

**TAB — PRIVATISATION**

*Motion*

**HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural)** [10.08 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house calls on the government to rule out any proposed privatisation of the TAB due to the —

- (a) adverse implications for regional and metropolitan racing, pacing and greyhound clubs;
- (b) adverse implications for community sport and recreation organisations; and
- (c) money being wasted investigating such a clearly flawed action.

**Hon DARREN WEST:** I rise today to make a contribution on a very, very important issue in my electorate—the future of regional racing. I refer to not only thoroughbred racing, but also trotting and greyhound racing as well as the spin-offs from the TAB back into community sport and recreation programs. Anyone who visits a country racetrack would see the importance of the backing of the TAB and putting back the funds that are injected through betting into stakes for racing, which is the cornerstone, of course, of the meetings. Many very well-known jockeys and trainers began their career on small country racetracks through the opportunities that were provided on some of the less capable horses that are bred; they got those opportunities to begin their apprenticeship in regional areas. With the privatisation of the TAB, as has been mooted—I will go into more detail during my comments—there is no doubt, members, that country racing as we know it will finish. That would be a very sad day. Therefore, the idea of this motion is to put forward the very good reasons as to why the government should not proceed with the sale of the TAB and why it should not even investigate the sale of the TAB. The government should rule this out here and now as something that it is considering.

As I have said before both in this house and outside this house, this government has completely trashed the state's finances. The government has lost this state's AAA credit rating and been totally fiscally incompetent, and it is now looking for ways to plug the holes in the financial dyke. However, the privatisation of the TAB should not be one of those ways. The government should consider changing the way it spends money, rather than looking at the privatisation of assets at all costs and no matter what the implications may be.

I will now do something that I have never done before and that I may never, ever do again. I am going to agree with something that Jeff Kennett, the former Premier of Victoria, has said of a political nature. Of course I support the work that Jeff Kennett does with beyondblue and other organisations, but when it comes to politics, I do not think there would be two people who are much further apart. On 21 August last year, there was an article in *The West Australian* by Gareth Parker, state political editor of *The West Australian*, titled “Kennett rues selling TAB in Victoria”. As members may know, Jeff Kennett wreaked a trail of havoc through the state of Victoria. He brutally amalgamated local governments. He did some things as Premier that I find very, very unsavoury. One of those things was the privatisation of the Victorian TAB. If Jeff Kennett says that the privatisation of the TAB in Victoria was one of the biggest mistakes that he ever made, it clearly would be a big mistake, in my view, to privatise the TAB in this state. The article says —

Former Victorian premier Jeff Kennett said privatising his state's TAB was one of the worst decisions he has made.

That is what he said in hindsight—after the sale of the TAB in Victoria. The article continues —

As debate rages around whether the Barnett Government should follow suit two decades after Mr Kennett became the first premier to sell a betting business, Mr Kennett said it was incumbent on governments to act in the interests of the racing industry.

Of course, at the heart of this motion this morning is that very question—what is in the best interests of the racing industry, especially, in my case, as a member representing a regional seat, all the small country race clubs not only in my seat, but across the state. The article goes on to say—

“If, when we sold the Victorian TAB, we knew what was going to happen with corporate book-making, we wouldn't have done it,” he said.

That should be endorsement enough that this is a bad idea and should be shelved immediately. The rhetoric from the government should be that it is not even considering this; it is not going to waste any more of the state's money investigating this; it is dead and buried and not an option. But I fear that is not the case. The article goes on to say —

**Extract from Hansard**

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“We privatised it in the best interests of the racing industry but what happened is these foreigners have come in here knowing they have the most liberal laws to operate in any country and they are stealing TAB customers so they can dominate the market.

“They are not interested in racing, the horses or the welfare of the trainers and owners. They just see racing as a product, along with every other sport.”

The TAB has an equalisation scheme under which country meetings that would not be viable in their own right are cross-subsidised by betting in other places. A person who lives on the other side of Australia can bet on a horserace in Northam, and the proceeds from that betting will go back to that race club in Northam. I often cite the story of a couple who now live in Northam—he is a teacher, and his wife works at the Wheatbelt Development Commission—who were sitting in a pub in Coffs Harbour and saw that the trots were on at Northam and thought if that town is big enough to have a trotting track, maybe they should look at moving there; and they are still living there five years later. So, in addition to the financial benefits for country race clubs, the fact that a town is flashed up on Sky television or a racing channel somewhere and people can get involved in a race in that town raises awareness of some of our regional towns and regional race clubs. I always like to tell that very good story about how some very good people came with their skills to Northam in Western Australia because of a race that they saw on the telly.

Paragraph (b) of my motion refers to the spin-offs that are available to other sports—not just the three codes of racing that I have referred to— as a result of the TAB being in public hands. I want to quote from an article in *The Weekend West* of 13–14 September 2014 headed “TAB sale ‘threatens sports’”. The article goes on to say —

WA’s peak independent sports body says selling off the TAB would rip the heart out of community sport and recreation by robbing it of about a third of its State funding.

Not only are we now looking at gutting the racing industry, we are looking at cutting by as much as one-third, according to this article, the funds that go to other sports. The article goes on to say —

WA Sports Federation chief executive Rob Thompson said funding made available through the sports wagering account, which is topped up using TAB profits, made up 32 per cent of the \$14.3 million allocated to community sport and recreation organisations.

Mr Thompson said the account, which received \$4.5 million in sports betting income and unclaimed money in 2013–14, had grown almost 15 per cent each year, helping to bolster WA’s sport and recreation industry.

He said a privatisation of the TAB would almost certainly mean the sports wagering account would cease to exist — a “devastating” blow for junior and senior sport.

He was concerned that the significant threat to the sport and recreation industry was being left out of the debate.

I think that largely it has been left out of the debate, and it is too important an issue to leave out of the debate. I expect that the line from the government and members opposite will be, “We have not made a decision; we have not ruled the sale of the TAB in or out”—even though I will quote later in my contribution remarks to the contrary. I think that will be the position of the government. I would say to the government, in response to that: stop wasting money on the sale of an asset that should not be sold; stop wasting money on a clearly flawed idea; rule out the sale of the TAB immediately, and target that spend into something that is of more value. That is what I would call on government members to do. As I said, the state’s AAA credit rating has gone. A lot of money has been wasted by this government. The state’s finances are in disarray. Two ratings agencies have downgraded the state’s economy from AAA to AA+. The federal economy, in which there is allegedly a budget emergency, still has a AAA credit rating. The position in this state is worse than that. State debt has gone from \$3.8 billion to \$25 billion. I say to the government: do not spend any more money on a flawed idea; rule out the sale of the TAB, and spend that money on something valuable and useful.

There has been much speculation about the sale of the TAB. Usually, when there is such strong speculation, I think it is fairly safe to assume that there is something in the story. I will quote again from *The Weekend West* of 13–14 September 2014 and a feature that I often read and find very interesting called “Leadership Q+A”. This particular question and answer session was with David Hobbs, the chief executive of Greyhounds WA, and he was asked questions about what does he do in his spare time, what is his favourite television show, and what is his favourite place to go on holidays. He was also asked the very important question, “Do you think the TAB should be privatised?”, and his answer was —

It’s now looking likely that the TAB will be sold, —

This is a very senior industry player who is of that view —

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possibly in the second round of asset sales but the three codes in the racing industry—thoroughbreds, harness and greyhound—are still waiting on a consultant’s report that will tell us how we would fare if the TAB is privatised.

If a consultant’s report has been commissioned on how the codes will fare after privatisation, it is fairly safe to draw the assumption that there will be a privatisation, or certainly there is a strong chance that there will be a privatisation. His answer continues —

How will distribution be dealt with in the future? We need to be assured that we won’t be worse off under a private sale than we have been under government.

I can tell the chief executive officer that there will be a privatisation because Jeff Kennett has told us there will, given his experience of two decades ago. I think the chief executive officer is being somewhat hopeful, but I think the reality is that his worst fears will certainly be realised.

I will quote the debate that happened in the other house on this in a few moments, but a regional newspaper ran an article on it. Being a regional member, I researched the implications for regional areas. As a regional member, I thought that was my duty; I will let others make a contribution about the issues in the metropolitan area. Heather McNeill wrote a very good article headed “Discussion of TAB privatisation heats up” that appeared in the *North West Telegraph* on 3 September. The article reads —

The debate about whether to privatise the TAB continued in Parliament last month, with the sale considered as part of the State Government’s second round of asset sell-offs.

I interpolate that the asset sell-offs are a direct result of fiscal mismanagement, not because they are a good idea. The article continues —

In an often heated exchange, shadow minister for racing and gaming Michael Murray said privatising the TAB could reduce the State’s racing clubs from 55 to as low as 15.

Let us just think about that for a moment. If there are only 15 racing clubs left in Western Australia, where will the opportunities for owners, trainers, jockeys, strappers and feed suppliers come from? We will have just the elite—the very wealthy who own the horses; all the part-timers, the hobby owners and the interested souls will not have any opportunities, if we have 15 race clubs, to be involved in the racing industry. What a shame that would be. That would tear the heart out of so many of our rural communities. The article continues —

“A percentage of the turnover that goes through the betting machines goes back to those clubs,” he said.

“If that money is gone ... Leinster, Roebourne and maybe even Port Hedland will be gone because if they do not have support from the TAB, they will not survive.”

Port Hedland Turf Club president Arnold Carter, who runs six races a year including the Hedland Cup, said he was against the sale of the TAB and the State Government would have to show him some dramatic figures to change his mind.

After reading the article, I contacted the largest racing club in my electorate—the Geraldton Turf Club—which holds 19 meetings a year. Tremendous horses have run on that large provincial track—some very eminent Western Australian horses and some of our finest jockeys. The spokesperson for the club told me that without the TAB, that club is finished. That is the biggest provincial centre in my electorate and the largest club. Members could argue that Northam is a more significant club because it has the backup track should there be inclement weather in Perth, but Geraldton—a significant regional club—has told me that there is no way known it can survive in an environment without the support of the TAB. It would just about completely gut racing in my electorate, and we would all have to come down to Perth. What a shame that would be.

Another article of regional significance appeared in the *Kalgoorlie Miner*. Kalgoorlie is very famous for its racing round. The article reads —

Racing clubs in small regional towns such as Leonora and Leinster will be the first to suffer if the State Government sells the TAB, according to the Country Racing Association of WA.

Secretary John Biggs said the detriment to provincial clubs would also have a significant flow on effect in small towns where race meets are often the biggest event of the year.

Concern over the potential privatisation of the TAB has prompted the racing industry to engage consultant Ray Gunston who is in the process of preparing a report detailing the implications for the industry.

Such is the fear of the Country Racing Association of WA, it has already commissioned a report to see what the impacts will be. The article continues —

**Extract from *Hansard***

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“A race meeting in some of these country clubs is the biggest thing they have in town for the whole year and it’s important that we’re able to continue that because it does affect the morale.

That is another good reason. Not only will opportunities for the racing industry be lost, but everybody loves to dress up and go to the races. Just because people live in a regional area far from the city, why should they not have that opportunity? Those people will not have that opportunity if the TAB is privatised. The article continues —

A portion of TAB revenue is tipped back into the industry every year with distributions totalling about \$130 million in 2013–14.

That is \$130 million, members, that goes back into regional racing as a result of distributions from the TAB! The article continues —

Each club receives a certain sum of money per race 100 per cent of which must go to race stakes.

The race stakes are very important, because a winning horse has a trainer, jockey, requires feeding, has a strapper, and the owner needs to move the horse around. The racing industry has so many ripple effects in regional country towns. It is one of the best for putting money directly back into towns. I will not generalise, but most people I know who are into horses spend more money on their horses than they do on themselves. They are happy to put that money back through feed merchants and staff, and provide rural jobs and opportunities.

The article continues —

Mr Biggs said he did not think there was any doubt those distributions would fail if the TAB became privately owned.

“The small clubs that don’t present a turnover or a profit to the TAB are always going to be the first ones to be affected,” he said.

“The owners are going to want to ensure they look after wherever they can get their best returns.” Kalgoorlie–Boulder Racing Club chief executive Tim Beaver said the industry would want a guarantee from the Government that distributions would be unaffected if the TAB was sold.

This is ongoing, sustainable money coming from the TAB, not just a one-off grant to fix up the grandstand. This is the sustainable money that clubs need. The article continues —

Racing and Gaming Minister Terry Waldron said he would only support the sale of the TAB “if it were in the best interests of the racing industry”.

I think that comment might lead someone to think that it is dead in the water and it is not going to happen, but it does not seem that way when we read on a bit further.

There is some concern over the National Party’s position on the TAB. I have with me a media release from Mick Murray, MLA, member for Collie–Preston, shadow Minister for Regional Roads; Racing and Gaming. The media release states that he moved a motion in the Parliament and the Liberals and Nationals failed to oppose the TAB sell-off. The media release reads —

- Liberal and National MPs have backed the privatisation of the WA’s TAB
- Not a single Liberal or National Party MP supported WA Labor’s motion condemning the privatisation of the TAB.
- Liberal and National MPs have ignored the pleas from the racing industry and their electorates

That is what happened in the Parliament. I have the debate here; I am pressed for time so I will not read it all, but anyone who wants to check *Hansard* from that debate in the other place can.

I also have with me some comments from the Premier that appeared in the press. An article by Daniel Emerson—a very highly regarded journalist—that appeared in *The West Australian* on 1 August states that the Premier said —

... the Government “probably will” sell the TAB, ...

Can members see the many mixed messages flying around here? The racing and gaming minister has said he will sell it if it is in the interests of regional racing—it has been clearly demonstrated that it will not—and now *The West Australian* reads —

Colin Barnett said yesterday that the Government “probably will” sell the TAB, his strongest indication yet after previously ruling it out and then putting the agency on a list of asset sales for consideration. The Premier said the Government’s first round of asset sales, made necessary by the loss of the State’s

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AAA credit rating in September, would focus on land but the TAB could follow. “I think the Government probably will sell the TAB but it’s not going to be in the first group of asset sales,” ...

I think we have a fairly strong indication there from the leader of the Liberal–National government that the TAB will be sold. I think I have put some really good arguments to members on why that should not happen. I think in the interests of racing in my electorate and the flow-on jobs and quality of life that that provides, it is a silly idea. As I have indicated, there are flow-on effects for not only racing, but also other sports, and significant amounts of money are being tipped into community sport and recreation. But I would also call on the government to come out and be clear about it, rule out the sale of the TAB, and not waste any more money investigating such a silly idea. The government has wasted enough; let us get serious about the TAB and keep it publicly owned.

**HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the House)** [10.28 am]: I will make a few comments about this issue on behalf of the Minister for Racing and Gaming. I am very conscious of racing, particularly in the regions. The Hannans Handicap was held yesterday in Kalgoorlie, my home town, and the Kalgoorlie Cup will be held next Saturday. I have attended those events a number of times over the years and have a deep personal regard for racing in the regions. Having said that, we are talking about something that may or may not occur, and I want to make that perfectly clear from the outset. The Treasurer announced in his budget speech the government’s decision to address the state’s debt issues through an orderly sale of some of the state’s assets. As part of that process, the government will undertake a strategic review of state-owned assets and that includes the TAB, and we have made that quite clear from the outset. However, as the Premier and the Minister for Racing and Gaming have regularly confirmed, the potential sale of the TAB will be considered as part of the second tranche of asset sales next year. I emphasise yet again that no decision has been made at this stage about the sale of the TAB.

The state government and the Western Australian racing industry are the TAB’s major stakeholders. The state government is the owner of the asset and the racing industry is the provider of racing product and a major beneficiary of the TAB’s wagering revenue. Since the budget was delivered in May, the Treasurer and minister have met with Racing and Wagering Western Australia, as the operator of the TAB but also as the racing industry’s governing body, to discuss this issue. RWWA therefore will play a key role in the consideration of a potential sale. I emphasise that again: it will play a key role in the potential sale of the TAB—and it is a potential sale. RWWA has met and will continue to meet with Treasury officials as part of this process.

The Minister for Racing and Gaming, as the minister responsible for racing, has stated that he would support the sale of the TAB only if it were in the best interests of the racing industry and the wider community to do so. However, as most people would understand, in the interests of the broader state finances, the government needs to look at all options. Privatisation itself is a complex issue, but it is important, whatever the outcome, that a sustainable future for the racing industry is achieved.

It is without doubt that distributions to the racing industry under RWWA’s stewardship of the TAB have grown strongly. Returns to community sport via the sports wagering account have also increased steadily over time. The government will carefully consider both these funding streams in any decisions being made.

There are of course important lessons to be learnt from privatisations in other jurisdictions. They have gone about the sale process in very different ways, all producing varying outcomes for the respective racing industries. It is important that we understand the pros and cons of these sales, and the government will certainly do that. Regional racing clubs are often the community glue and provide significant recreational and social values to the community. This will also be a key consideration. The government is also aware that TAB agents have made important investments in the business of the TAB and tens of thousands of Western Australians gain their employment directly and indirectly through the racing industry. This issue is extremely complex. It is not simply a decision to sell the asset, take the money and retire debt. The racing industry is a significant industry, contributing more than \$600 million to the state’s economy each year, and the government is well aware of the requirement to consider its future. The government will do the work to ensure that we have the right information to make a decision that is in the best interests of racing, community sport and the broader community. As I have said, RWWA will continue to be consulted on this issue, but at this stage no decision has been made.

**HON SAMANTHA ROWE (East Metropolitan)** [10.32 am]: I am very pleased to rise to participate in this debate this morning. I would like to thank Hon Darren West for bringing this motion to the house today and I put on the record that obviously it will receive my strong support. The racing industry in Western Australia is vitally important to our economy. The industry employs approximately 34 000 Western Australians. Any significant loss in revenue will clearly have flow-on effects on employees and families who work in that industry. I think Hon Darren West also mentioned that it is not just about trainers and jockeys; we are also talking about strappers, track workers, those who work in hospitality, retailers and the cleaners associated with this industry. It would have quite a devastating impact on the WA racing industry if the privatisation of the TAB were to go ahead, as has been strongly indicated by this government. We are of the view that it will most likely happen, if

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not in the government's first round of asset sales, possibly in the second round. The Premier has made very strong comments about this matter and has supported these comments. It is certainly our view that any privatisation of the TAB will have adverse impacts.

As a metropolitan member of Parliament, I will focus my comments on this motion specifically on Ascot Racecourse in Belmont in my electorate. I would like to point out that racing at Ascot Racecourse and Belmont Park Racecourse has had a proud history, and we should not diminish its sustainability for the sake of propping up this government's mismanaged budget. There have been tough times for this industry. Other forms of entertainment are already competing with racing and of course there is also online gaming, so we need to make sure that we are doing everything we can to support the WA racing industry, and privatising the TAB would certainly not achieve that. The racing industry is also important to the local economy. We know that many families are employed around the Ascot area and that would have huge implications for their employment. Some residents in Belmont and specifically in Ascot have invested millions of dollars in setting up racing-related businesses and enterprises in the area. They have purchased property in historic stable areas and there could be an adverse impact on these people if the privatisation of the TAB were to go ahead. The government also needs to consider these issues when it looks at whether it will go ahead with the privatisation.

The industry obviously offers Belmont the opportunity to be a tourist destination. Ascot racing brings in a large number of tourists each year, so it is a major attraction in the Belmont area. Racing has been conducted at the heritage-listed Ascot Racecourse since 1848 and we should celebrate this.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I am sure the honourable member on her feet is finding it is a bit disconcerting with members in front of her turning around and talking to members next to her.

**Hon SAMANTHA ROWE:** Thank you, Mr President. As I was saying, we should celebrate the fact that racing has been taking place at Ascot since 1848. We do not want the industry to be at risk or damaged because this state government cannot manage its budget. We know that the government has lost its AAA credit rating. We know that the state government cannot manage its finances. But why is it up to the racing industry to prop up a mismanaged budget? This is not about any benefit to WA racing; this is purely and simply about selling a state asset to patch up a poorly managed budget. The government will not get away with this. The residents of Ascot and Belmont and the surrounding communities know what is going on and why the government is doing it, so it should just come clean.

The chief executive officer of Racing and Wagering WA, Richard Burt, said in February that the reason the government will sell the TAB will not be the lack of performance of RWWA or the TAB; it will be purely a financial need. Michael Grant, the president of the Western Australian Racing Trainers' Association, said that the Western Australian TAB successfully operates in a competitive wagering environment, there is no groundswell of support within racing to change the existing structure and the WARTA is cognisant of the government's financial motivation, and nothing more.

I would like to put on the record that an article entitled "Government probably will sell TAB, says Premier" in *The West Australian* of 1 August this year states —

Colin Barnett said yesterday that the Government "probably will" sell the TAB, his strongest indication yet after previously ruling it out and then putting the agency on a list of asset sales for consideration. The Premier said the Government's first round of asset sales, made necessary by the loss of the State's AAA credit rating in September, would focus on land but the TAB could follow.

We believe it is absolute nonsense that this government is not considering the privatisation of the Totalisator Agency Board. Mr Mick Murray moved a motion in the other place about whether the TAB should be privatised. I think it is disappointing that the member for Belmont, who has previously commented in her local paper, the *Southern Gazette*, and in the other place that she is not for the privatisation of the TAB, when push came to shove, was not prepared to cross the floor and stand up to the Premier and stand up for the Belmont community. She is all talk —

**Hon Alyssa Hayden:** How do you know?

**Hon SAMANTHA ROWE:** I am so glad Hon Alyssa Hayden asked that question. I will tell her how I know — Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order, members. All in your own time, not somebody else's time.

**Hon SAMANTHA ROWE:** Thank you, Mr President. An article in the *Southern Gazette* on Tuesday, 2 September, states —

BELMONT MLA Glenys Godfrey spoke against privatising the TAB in Parliament on August 20, but when pressed by Collie MLA Mick Murray as to whether she would cross the floor in a vote she said she would not.

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We now know that she did not cross the floor. The member for Belmont not only refuses to stand up for her electorate on the privatisation of the TAB, but also on the forced council amalgamations. Quite frankly, I believe the member for Belmont is asleep at the wheel; she refuses to stand up for her electorate. It is all talk!

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order, members. Order! It was going very well for quite a long time. Let us get back to one person speaking at a time and that is the member on her feet.

**Hon SAMANTHA ROWE:** Thank you, Mr President. There was quite a lot of hysteria from the members opposite. I must have hit a nerve.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! It is inappropriate, before the member even had a chance to resume her comments, that there were three interjections.

**Hon SAMANTHA ROWE:** The hysteria across the other side of the chamber is deafening and it can only mean that we have hit a nerve.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order. That time there were not three interjections, there were seven. Let us try and start again.

**Hon SAMANTHA ROWE:** Thank you, Mr President. I would like to comment on this media release. It states —

The TAB provides the Government with an ongoing revenue stream returning \$40 million each year. In addition, it provides an estimated \$120 million to the racing industry each year.

Representatives of Belmont Racing and Western Australian Racing more broadly have expressed concern at any move to privatise the TAB, believing that it will seriously damage the industry ...

*“This abandonment of the Belmont Racing Industry by Glenys Godfrey must leave people asking if they can trust her to represent their wishes” ...*

The press release continues —

*“In Glenys Godfrey’s own Parliamentary grievance, she claimed to strongly oppose the sale of the TAB and labelled any such sale as ‘short-term gain for long-term pain’. Yet when push came to shove and there was a vote on the issue in Parliament, she refused to stand up —*

— for her electorate of Belmont. I think that is highly disappointing and the member is clearly asleep at the wheel. I believe that the Western Australian racing industry deserves more.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order.

*Point of Order*

**Hon LIZ BEHJAT:** I have been listening very closely to the member on the other side of the chamber and, in accordance with standing order 45, I find her last comment that the member for Belmont is asleep at the wheel quite offensive. The member for Belmont is a very hardworking member of Parliament, and I ask the member to withdraw that comment.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Members, standing order 45 is there for the good reason that we do not become a kangaroo court in this chamber in terms of condemning members in the other place. But Parliaments are a place for reasonably robust debate at times, so we all have to have a little bit of a thick skin, and I do not think the phrase used by the honourable member on her feet crossed that line. There is not point of order.

*Debate Resumed*

**Hon SAMANTHA ROWE:** Thank you, Mr President. I have only 26 seconds remaining and I want to make it clear that I fully support the WA racing industry and that I believe any move by the Barnett Liberal government to privatise the TAB will have an adverse impact. I think it is about time the government told the people of Western Australia what it intends to do with the TAB.

**HON COL HOLT (South West — Parliamentary Secretary)** [10.45 am]: It is good to have this debate during the Kalgoorlie race round. I would like to quickly congratulate my niece Jerry Noske who won the Boulder Cup last weekend on Red Blast, which is a horse from the Morton stables—so, excellent work!

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I want to put on the record that I remain completely unconvinced that the sale of the Totalisator Agency Board is in the best interests of the racing industry. That is my perspective as a regional member. I want to state some of the key stats from the “Western Australian Racing Industry Economic & Social Impact Report”. The report was released in 2012, which is only a couple of years ago. Some of the key stats are: there are 55 race clubs in Western Australia, of which 52 clubs are in regional Western Australia; there are 874 race meetings held each year, of which 570 occur in regional areas; there are 10 092 race club members, of which 6 717 are in regional areas; 54 per cent of breeders in the racing industry are located in regional areas; 43 per cent of the 16 700 people who have an ownership in racing live in regional Western Australia, particularly in the Peel, wheatbelt and south west regions; nearly 70 per cent of the 1 690 trainers registered in WA live outside the metropolitan area; 2 555 of the 6 737 full-time equivalent jobs are located in regional areas; the industry generates around \$550 million in direct expenditure; and over 50 per cent of the 33 680 people directly involved in racing are in regional Western Australia. It is a significant industry, economic driver and employer in regional Western Australia.

My concerns about the privatisation of the TAB include who will look after those regional interests if the TAB is privatised. Do we expect a commercial operator to look after those regional interests? I want to put a couple of examples to the house. In an event such as when the grandstand roof blew off the York race club, which only has a few race meetings year, but is a significant part of the social fabric for York, would a private organisation running the TAB see fit to invest in a new grandstand? If a self-serve betting machine in a remote or regional area breaks down—let us pick anywhere: Kojonup, Tambellup or Nannup—would we expect a private operator of the TAB to rush to the town to fix the betting machine? If they are making a commercial decision, they probably would not. However, as a service obligation, the operator probably should do so.

I have met with people from the racing industry and they believe that there are two main groups of people who support the racing industry in Western Australia. Firstly, there are the poor and long-suffering owners, who continually invest in racehorses, greyhounds or trotters, hoping for that one big win out of the thousands that race every week. They are integral to and actually prop up the industry. The other group of people who really continue to support the industry are the punters, who make their own choices about what they want to spend their money on and who like to have a flutter on the ponies at the weekend. They are really the biggest financial supporters of the racing industry and I am not sure, from the viewpoint of the government supporting the industry, why we would take away that major element of backing for the racing industry and put it into private hands. I am yet to be convinced, but I think it is diligent to look at the whole issue from a broader perspective. There have been a lot of changes in our communities and our society and in the ways in which we do business; it all changes continuously, at an increasingly rapid pace.

I turn to the second report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Review of the Racing and Wagering Western Australia Acts’ inquiry into the Racing and Wagering Western Australia Acts. Finding 60, at page 148, states —

While privatisation of the TAB has occurred in most other states, there is no long-term benefit for the industry in Western Australia. There is extensive industry support for the existing structure and wagering ownership arrangements under Racing and Wagering Western Australia to continue.

That was in 2010.

**Hon Adele Farina:** How many recommendations from that report has the government implemented?

**Hon COL HOLT:** I do not know.

**Hon Adele Farina:** Zero.

**Hon COL HOLT:** That was four years ago. If we consider the rapid pace of change in our lives, that is quite a long time ago. Are we to not ever say that we should go back and investigate what is now going on in the racing industry in case there is a really good reason to change what we are doing? That is the point. With regard to the motion moved by Hon Darren West, I am of the view that paragraphs (a) and (b) are quite correct, but I certainly will not commit to not looking at the industry in full depth to see what the best outcome would be for the industry. I listened very carefully to Hon Darren West’s arguments. Paragraph (c) of the motion is worded, “money being wasted investigating such a clearly flawed action”, and I had hoped that Hon Darren West would provide evidence to show that the action is clearly flawed, but all he came up with were some media releases and a comment by a former Premier who, in hindsight, said that it was the worst mistake he made, which again came from a media release. I hope Hon Darren West is not basing all of his rigorous thinking on media releases and things that have been reported in the press, because we on this side of the house will look at all the issues and make our decisions based on the best interests of the racing industry and the Western Australian people.

I reiterate that I am still unconvinced that privatisation of the TAB is the right way to go. I think the racing industry itself is taking an approach of saying, “Well, let’s look at how things are changing in terms of our

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product and the way that we sell it". We know that there are now many, many different players in the punting scene in Western Australia; the TAB is no longer the only one. There are attacks all the time from online, interstate and international betting agencies, and we would be mad to not see how that will impact on the TAB and the racing industry. That is why we need to look at those things. Again, I remain unconvinced that we need to sell the TAB because of the impacts it could have on regional racing, but let us look at it, because there are going to be impacts into the out years that are going to change how the TAB operates. I actually think the TAB is doing a really good job in response to its external pressures and I back the TAB, but the racing industry itself has employed Ray Gunston to look at this issue. He was heavily involved in the privatisation of TABs in other states, but the WA racing industry, which is opposed to the sale of the TAB, has gone to Ray Gunston and said, "Look at this on our behalf to see what the best outcome can be for our racing industry", and that is exactly what is happening. The racing industry is not putting its head in the sand like Hon Darren West is; it is actually saying, "Let's have a look and see what the best outcome is for our racing industry."

Again, all the information I have received points to the sale of the TAB not being right for regional racing, and I will keep saying that until I am presented with evidence to the contrary. But if the racing industry came to me tomorrow and said, "Actually, we think we've got this wrong; we actually think we can get a better deal doing this", then I will be prepared to listen to it. That is exactly what Hon Darren West should be doing; instead of putting his head in the sand and dredging up newspaper articles and comments from a Premier who left office 25 years ago, he should do some rigorous thinking and backgrounding and come up with an option that actually helps the racing industry into the future.

**HON ADELE FARINA (South West)** [10.55 am]: I would like to speak in support of the motion moved by Hon Darren West and commend him for moving it, because this is a very important issue in regional Western Australia. The state government has flagged that it is possibly going to sell the TAB as part of its \$6 billion asset sale to pay off its state debt, because it is unable to manage its finances. The very first question one needs to ask is: why are we selling state assets simply because this government is unable to manage its finances? Surely the government should be looking at better financial management in terms of the amount of money it is spending and where it is spending it, rather than selling off state assets.

The sale of the TAB will have a devastating impact on the racing industry, and the lack of any position from the state Liberal and National Parties is creating great uncertainty and loss of confidence in the industry. It is also devaluing the TAB outlets; a number of them are for sale but they cannot be sold because of the uncertainty that is being created by this government's inability to state a clear position, and the fact that it is taking so long to form a view on this issue one way or another.

The TAB is integral to funding racing in Western Australia, but it is also an important contributor to community sports. The industry feels very, very betrayed by the Premier and the National Party because of the position they have taken on this issue. The minister commented that he would only ever consider the privatisation of the TAB if it were in the best interests of the racing industry, but the state government has failed to provide any reassurance to the community that this sale will not go ahead, and that is really not good enough. For the government to come into this place and say, "Well, a decision hasn't been made", is again not good enough because of the uncertainty it creates within the sector.

I would like now to go through some stats. The racing industry adds \$594.6 million to the WA economy each year, and 48 per cent of that comes from regional WA. There is \$264.1 million in net wagering revenue and 55 racing clubs across the state, all but three of which are in regional Western Australia. There are more than 33 000 people employed through WA racing, including both paid employees and volunteers, and 6 737 full-time employees. A sum of \$349.3 million is generated in wages across all sectors of the industry and between 2010 and 2013, the turnover for WA wagering grew by eight per cent. We have heard statements from the minister and the government that the industry is in a mess, but the stats show that not to be the case because it has grown by eight per cent. Turnover has increased from \$1.6 billion in 2008–09 to \$2.15 billion in 2013–14, which is a 34 per cent increase. Distribution in 2008–09 was \$106 million; in 2013–14, it was \$130 million, which is an increase of 23 per cent. Again, the stats show very clearly that any suggestion that the industry is in a mess is just wrong.

There is ageing infrastructure in regional WA racing clubs and insufficient investment is currently going into racing in Western Australia under the current model. If the TAB were to withdraw the funding it provides to the industry, it would have a devastating impact on racing in regional WA and there would be many job losses as a result. The experience of all other Australian states that have privatised their TABs is that it has had a devastating impact on the racing industry. That is not a path we should go down. I do not know what further evidence the government needs to make a decision on this matter; all the evidence that exists to date strongly indicates that we should not go down this path.

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In regional WA racing clubs are very important to not only the racing industry, but also their communities. They provide significant recreational, social and economic value to their communities. The impact is on not only the racing sector, but also on community sport and recreation. Privatisation of the TAB would rip the heart out of community sport and recreation by robbing it of about one-third of its state funding. Funding made available to clubs through the sport wagering account uses TAB profits, with up to 32 per cent of the money allocated to community sport and recreation organisations coming from TAB profits. The chief executive officer of the Western Australian Sports Federation has been reported as saying that this would be a devastating blow for junior and senior sport across the state; it would impact on support for the training of coaches, administrators and officials, and many support agencies for community-based sports also rely on this funding and would be devastated without it. Parks and Leisure Australia WA president, Mark Casserly, said that losing the sport wagering account would set recreation in WA back 10 years and decimate participation in physical activity. It is important for members to understand that more than 160 community organisations utilise race club facilities and resources, and that more than 110 community organisations and charities in WA are financially assisted by race clubs. Over the past decade, sport and rec organisations have received over \$29 million in funding support. It is a significant source of funding for community-based sport and recreation groups, and they would not be able to continue the work they do without that critical funding. The ramifications of this very bad policy decision or consideration will have deep impacts on the community.

Last year Racing and Wagering WA distributed over \$12 million in participant funding—that is, race day stakes—to clubs in the south west. That included Bunbury Turf Club, Albany Racing Club, Mount Barker Turf Club, Pinjarra Race Club, Collie Race Club, Bunbury Trotting Club, Harvey District Trotting Club, Pinjarra Harness Racing Club, Albany Harness Racing Club, Bridgetown Harness Racing Club, Collie Harness Racing Club and Busselton Trotting Club. Eight south west communities were beneficiaries to varying degrees of that very important funding. It will be a significant blow to those regional communities if \$12 million is pulled out of those communities.

Ross Price is a local trainer and the vice-chair of Bunbury Turf Club. He has provided, through my office, some comments in relation to this issue. He is very concerned; his view is that once the TAB is privatised we can neither expect a private company with shareholders to grow the industry the way the WA TAB has done, nor expect the continual increases in distribution that have been experienced with the TAB. The primary concern of a private company once it owns the TAB will be its shareholders, not the industry.

**Hon Helen Morton** interjected.

**Hon ADELE FARINA:** If the minister thinks that is a laughing matter, she should look at the company law code and understand how companies operate. Their primary responsibilities are to their shareholders. The concerns expressed by Mr Price are very valid. He has also indicated that 95 per cent of all stakes paid by Bunbury Turf Club in 2012–13 were provided by Racing and Wagering Western Australia—that was over \$2 million. All those moneys are distributed direct to participants in the industry—owners, jockeys, trainers et cetera—and they keep those people employed.

Bunbury is poised to undertake a \$10 million redevelopment that has been signed off by all the parties and will see the first synthetic race-capable track installed in WA. That project is now under threat because of the uncertainty created by this government because it is unable to state a position on this issue. Bunbury Turf Club has eight permanent employees. On busy race days the club employs up to 100 people. Local trainers often employ young people with poor literacy et cetera who struggle to find employment elsewhere, so it provides a first job opportunity for young people in the area.

Racing is a long-term industry. If a person buys a yearling it is likely to be two years before it races, and until that time they have no idea whether there will be a return on that investment. Uncertainty around the possible privatisation of the TAB is really hurting the industry. Last year Mr Price indicated that he spent approximately \$500 000 at the yearling sales, and this year, due to the uncertainty, he is yet to decide whether to attend the sales.

**HON ROBYN McSWEENEY (South West)** [11.05 am]: Although I do not agree with the way the motion is worded, I think we need to discuss the issue at length. The TAB is an integral part of racing and we know that in other states where it has been sold people are saying that race clubs are in deficit. I would like to put on the record that Hon Glenys Godfrey and I have spoken many times about the TAB and the history of horseracing and I find her to be a very good local member who stands up for her community of Belmont. There is absolutely no question about that.

For those members who do not know, my great-grandfather owned Belmont and Goodwood racecourses and I have been doing research to write a book on the history of thoroughbred racing in Western Australia. I think that we should always take note of what history tells us, so I am going to go back to 1933—nineteen frozen to

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death! In 1933 the people coming through the gates for race meetings in Western Australia were decreasing and that was causing much angst amongst the racing fraternity. In 1929 the amount going through the gate of the totalisator was £255 000; five years later it had risen to only £313 000. On 15 June 1933 the *Daily News* published an article written by Albert, my great-grandfather, in which he supplied answers to what he thought was wrong with racing. The article reads —

In view of the events of the past few weeks, the question is being asked everywhere today where sportsmen gather.

Mr. A. E. Cockram supplies his answer in this article, specially written for “The Daily News”.

His views are entitled to the widest respect for there are probably few better judges of horseflesh in Australia.

In addition to owning, breeding and importing horses, Mr. Cockram has been for a long time financially and actively concerned in controlling racing clubs and courses. He is chairman of the Belmont Park Club.

According to my notes, the rest of the article reads —

Case for Reduction of Taxes and Charges.

Horse racing is considered the Sport of Kings and the great thoroughbred the King of all horses. Horseracing is the most important of all sports and has come to be an industry of National importance. Primarily horseracing has fostered the breeding of thoroughbreds and any breed of horse will be improved to a class of the thoroughbred.

Horseracing is to be given every encouragement to maintain the high standard to which it has reached.

...

Race clubs and race horses are therefore carried on to primarily improve breed of horses.

But in Australia it has come to be an industry in which enormous capital is invested and in which a great number of people depend on for employment and their livelihood.

... trainers and jockeys, stablemen, saddlers and the large number of men and women who are required on race days to manage the course depend on racing for their existence. Much capital is invested in valuable breeding studs, property and buildings.

Racing and training stables employ large staff which keep the stables in working order and many more when renewal and repairs to valuable building and property are necessary.

The same could be said today, and we all are. A lot of people depend on the racing industry. The article goes on —

Government Benefit

From all those employed in the racing industry the State and Commonwealth Governments receive revenue in taxes such as land tax, income tax, and hospital tax —

Whatever that is; I have not gone into that yet —

and from the racing club they derive many taxes that they are worth detailing.

There are taxes on totalisator investments, 1 pound per 1,000 pound. Stamp tax on tote tickets. State and Commonwealth Governments tax on course admission tickets. Tax on Stakes and Salaries, on bar purchases and on printing. In addition, the Government takes tax on dividends, fractional and unclaimed dividends. On top of all these taxes the clubs pay rates to the various municipalities.

Therefore from many monies the country benefits and the Government collect these revenues without any cost.

Racing therefore is a useful industry but there has arisen a menace which threatens to wipe it out.

The starting price evil is one which if allowed to continue will close up the racing clubs and paralyse the industry.

The racing bodies are doing all in their power to combat it but without governments, their efforts are proving unavailing.

Starting prices or away from the race course betting grows and prospers to the disadvantage of the racing clubs, the government and the industry. Yet the Governments have taken little action to stamp the evil out. Rather they hamper the clubs by imposing heavy taxes which they receive without cost,

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while in the puny fines they impose on those found guilty of starting price betting they receive little more than that which it cost to collect.

I will not read all the article. I just wanted to read that out to show that things have not changed much in those years, except for the big money that racing generates these days. I think there is half a billion dollars in prize money now, whereas back in those days the prize money was not as huge. The TAB also injects more than \$126 million into the WA racing industry. A report I read indicated that the government collects \$43 million a year from racing. The report states —

The State Government will get \$43 million in tax from a betting turnover of \$2.15 billion and the Federal Government will get \$28 million in GST revenue.

It is therefore not a small industry. I will read a letter from Michael Grant, president of the WA Racing Trainers Association—an association that is concerned and has the right to be. Whenever there is a mooted change in an industry and the industry is not given certainty, people come out and start agitating against a government.

Albert's last sentence in the article back in 1933 reads —

A conference between representatives of the Government, the racing clubs and the press should be held to discuss the situation immediately.

I do not see that anything much has changed now. However, Michael Grant wrote a reply to an editorial by Paul Murray. Paul likes a flutter himself, so I know that he is certainly not against racing. Michael Grant writes —

As a long-time participant and passionate member of the Western Australian racing industry I felt compelled to respond to the inaccuracies of Paul Murray's opinion piece in the West Australian on ... May 28, advocating the sale of the TAB.

Mr Murray says there is no legitimate reason for the Western Australian government to be involved in the business of gambling and underpins his argument by pointing to the sale of the Victorian TAB in 1994.

...

The NSW TAB was privatised in 1998; Racing NSW is currently in a funding deadlock with its state government. Two weeks ago, Racing Victoria Limited ... raised race field fees to all wagering operators in an effort to protect jobs and sustain the Victorian racing industry into the future.

Michael says that one can surely take heed from that. He goes on —

Members of the racing industry that were 'emboldened' to speak out against the Government's plan to sell the TAB were apprehensive participants who have genuine and legitimate concerns about their livelihoods and the future wellbeing of the industry they work within.

It is rare for various sectional interests of racing to unite but attendance of representatives of Trainers, Jockeys, Owners and Breeders exemplifies a growing anxiety about the lack of clarity and consultation from government.

If that is how the racing industry feels, it behoves this government to sit down with all the players concerned and discuss these issues. It is not good for the racing industry to see in the paper one day that the TAB may be privatised. I do not know whether it will be privatised, but we really need to flesh out those issues.

**HON LJILJANNA RAVLICH (North Metropolitan) [11.16 am]:** Mr President —

**The PRESIDENT:** The question is that Hon Ljiljanna —no!

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** The question is that the motion be agreed to and Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich has the call.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Thank you, Mr President, for that wonderful introduction!

I rise to support this motion. In fact, how can anybody not support this motion? There is no doubt that should the TAB in Western Australia be privatised, there will be serious adverse ramifications for regional and metropolitan racing, pacing and greyhound clubs—without doubt there will be. There will be adverse ramifications for community sport and recreation organisations—without doubt there will be. Of course, we know that this government is very good at wasting money on investigating all manner of things, and no doubt the report that has looked at whether the TAB should be privatised is no exception.

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When I first came to this place more than 17 years ago, the Court government was in power. The Court government ran a very similar agenda—spend, spend, spend, spend, spend, spend! After it had absolutely mismanaged the finances by and as a result of incompetent ministers, what did it do? It sacked public servants and started to sell the assets of Western Australian taxpayers.

I want to refer to my maiden speech from 17 years ago in this place.

Several members interjected.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Members, just listen to the parallels between what happened then and what is happening now. I said —

I now briefly turn to the issue of financial management. I believe all Western Australians are hurting under the Court Government's policies. Since coming to office the Court Government has promoted a record of strong financial management which has been highlighted by its preoccupation with debt reduction. Privatisation and the sale of government assets have been the vehicle by which debt has been reduced. The Court Government refers to this as its "sale for public benefit policy", with Western Australians being told repeatedly that they will be better off as a result of privatisation, that jobs will not be lost, and that competition will reduce costs and flow ... for key services. In fact, in the recent state Budget, the Government increased AlintaGas rates by an average of 3 per cent, Western Power rates by 3.75 per cent and Water Corporation rates by approximately 4 per cent. In addition, motor vehicle licence fees, public transport fares and drivers' licence fees increased substantially. I ask the Government: Where is the public benefit?

**Hon Sue Ellery:** Hallelujah, sister!

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Hallelujah, sister! Absolutely!

We know that there has been an absolute and total mismanagement of the state's finances. We know that debt has gone out of control. We know that Western Australian taxpayers are being punished for it. It has nothing to do with them, it is not of their own doing, but they are being punished for it. We know that public servants cannot rely on any assurance that they will have a job; and, increasingly, businesses are folding because of the incompetence of this government in managing the state's economy.

We know also that the government is embarking on privatisations. But we do not know exactly what is going to be privatised. The government needs to stump up and be transparent. Western Australians are sick and tired of hearing the government say, "This might be privatised, or that might be privatised; oops, no, we are going over there and we are going to privatise something that you have not heard of." Western Australians do not want privatisation. They also do not want the dishonest process of how this government goes about privatisation. But, be sure, the government will pay a hefty price at the next election for any privatisation agenda. The government should pay a hefty price for the fact that it did not go to the last election and say that it was intending to privatise a whole lot of things. It is only now that the government is starting to tell the people of Western Australia about its privatisation agenda; it should be punished for that, and it will be.

I have had the pleasure of being the Minister for Local Government; Racing and Gaming. After I left Education, I went to Racing, Gaming and Liquor. I thought Education was a challenge. But when I got to Racing, I thought, "Oh, God, I don't even know whether these people are going to like me." At my first race meet, there was a big fellow who was one of the part-owners of a horse that had won. So I walked up to him, and I thought I hope he likes me, and I was introduced and he was told that I was Ljiljanna Ravlich, the new racing minister, and he grabbed me with both arms and said, "Come here, darling! I love you!" I thought that was the nicest thing that had happened to me in politics. He then said that he was my biggest fan.

**Hon Helen Morton:** Was it Eric? Does he have a racehorse?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** No, it was not Eric. I had never met this bloke in my life, and I thought I am going to enjoy this portfolio, and indeed I did. The point that I want to make is that as soon as I got there, the equine flu hit.

**Hon Alanna Clohesy:** An awful coincidence!

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Yes, an awful coincidence!

But, anyway, it ended up being a very pleasurable portfolio. I did say to them when I got there that I do not really know a lot about racing, but I do know that it is a very important industry; I know that there are many small, medium and large businesses that survive on the strength of that industry; and I know that racing is important to local economies. I have not changed my mind on any of that at all. So, for those reasons, I support the motion that is before the house.

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I want to quickly put on the public record the value of the racing industry. An article in *The Weekend West* of 15–16 February 2014 talks about a Racing and Wagering WA report that was commissioned in 2010–11 on the economic and social impact of the racing industry in Western Australia. The report found that 33 686 people, or the equivalent of one in 54 adult residents, participated in the state’s racing industry. The report found also that the state government received \$34 million from wagering tax revenue in that year. Mr Burt, the chief executive of Racing and Wagering WA, is reported in that article as saying that this figure would rise to \$42 million this year, with a further \$23 million to be paid to the federal government in GST. The report goes on to state that TAB turnover was \$1 billion in 2003–04 and will grow to \$2.1 billion this season.

The racing industry is a major contributor to the economy. The government cannot argue at any point that the racing industry is a non-performing asset. It is very much a performing asset. If we are going to privatise, the idea is that we should privatise our non-performing assets.

**Hon Ken Travers:** Like cabinet!

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Yes, like cabinet! We do not take a performing asset and get rid of it. Truly, we hear some dumb things in Parliament, especially from members opposite. But this idea that we should sell the TAB would have to be one of the dumbest. I will say it again: if the government sells the TAB and if it goes through with its privatisations, it will not survive the next election.

**HON HELEN MORTON (East Metropolitan — Minister for Mental Health)** [11.26 am]: Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich has been in Parliament for 17 years —

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** More!

**Hon HELEN MORTON:** — and she is still a waste of space. Unbelievable!

Several members interjected.

*Withdrawal of Remark*

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I do not think there is a need to take a point of order. I just caution the minister. I have often said that when it crosses the line in terms of debate over issues and gets personal, that is the line that I draw. I think, minister, that that is uncalled for, quite frankly, and I would ask you to withdraw it.

**Hon HELEN MORTON:** Thank you, Mr President, and I do withdraw it.

*Debate Resumed*

**Hon HELEN MORTON:** The point I am making is that after 17 years, some ideology is being played out here that is not born in reality; and I will get to that in a little bit. It is all about this ideology-driven position about not privatising anything at all under any circumstances.

I have a very great interest in the racing industry. Most people would know that my family is heavily involved in the racing industry in a variety of ways. My husband and I have breeding properties. We have I do not know how many horses; I would not have the faintest idea. We are also involved in the educating, breaking, pre-conditioning and training. All the brothers-in-law are leading trainers in Perth. I have a nephew who is a trainer now. I have a son who is involved in that industry as well. My daughter’s partner is an auctioneer and a blood horse broker.

Several members interjected.

**Hon HELEN MORTON:** This is all about the racing industry.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order, members!

**Hon HELEN MORTON:** I have just lost two minutes, Mr President.

This is an ideology-driven argument not born of reality.

**HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural)** [11.28 pm] — in reply: In my last few seconds, I want to make the point that the uncertainty, speculation and lack of clarity from the government is what concerns the industry the most. Hon Col Holt touched on it: do not muck around doing studies; just get on and make a decision and let the industry know where it stands. That is what the industry wants.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.