

TAB — PRIVATISATION

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

I have a supplementary question. What did the Premier mean when he said privatisation would be the big roll of the dice for the industry and why will he not take the TAB privatisation plan to the 2017 election?

Mr C.J. BARNETT replied:

We may well do that if we do not get an agreement beforehand. As it stands now, the TAB privatisation would probably not get through both houses of Parliament—that is the reality.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: So, Mr Speaker —

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Mr Speaker, I am trying to address the question.

Mr P.C. Tinley interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Willagee, I call you to order for the first time. Through the Chair, Premier, thank you.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Anyone observing the racing industry would observe that attendances at a normal Saturday race meeting are probably in the order of 2 000 to 3 000 people.

Mr J.E. McGrath: If that.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: If that; I thank the member. My father liked to go to the races. I was dragged around the races as a kid and there were large crowds. Attendance at horseracing events, and particularly I suggest at dog racing events —

Mr M.P. Murray: That was before telly, wasn't it?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The wit is so piercing!

Attendances at races have gone down. The TAB also faces competition from private betting agencies, with multiple agencies now competing. Because they are private, they have greater freedom in what they can do compared to a government-owned TAB. I suggest that the TAB will probably lose market share as the years go by and that does not put racing in a good position. Racing faces the other problem —

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is pointless, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Member for Albany, I call you to order for the first time. This has to do with the TAB.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am talking about the gallops. Trying to maintain two large inner-city racecourses at Belmont and Ascot is not really working out. Those facilities are no longer of the standard that the public expects for sporting events. In my view, they cannot survive. Similarly, separate tracks for dog racing and pacing will probably not survive. We cannot ignore the fact that people are not going to these races. The online or telephone punter is using other services. Members opposite can be in denial if they want to. That is the reality of what is happening out there. If members cannot see it, they must be blind.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Mr Speaker, they really do not want to hear an answer. It is childish behaviour.

The SPEAKER: Member for South Perth and member for Albany!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: When I use the term “roll of the dice”, that is a fair comment. If the TAB is privatised —

Mr D.J. Kelly: That's your whole attitude to the budget, isn't it—“roll of the dice”?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: How funny! Has the member been practising that one?