

DIRECTOR GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF RACING, GAMING AND LIQUOR — MACAU TRIP

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

I refer to the director general of the Department of Racing, Gaming and Liquor's trip to Macau last year that was paid for by private enterprise.

- (1) What was the total cost of the trip?
- (2) Why was the trip not funded out of the department's budget, given the minister's approval and support of the trip and its appropriateness?
- (3) What are the Department of Racing, Gaming and Liquor's guidelines in relation to accepting gifts and hospitality?
- (4) Has the director general adhered to these departmental guidelines when accepting a free trip from Crown Perth casino?

Mr T.K. WALDRON replied:

- (1)–(4) I thank the member for his question. First of all, I will have to get back to the member on the cost of the trip; I do not have that with me at the moment, but I will get that for the member.

Crown Perth is a significant contributor to tourism in Western Australia market, and the VIP market, as I think the member well knows, plays a really important part. The international casino business is a really big part of that market. We are under increased significant pressures from Singapore and, in particular, Macau, which is eight times bigger than Las Vegas. It has a big effect on the industry here. Mr Sargeant travelled as chair of the Gaming and Wagering Commission and in his role as the regulator of gambling in Western Australia. It is completely appropriate for him to be better informed on challenges that meet that market on which he has to make rulings from time to time. He manages conflict, perceived or otherwise —

Mr R.H. Cook interjected.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: He does, and in accordance with government guidelines. I want to point out that in approving this trip, it is common practice on the part of Australian casino regulators to require casino operators to meet the costs of casino-related regulatory activities that fall outside the normal day-to-day processes.

Several members interjected.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Just let me finish.

To meet the expenses of the Gaming and Wagering Commission for such purposes is a process that has been regularly undertaken since the casino has been in operation here. Mr Sargeant is the chair of the Gaming and Wagering Commission. For instance, the former minister Hon Nick Griffiths authorised a similar trip to the United States that was paid for in the same way. Another thing that I think that should be acknowledged is that when I give approval for any trips et cetera, I always look at them closely and I judge them on a case-by-case basis. In this case, I thought it was in the best interests of the state. It is a big industry that brings income to this state. I also took into account the impeccable history and integrity of Mr Sargeant, with whom a number of ministers have worked over the years. I have no doubt of his integrity and his history, and that is why I approved the trip.