

WAGERING TAXES — RELIEF FOR RACING, PACING AND CHASING INDUSTRIES

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

I refer to yesterday's pleas for help from Racing and Wagering Western Australia to reduce its \$56 million wagering tax bill and the dramatic reduction in returns to the racing industry.

- (1) Will the minister assist the racing, pacing and chasing industries by providing tax relief through the wagering taxes paid to the state government?
- (2) Will the minister guarantee that the existing race meeting schedule will be maintained in the year ahead?
- (3) Can the minister detail which services will be cut to enable RWWA to meet its \$4.2 million funding shortfall?
- (4) How will the government honour its election promise to support the Perth racing festival?

Mr T.K. WALDRON replied:

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)-(4) As the member knows, the Betfair decision, the introduction of product fees and race fields legislation, and changes to Centrebet have introduced quite a number of pressures and costs. These changes have put an extra \$21 million of costs on to the racing industry. This is a fair question and a good one. We have been working with RWWA on possible tax relief. We have been looking at two or three ways of doing that. In recent days, RWWA has cut its cloth to try to address this problem from within without imposing costs on government, and I have changed what I am considering. I will be talking to my colleagues about what we can and cannot do. There is an opportunity, through some of the internet betting sites, to perhaps achieve a win-win situation. I will not go into detail now but I am happy to talk to the member about what I am trying to do. As the member saw yesterday with some of the announcements about racing prize money, RWWA has been able to maintain its prize money, but in doing so some race meetings in country Western Australia have been lost, although not a large number. The racing industry has been going really well. We have been able to maintain the prize money but we have had to cut back on some meetings. In the present economic situation we have to be responsible. Obviously there are other opportunities we are looking at to gain extra money for the racing industry. What was the member's last question?

Mr M.P. Murray: The Perth racing festival.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I think the Perth racing festival is a good idea, but the amount that was being talked about was unrealistic, and many people from the industry have said that. It was a good idea, but at this stage we are not in a position to support it.

Mr M.P. Murray: So you will not honour the promise made before the election?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I am not aware of any promise. I think the then government made a promise. As I understand it, the Liberal Party did not make any promise. I am not aware of any promise, but I have been meeting with Perth Racing and have been keeping the Premier and the Minister for Tourism informed. The concept of a racing festival is a good idea, but we must be realistic about how far we can go to fund it. I have no problem with the concept at this stage, but it would not be responsible to fund it at this stage.