

STATE FINANCES — ASSET SALES

454. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Premier:

I have a supplementary question. Given that the TAB and the Muja power station are government agencies nominated for privatisation, what does the Premier say to the TAB franchise holders and power generation workers who remain uncertain about their jobs, future business operations and forward planning?

Mr C.J. BARNETT replied:

Muja AB has recently been refurbished and is now operating at its design capacity. That asset may be considered in the future, but it is not in a position to come under consideration now; there are still issues relating to that, one of which would be that we want to prove the continual performance of that station before it is considered. With respect to the TAB, I have said publicly that it will not be among the initial assets considered for sale, but we will examine it. There are a few issues to do with that and the member for South Perth has raised some issues. Go to the races; how many people go to the races and how many people are there with them? About 2 000, if they are lucky, in Perth. The other day there was a meeting of the dogs and 91 people turned up.

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member of Albany!

Mr M.P. Murray interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Collie–Preston, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I think the racing codes have a responsibility to look at themselves. Is it realistic to have two major horseracing venues within a couple of kilometres of each other in Perth? I do not know; I suspect not.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The racing industry has been slow to look at sharing assets and combining them. The codes have been slow in this, and they all come to government and want extra funding. There is a point, and there is some responsibility on the racing codes, in my view, to improve their performance. One of the key measures is how many people can be attracted to the track, and they are not attracting too many at all. I take the point that the member for Collie–Preston raises about TAB franchise operators, but I repeat again that the TAB will be examined—I think that is overdue—but it will not be among the initial list of assets to be privatised.