

RAILWAY STAKES — POLICE PRESENCE

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

I refer to the heavy police presence, including uniformed and specialist police, at the Railway Stakes meeting at Ascot last weekend.

- (1) Is the minister aware that the police threatened to close down liquor outlets at Ascot, and possibly the entire venue, in the middle of this million-dollar race meeting?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house of the basis on which this threat was made to the Western Australian Turf Club?
- (3) Who in the government is in charge of liquor policy?
- (4) Is there any concern that the success of the Winterbottom Stakes or January's Perth Cup may be jeopardised as a result of this heavy-handed police presence?

Mr T.K. WALDRON replied:

I thank the member for his question; and, if it is his birthday, happy birthday.

- (1)-(4) I was at the Railway Stakes on Saturday, and it was brought to my attention that the Western Australian Turf Club was not happy with some of the enforcement. It was brought to my attention that the concerns were not with police enforcement; they were with the enforcement of one of the officers of the Department of Racing, Gaming and Liquor. I asked the turf club to get the full details and to write to Barry Sargeant, the Director of Liquor Licensing, and to send a copy to me so that I could follow up on that.

One point I want to highlight is that there have been a lot of reports about heavy-handedness at race meetings in Western Australia. I am fully aware of those reports. However, this government has taken a really strong stance on liquor. We have lots of problems in society with the consumption and management of liquor. We are trying to change that culture. I will not support allowing unaccompanied children in licensed areas or the supply of liquor to underage people. I understand the member's concern, and I will continue to comment on it, but we cannot condone venues supplying underage people with alcohol. If there is unfair enforcement —

Mr M.P. Murray: Are you saying that the turf club is doing that?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: No, I am not saying that the turf club is doing it, but that has happened on occasions.

Mr M.P. Murray interjected.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: The member should just listen. If we do not control the supply of liquor at these venues, it will cause huge problems and these venues will end up being closed. A balance is required.

Mr M.P. Murray interjected.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: The member should let me answer the question. One issue that has been raised with me, for which I have some sympathy, is the behaviour and role of security guards and the way that they enforce the law. I have some concerns with that issue. I have spoken with the Director of Liquor Licensing. It is the police's call. It is not a rule or a regulation, but a suggestion was made to allow a recommended number of security guards per person at venues or events. It is only a suggestion. A lot of people throughout Western Australia have taken that to be the required number. For instance, people from the Wagin Woolorama have raised the same issue with me. The Director of Liquor Licensing and I recommend that venues that want to hold events should meet with the police, work out their real needs and then apply appropriate procedures. When there were problems at the Woolorama and the Kulin races, I was proactive; I met with police and most of those problems have now been overcome.

Mr E.S. Ripper: They are known centres for antisocial behaviour! What's going on here?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: No. I agree with the member that the racing industry is important to Western Australia. It employs many people and a lot of people get great enjoyment from the industry. We do not want racing venues to be over-policed.

Mr M.P. Murray interjected.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Does the member condone unaccompanied children wandering around licensed areas?

Mr M.P. Murray: No.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Good. Does the member condone the supply of alcohol to underage people?

Mr M.P. Murray: No.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: That is good; I am with the member on that. A balance is required. I respect the question that the member asked.

Mr M.P. Murray interjected.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: The turf club will write to me and I will follow up the issues with it. I will then meet with the turf club to try to overcome any issues. If people have acted outside their jurisdiction, we will take action.