

TAB — PRIVATISATION

1000. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Racing and Gaming:

I refer to the chairman of Harness Racing Australia, Geoff Want's, comments at the Australian Harness Racing Awards last month that in every state of Australia the privatisation of totalisator agency boards has been a disaster for the harness racing industry.

- (1) When the minister privatises the WA TAB, how will he ensure that corporate bookmakers return money to the racing industry?
- (2) On the back of Mr Want's comments, what plans does the minister have to ensure that the new owners of the WA TAB keep the industry sustainable?

Mr T.K. WALDRON replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for the question, but it is based on the government selling the TAB. We have not made any decisions and we are not looking at that until the early part of next year.

Mr M.P. Murray: Discount it—you are on your feet.

The SPEAKER: Member for Collie–Preston!

Mr T.K. WALDRON: No, we are looking at it. Of course, we are looking at it. The member knows that an industry group was formed, which I think was a really good idea, and employed Ray Gunston to do a report. That report has been presented today and it takes the industry through the pros and cons of privatisation. The Treasurer and I met with Ray Gunston and Michael Grant from the committee.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, you can ask your own question later. I call you to order for the second time.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: We met with them to look at the pros and cons. The committee is really happy with what Ray Gunston has done, because, as Michael said, he has educated them about the real pros and cons of this. An early criticism—remember, we have not started the full process—was that we would not consult with the industry. We have consulted with the industry, and yesterday the Treasurer and I gave the guarantee that as the process goes forward, we will take the industry with us on that process because we realise the importance of the racing industry. That was made clear by me and the Treasurer yesterday. It was great that the Treasurer was at that meeting. We will look at it, and if it does not stack up, we will probably walk away from it, but let us have a look at it. Industry itself is more than happy now to have a look at it because it understands what is going on. Let the process happen, and then the government will make a decision.