

Chairman; Mr J. Mcgrath; Mr Peter Watson; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Trevor Sprigg; Mr Mick Murray

Racing and Wagering Western Australia -

Mr M.J. Cowper, Chairman.

Mr M. McGowan, Minister for Racing and Gaming.

Mr R.B. Bennett, Chief Executive Officer.

Mr R.G. Bowe, Chairman.

Mr E. Nunn, Manager, Corporate Planning.

Mr R. Wimmer, General Manager, Strategic Planning and Corporate Development.

The CHAIRMAN: This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard staff. The daily proof *Hansard* will be published at 9.00 am tomorrow. The estimates committee's consideration of the estimates will be restricted to discussion of those items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated fund. This is the prime focus of the committee. While there is scope for members to examine many matters, questions need to be clearly related to a page number, item, program, or amount within the volumes. For example, members are free to pursue performance indicators that are included in the budget statements while there remains a clear link between the questions and the estimates. It is the intention of the Chairman to ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered and that both questions and answers are short and to the point. The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee, rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. For the purpose of following up the provision of this information, I ask the minister to clearly indicate to the committee which supplementary information he agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the minister's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the Committee Clerk by 9 June 2006, so that members may read it before the report and third reading stages. If the supplementary information cannot be provided within that time, written advice is required of the day by which the information will be made available. Details in relation to supplementary information have been provided to both members and advisers and accordingly I ask the minister to cooperate with those requirements. I caution members that if a minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice with the Clerk's office. Only supplementary information that the minister agrees to provide will be sought by 9 June 2006.

[Mr A.P. O'Gorman took the chair.]

The CHAIRMAN: I give the call to the member for South Perth.

Mr J. McGRATH: I notice that the Chairman of Racing and Wagering Western Australia is wearing a Port Adelaide tie. That is not right for a South Fremantle boy and a Fremantle Dockers supporter!

I have referred to Betfair previously. Given the circumstances of the changing world in which we live, the Totalisator Agency Board might consider setting up some kind of betting exchange so that it can compete with some of the international operators. Is that possible? Would the minister support such a move?

[5.20 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: We have concluded the drafting process, and we will introduce a bill shortly to deal with this issue. As the member would be aware, Victoria already has legislation in place, and I think New South Wales and the other states, with the exception of Tasmania, are moving in the same direction as we are; that is, we do not intend to allow a betting exchanges to operate in this state, and we do not intend to allow our race field information to be used by other operators without permission. That is the way in which we will deal with Betfair and corporate bookmakers, who I am advised are just as big a threat, if not bigger, to the industry. We do not have any plans for Racing and Wagering Western Australia to set up a betting exchange. However, I will defer to Mr Bowe to provide further information about that, and if Mr Bennett has anything else to add, we will ask him to say something.

Mr R.G. Bowe: I confirm that we have no plans whatsoever for a betting exchange operation in Western Australia for two fundamental reasons: firstly, because of the nature of the product, we believe it would reduce significantly any funds we can channel across to the three racing codes in WA; and, secondly, we believe it has the potential to introduce integrity issues into the codes, which we can well do without, and that is based on experience overseas. That is all I will say on the matter.

Mr J. McGRATH: I have a supplementary question. Given that that is the situation, what comment would the minister make on an article that appeared in *The West Australian* some months ago that stated that the Totalisator Agency Board was looking at 24-hour interactive gambling on racing around the world; that is, it would give people access to race meetings around the world, so that there would basically be 24-hour gambling?

Chairman; Mr J. Mcgrath; Mr Peter Watson; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Trevor Sprigg; Mr Mick Murray

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let Mr Bennett go into some detail on that. I saw that article some months ago. I think it was referring to the new computer engine that is being developed by Racing and Wagering WA. The existing one is more than 20 years old, and it has been added to. The member will recall what computers were like 20 years ago. They are not exactly the same as they are today. The old engine that is in place now must be shut down for four hours a night, or maybe a little longer, to be improved, and then it restarts at a certain time. That is because it is old. I do not think the new one will need that sort of attention. That will open up those opportunities. The old computer is shut down at that time of night for technical reasons, and not for any other reason. The new computer system engine will cost more than \$20 million, I understand. We will go for the best that we can get, because it has to last for a long time. Perhaps Mr Bennett can expand on that.

Mr R.B. Bennett: What the minister has said is basically the situation. Each night we must go through a refresh process and take copies of the files off the computer, and they are then stored off site. We are looking to run the Internet site for an extended period over the course of the upcoming soccer World Cup. That is mainly because the last game of the night starts at 12.30 am, whereas at the moment the system is dropped at 12 o'clock. Therefore, for that period during the World Cup, we will operate the Internet for an extended period to take advantage of the interest in the World Cup.

Mr J. McGRATH: I seek further information. If that is successful, would RWWA look at operating the Internet site for 24 hours for racing in, say, the United Kingdom?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will defer to Mr Bennett.

Mr R.B. Bennett: If there were a demand for it, we would look at it. However, the pressure for this is really being driven from over east, where the clubs and what have you with gaming machines are open for much longer hours. I am not sure that we would get an awful lot of business past midnight, because about the only place that would be open would be the casino. We do not see it as a major revenue stream. However, as I said, it will be available as a service to our clients during the period of the World Cup.

Mr T.R. SPRIGG: I refer to page 897, and my question is on the same point. From the answers just given, it sounds as though a TAB agency will at some stage have the capacity to be open for 24 hours a day. Is that envisaged at any time; and, if it is, will this increased availability not make the situation with problem gambling even worse?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The average TAB agency - there are about 120 across the state - generally closes about eight o'clock at night. It is not envisaged that that would change. However, what would change is that the bet engine that people can access via the Internet would potentially be open for longer of an evening.

Mr T.R. SPRIGG: Or by phone?

Mr M. McGOWAN: No. I do not think that enough revenue would be generated to allow that. Phone betting obviously requires people to be at the other end, and they must be paid. Because of the hour, people get paid more. Therefore, we would have to be able to generate enough income to allow that to happen.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I have an Indian who rings me four times a night, so the minister could use him.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Who rings the member four times a night?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I had four calls last night.

The CHAIRMAN: Take that up with the federal government.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think that is basically all I wish to say.

Mr R.B. Bennett: I have a point of clarification. During the World Cup period, we will have phones operating, and the agencies will be permitted to open for longer if there is a demand for that in their agency. However, as I said, that will be confined to the period of the soccer World Cup.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member referred to the issue of problem gambling. Western Australia has the lowest level of problem gambling by a factor of about three compared with the eastern states, and that is because we do not have poker machines. It is absolutely undeniable that that is the reason.

Mr P.B. WATSON: My question is about stake money for country race clubs. I congratulate RWWA on the money that it has put into the Albany Racing Club for the new sand track. I notice that there is a discrepancy between Bunbury, Northam and Kalgoorlie, and Albany, Mt Barker and Geraldton. The first places I mentioned got a higher percentage for their stake money allocation. My main concern is that those places are getting a higher percentage of a higher stake; we are getting a lower percentage of a lower stake. All it is doing is increasing the difference between the regional clubs. A trainer gets the same amount of money, I think, for going from Perth to Albany as he gets for going from Perth to Bunbury. If the stake money improves in places

Chairman; Mr J. Mcgrath; Mr Peter Watson; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Trevor Sprigg; Mr Mick Murray

such as Bunbury, Northam and Kalgoorlie, people will stop going to places such as Albany, Mt Barker and Geraldton. Is that as much of a concern to the minister as it is to me?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am always concerned about the member for Albany's electorate.

The CHAIRMAN: I think that question asks for an opinion.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Will the minister please explain why there is a discrepancy?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will defer to my advisers in a moment. In broad terms, there are obvious different tiers of clubs. I think there are six or seven different tiers of clubs, and their stake is determined by the tier they are on. That is all determined by the revenue they generate. It has been an ongoing issue as to which club is on which tier and, therefore, what stakes are paid. My aim, and RWWA's aim, has been to address that and, in addition, to grow the stakes. The member will have noted that in the past year the stakes grew by about 10 per cent. In the year before that, it was 30 or 40 per cent, and in the year before that, it was 20 or 30 per cent. For everyone, the performance has gone through the roof. Every club does well, but some do slightly better than others. Therefore, there is that jealousy thing.

[5.30 pm]

Mr P.B. WATSON: It is not a jealousy thing; it is a survival thing.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think the industry has done exceptionally well.

Mr R.B. Bennett: To put that in context, the first series of clubs that the member mentioned - Kalgoorlie, Bunbury and Pinjarra - had a 14 per cent increase in stakes for the coming year. The clubs in Albany and Geraldton had a 17 per cent increase in total distribution.

Mr P.B. WATSON: I was told it was 11 per cent.

Mr R.B. Bennett: Sorry, you are right.

Mr P.B. WATSON: That was from the club.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I would like to return to the Betfair argument that we started the day with. Is the department doing some work on what Betfair may be doing to bookmakers? Are bookmakers within the department's ambit of concern? A number of bookmakers have approached me saying that with Betfair, they can establish a price, leave a price out there and somebody can pick it up. It makes it difficult for them to run their own books. Is the department considering any other processes that may allow bookmakers to increase their revenue while they are on course, or even off course?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I defer to Mr Bennett.

Mr R.B. Bennett: There is no doubt that Betfair is a bigger threat to bookmakers than it is to TABs. I am not sure we can protect the bookmaker. I suspect that the bookmakers are probably using Betfair as part of their operation anyway. All we can do is try to provide better facilities for the bookmakers on course. It could help the bookmakers' cause more than anything.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Is the department looking at the restrictions imposed a few years ago about the size of telephone betting? Are those sorts of issues being looked at?

Mr R.B. Bennett: To the best of my knowledge, there are no longer any restrictions on bookmakers.

Mr J. McGRATH: My question relates to the situation at the Belmont Park racecourse redevelopment. I cannot find it anywhere on the page but it does involve Racing and Wagering Western Australia. While the Belmont Park redevelopment is taking place, racing will be short of one track. How confident is RWWA that the racing industry will have enough racetracks? How long does it expect Belmont Park to be out of commission? Is it confident that Ascot and Pinjarra will both be able to hold race meetings during the winter months?

Mr M. McGOWAN: We are very confident that it will be under new management. I will seek the advice of Mr Bennett.

Mr R.B. Bennett: We are not involved with the Belmont redevelopment. We understand that Belmont would be out of use for approximately 12 months. Belmont would normally run about 93 meetings a year. Over that period, it would be able to hold about 65 meetings at Ascot. The new track at Ascot has held up extremely well over the summer period. It probably ranks as one of the best tracks in Australia. I do not think we have a problem with Ascot holding up. With respect to the other 30 meetings, the government's grants have been utilised in doing improvement works to the tracks at Northam, Bunbury and Pinjarra, the idea being that we will

Chairman; Mr J. Mcgrath; Mr Peter Watson; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Trevor Sprigg; Mr Mick Murray

slightly extend the seasons at each of those venues and absorb those extra meetings by an extension of the season at each venue. In the next fortnight we are due to sit down with Perth Racing and work out the exact problem. We will then be in a position to determine precisely what meetings might be held at what tracks.

Mr J. McGRATH: On the same subject of tracks, this time last year the minister made a very profound and prophetic statement, which was quoted in *The West Australian*. He said he did not rule out the possibility of racing being held at Lark Hill one day, which is not in his electorate but right alongside his electorate. A lot of people in that area are very excited about the prospect of a race meeting being held at Lark Hill. It is on the railway line. It is in the fastest growth area in the metropolitan area. There would be more punters in the minister's electorate than there would be in mine. There is a ready market down there. Is the department ruling out Lark Hill as a venue that could maybe be the venue for some mid-week meetings?

The CHAIRMAN: Member, is that a general question or are you pointing to an item?

Mr J. McGRATH: I am pointing to the line "Racing and Wagering Western Australia". That is the only line I can find.

Mr M. McGOWAN: He is just talking about the vibe of the section.

The CHAIRMAN: If the minister is happy to answer, I am happy to let it go.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I still think that what I said last year is accurate. I recall what I said and I recall that the member agreed that he would like to see race meetings held at Lark Hill and I think he said something to that effect recently. The problem is that it is relatively new and it has always been used as a training facility, with the exception of an occasional picnic meeting, which I understand were very successful. The improvements that we are making to that facility, which will start very shortly, will go a long way towards allowing that to happen in the future, although at the moment it is being improved as a training facility. We should bear in mind that spending nearly \$5.5 million on it is a good start.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: When we were in the previous section, the minister said we may be able to chat about what is on the top of page 887. It is not in this section. It relates to RWWA developing plans. The department has been very successful. I have said that to the minister privately. I will say publicly now that it has been astoundingly successful. It is a great credit to all staff. I refer to country trotting in particular, although I understand metropolitan trotting is getting a bit perplexed about where it may fit into this process. To the minister's credit, he said he would be influenced by the people around him now with the money he has responsibility for, which is a great working relationship. The minister indicated that someone could tell me what we can expect to see in terms of expenditure. Expenditure is not the issue. That is a B-grade issue. The A-grade issue is an overall game plan for trotting concerning issues such as 1 000 metre tracks and other related issues about where this is going that members of my electorate are on my back about.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, that is not technically part of this section but if you are happy to answer it -

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is part of the vibe. I did say to the member for Avon that we would discuss this in this section. I understand that the trots may be concerned about what component of the money it will receive, but it need not worry - it will receive a significant amount of money.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I do not doubt that.

[5.40 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: As to the exact amount, I have not worked it out yet but the \$20 million to \$25 million RWWA money has been spent in accordance with the needs of the industry on the advice of the gentlemen surrounding me and the board of RWWA as to what actually suits the needs of the industry as opposed to what might suit the government's political interests. The member can see the evidence of that in that the government has spent a significant amount of money in the member's electorate and the electorate of the member for Murray. That is the way I intend to keep on spending the money. We will get to the trots. It has another year to run. A program will be rolled out for the trots as well. It will be spent in accordance with the needs of the trots and the industry rather than what might be a pet project for somebody. Racing and Wagering WA informs me that it spent \$700 000 fixing some roofs at Gloucester Park three months ago. There is some effort going in.

Mr R.B. Bennett: I will clarify that. We have done a study. We need to bear in mind that it is one thing for the clubs to say that they are not getting any money, but we really need to have a plan to decide what we can do before spending money. We have just recently concluded a study at Bunbury for the Bunbury Turf Club and the Bunbury harness club. That document has now been made available to the regional advisory group. It is now looking at whether a co-location may be the best answer for that area. We will be looking at a similar project in Albany to see what the needs of the industry are in that area. We looked at a co-location at Northam. It was not

Chairman; Mr J. Mcgrath; Mr Peter Watson; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Trevor Sprigg; Mr Mick Murray

feasible because of the topography of the race club, which precluded the establishment of a trotting track. In part, the clubs have to be somewhat patient. We have \$25 million to be spent over three years, and we are not even one year into that. Money has been nominally allocated to Northam. A concept plan has recently been concluded for the Pinjarra harness club. The harness clubs have lagged the thoroughbred clubs in some respects in getting their plans to the table. That was mainly due to the need to make some fairly prompt decisions regarding thoroughbred tracks, which were showing signs of deterioration. As the minister mentioned earlier, there are nearly 64 clubs in this state and effectively about 62 racetracks. It is not viable or feasible that all 62 racetracks be brought up to modern standards. We need to be very careful where we spend what is a limited resource.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I have already said that the department has done well with the racing industry. When will members of Parliament and other interested parties see an overall industry plan to show what will happen with the trots? Five years ago a very hot debate was occurring in thoroughbreds about which clubs were going to close. The department has killed all that nonsense, much to its credit. The same argument is occurring in trots. That is what I am saying. This is not really about who gets the money, although I am interested in my patch. That is a B-grade issue. The A-grade issue is what will happen to the industry. That is what I am interested to hear.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I understand the concerns. As I understand it, RWWA has a trotting representative, Ross Cooper, on the board. The board is about to deal with these issues shortly. I do not want to pre-empt what it will say and do, so I will let the board members deal with it. I will hear the recommendation shortly. In terms of government money, I am particularly excited by the prospect of bringing both clubs in Bunbury to a single facility. If the member has been to the Bunbury Turf Club recently, he will know that it could do with some work. The club is very popular. It had a carnival - I think they called it - a few weeks ago. To bring the two clubs together and provide them with brand-new facilities and a wonderful track will be fantastic.

Mr J. McGRATH: There might be a problem with training facilities. The galloper trainers are telling me that they will probably lose some training tracks unless the trotting track is placed in the middle of the course, which is a logistical problem. I support what RWWA is doing. Having spoken to both trotting and racing people, I believe there is general support for it.

Mr M. McGOWAN: We also need support from the local council, which, as I understand it, is quite strong.

Mr J. McGRATH: We know the former mayor - the member for Bunbury.

Mr M. McGOWAN: If the local council is supportive, which I assume it is, that could be one of the most exciting regional racing developments in Australia. It is something that people from around the country will come to look at if we do it right.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I have a question about what I think is a core issue for the trots. Concerning the board making a decision, there is a question about 1 000-metre tracks. Will that decision be made by the trotting industry or Gloucester Park or will it be a decision about how tracks will look? Will the decision come from the department?

Mr R.B. Bennett: There is a trend around Australia for 1 000-metre tracks. In some cases they are going to 1 200 and 1 400-metre tracks. It will not be any surprise to the member that some of the trotting clubs in country areas think that they should have a 1 400-metre track so that they can compete with Gloucester Park. There is no doubt that a bigger track does provide a better opportunity for horses' chances in a race. However, there has been nothing to prove that a bigger track improves the turnover or produces better horses. It is an issue that has not been resolved. Our view would be that a bigger track would be advantageous but not necessary to produce a first-class harness event.

Mr T.R. SPRIGG: I refer to self-serve terminals listed under "Works in Progress" at page 897. An amount of \$9.964 million has been allocated in capital works for the terminals. How many of the terminals are currently operating in local TABs? How many will be operating in the future as we move through the forward estimates?

Mr R.B. Bennett: It is a budget estimate. When the budget was put together, it envisaged self-service terminals in the agencies and PubTabs. We have approval from the Gaming and Wagering Commission to conduct the trial. At the moment we have 20 machines operating in Western Australia. The outcome of the trial has been disappointing in the agency environment because people would rather deal with human beings -

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Also because idiots like me cannot work out how to use the machines.

Mr R.B. Bennett: I will not comment on that. They have been very successful in PubTabs. At the moment we are re-evaluating the program to determine what the best use of the terminals may be. They probably have a

Chairman; Mr J. Mcgrath; Mr Peter Watson; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Trevor Sprigg; Mr Mick Murray

place in the smaller PubTabs where we could do away with wall boards and a terminal on a counter that is normally operated by a bar person. The bar person is normally more interested in pouring beer than processing tickets. They could help in that environment. Once we have formulated a plan we will return to the Gaming and Wagering Commission to seek its approval for the distribution of the machines. It will have to be under adult supervision and restricted to licensed premises.

[5.50 pm]

Mr T.R. SPRIGG: Is it envisaged that they will be located in places other than TAB agencies, such as malls or taverns that do not actually have PubTabs?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The government has not made any decision on it. There was controversy six or eight months ago about the 20 that were being run as trials. As Mr Bennett said, the results have been to some extent disappointing, because people like dealing face to face with a pleasant and friendly TAB operator. However there is some scope in pubs that have PubTabs.

Mr T.R. SPRIGG: Is the minister saying that they will only go into pubs that have PubTabs?

Mr M. McGOWAN: We have not made a decision yet.

Mr T.R. SPRIGG: So they could go into a shopping mall?

Mr M. McGOWAN: No, there is absolutely no prospect of them going anywhere outside an existing TAB agency or PubTab. However, we have not yet made a decision about whether they will go into those venues.

Mr R.B. Bennett: If they were put into a pub, that pub would have to go through the process of becoming a PubTab. They are not something that could be wheeled in and put in the corner. The venue would become a formal PubTab, subject to all the rules, requirements and supervision that any other PubTab is subject to. We never contemplated putting them in any venue other than one where they would be under adult supervision at all times.

Mr M. McGOWAN: In Victoria they are quite common in those sorts of venues, but they are not installed in any venue outside authorised betting agencies.

Mr T.R. SPRIGG: Put them next to the cigarette machines.

Mr J. McGRATH: I refer to the line item "New Business Initiatives - Racing" on page 897 of the *Budget Statements*. My question is about RWWA's contract with Sky Channel. I am personally a bit disappointed with the service offered by Sky Channel to Western Australian racing. I often sit at home on Saturdays and watch the races at Ascot or Belmont.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Does the member bet over the Internet as well?

Mr J. McGRATH: I do not bet; I just watch the races. They do not cross to the races until the horses are mostly into the barrier. We do not get the same service that other states get. In Brisbane they show the horses walking around the mounting yard.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Do they show the yellow roses at Flemington?

Mr J. McGRATH: Sky Channel, in some instances, pays only lip service to Western Australian racing. What are the details of RWWA's contract with Sky Channel? When will it cease? What will be the situation then for ongoing coverage on television of Western Australian racing?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I find it very hard to believe that the member for South Perth sits at home watching the races on a Saturday and does not place a bet. I did not think there was anyone in the whole country who sat and watched the races for fun, without placing a bet, but if that is the member's idea of a good time, that is his business. Mr Bennett will deal with the technical aspects of the member's question.

Mr R.B. Bennett: We are somewhat at the mercy of Sky Channel, which controls what coverage is given to which venues. Whether we like it or not, Western Australia is not considered overly critical to the eastern states coverage of thoroughbred racing in particular. The member might have noticed earlier this week an article by Alistair Robinson from the Western Australian Turf Club, which stated that TVN, the thoroughbred-only channel, has made it clear that it will not be covering Perth racing. That is an issue that we must work on, not only with Sky Channel. TVN has a similar view. It needs to be remembered that, eight years ago, we had only two programs a week on Sky Channel - the midweek and weekend meetings at Ascot or Belmont. Today, I think 12 meetings a week are covered by Sky Channel, which is a significant increase from where we were and probably better reflects the share of Australian racing that is generated by Western Australia. Part of the problem is the timing of the jump of the events, particularly if one event is delayed due to a fracas because a

Chairman; Mr J. Mcgrath; Mr Peter Watson; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Trevor Sprigg; Mr Mick Murray

horse does not want to go into the stalls or some other delay arises during the course of the day. We work very closely with Sky Channel. As I said, over the past eight years we have developed a good rapport with it and our interstate turnover is considerable now compared with eight years ago. We are aware of the problems but I cannot say that there is an easy solution or even a reasonably quick fix to it.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I refer to the line item on new business initiatives at page 897. There seems to be a reasonable growth in what used to be called the non-core business of the TAB, such as the fight between Anthony Mundine and Danny Green. I heard on radio that there was a considerable increase in wagering on that fight.

Mr M. McGOWAN: A lot of Western Australians lost a lot of money on that fight.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The minister might have, but I did not because I am not interested in gambling. Has that business grown to a stage at which it is worth looking at how it is marketed within a TAB agency? The TAB agencies or PubTabs are often tucked away in a corner and are located in obscure places. In tomorrow's paper there will be a good section on the odds for the football and rugby betting, and the World Cup football is coming up. Some people who do not bet on horses go to the TAB to bet on other events using their favourite numbers. I am sure that a market is being developed for people who bet on the AFL, but who do not bet on anything else.

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is a good question. Each TAB agency is an individual business and they often make business decisions on what they think is in their interests, which is what a small business does. I agree with the member that there is a big market for people who are not interested in the racing codes but who are interested in betting on other codes they follow. Agents should be encouraged to take up that market more fulsomely. I defer to Mr Bennett.

Mr R.B. Bennett: Fixed-odds betting has probably been our quickest growing product since it was introduced. Even this year it has increased by about 30 per cent. One of the issues that has held it back somewhat has been our inability to display the prices for the different events. The member will appreciate that there are 700 or 800 different events. To get the odds for each event, a customer must go through wads of printout pages to find out what is the current price before placing a bet. We are looking at introducing customer information terminals into all the outlets; that is, stand-alone agencies and PubTabs. That will allow a customer to enter a number and obtain the current price for the event that the customer is interested in. We believe that will make an enormous difference to fixed-odds betting. We conducted a trial of customer information terminals in conjunction with the self-serve terminals. The turnover on fixed-odds betting in those agencies went up by between 20 per cent and 25 per cent. That will start to happen in the next 12 months.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I refer to the works in progress listed on page 897. Have any further works been done on radio reception for racing in country areas? It is an ongoing saga.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I know it is an interest to the member for Collie.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Do not worry about the advertisements on the television; we would just like a radio reception.

Mr R.B. Bennett: We have improved the radio reception in York and Geraldton, because we were able to acquire a stronger transmitter. In some areas of the state we continue to have a problem. It is not a matter of us saying what we want; we must go through the Australian Broadcasting Authority, which has plans for each area. It is quite protective of the existing airwave usage. In the southern area in particular there are a couple of dead pockets that we are well aware of. It is a matter of getting the ABA to change its views.

The CHAIRMAN: That concludes our consideration of that division. The question now is -

That the clauses, schedules and titles of the bills be agreed to.

Question put and passed.

Committee adjourned at 6.00 pm
