Racing and Gaming:

I refer to the state government's plan to privatise the TAB.

- (1) Will the minister privatise the TAB; and, if so, when?
- (2) Will the National Party support the privatisation of the TAB without a guarantee from the Treasurer that all sale proceeds will be redirected back into the WA racing industry and not used for other purposes?

Mr B.J. GRYLLS replied:

I thank the shadow Minister for Racing and Gaming for the question.

- (1)–(2) I begin by acknowledging the former Minister for Racing and Gaming for the work that he did with the industry.

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Albany, I call you to order for the second time.

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: I acknowledge the work done by the former minister with the Western Australian racing representative group to work their way through the issues facing the Western Australian TAB. There is no doubt that there is enormous pressure on the Western Australian TAB from the huge influx of new gambling options that are available to people. Everyone understands that, and it is up to the industry and the government to deal with that. The shadow Minister for Racing and Gaming said that he does not support the sale of the TAB. The Leader of the Opposition has said that he supports the industry's view on the TAB. I understand that the industry understands the challenges and would like to see the government progress to a sale. The industry has moved from concern and worry, as it is right to do. It was concerned and worried about the circumstances of the industry and how the government would protect it in the future. The good work of Hon Colin Holt has taken that industry from a fear campaign led by the opposition spokesperson to an understanding of the issues and is now asking the government to rapidly progress its decision-making around the TAB. That has left the shadow Minister for Racing and Gaming with a position that is actually the opposite to that of the industry.

The government's position has always been that we will not sell the TAB if it is not in the best interests of racing in Western Australia. The former minister, and now me, have and will work very, very closely with the representative group from the industry to understand that. We will make our decision clear and we will make it available to the industry. I do know that this has been a very good process for the industry, which now understands the challenges that it faces and the opportunities that the sale of the TAB may bring to it and it is asking the government to make a decision. The opposition spokesperson says that we should not sell the TAB, the Leader of the Opposition thinks that we should listen to the industry and other members think we should not have a racing industry at all because of animal welfare issues. The Liberal–National government will continue to work closely with industry. I have a meeting with industry representatives this week. If the racing industry tells me that it believes it is in its best interests to sell the TAB, it will have my support to do just that.