

NORTHBRIDGE NIGHTCLUBS — EARLIER CLOSING TRIAL

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

I refer to the decision by the Liquor Commission of Western Australia to extend a trial that forces nightclubs in Northbridge to close earlier.

- (1) What discussions did the minister have with the Director of Liquor Licensing about this trial extension; and on what evidence was this decision based?
- (1) Will the minister ask the commission to publish the reasons for this decision and the terms of reference for the trial, as it has refused to do so despite numerous requests?
- (3) Is the minister able to explain why the extended trading permits held by the hotels in Northbridge have not been subject to the same measures?
- (4) Has Transperth been asked to increase services in light of these earlier closing times and the fact that patrons will now have to wait hours before being able to access buses and trains?

Mr T.K. WALDRON replied:

- (1)–(4) I thank the member for the question. As the member knows, the government has a strategy on Northbridge. We have worked very closely with the Australian Hotels Association, and with the Big N group, which the nightclubs are a part of, and I have met with them on several occasions, as I have done with the other groups. The trial period, which was agreed to—although I note that the nightclubs had some resistance to it—was to bring the closing time back to 5.00 am. As members would know, we have had a lot of problems and issues with social misbehaviour et cetera in Northbridge. The Premier and I, and others, went to Northbridge on a Saturday night and met with them, had a look around Northbridge and looked at a lot of the things that they are doing there. The nightclubs appealed to the Director of Liquor Licensing about the 5.00 am closing time. As I understand it, that appeal has been upheld. But it is only a trial. I think that trial finishes in early April. We will then look at the situation again. But it is only a trial.

The other question was about transport. Obviously decisions were made regarding the last train for that trial period, as I understand it. Once again, at the end of the trial, we will sit down with them all again and assess the situation. But I have to say that the nightclubs have been vocal. I actually went to a meeting with them—I am trying to think of the name of the chap I spoke to—and discussed some of these issues with them. They discussed it I think very openly with me. They have put forward their concerns. I do obviously meet with the Director of Liquor Licensing. That is where the situation lies at this stage.