

**Racing and Wagering Western Australia —**

Mr S.J. Price, Chair.

Mr R.R. Whitby, Minister for Racing and Gaming.

Mr I. Edwards, Chief Executive Officer.

Mr D. Hunter, Chief Racing Officer.

Mr T. Monaghan, Senior Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

**The CHAIR:** This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available online as soon as possible within two business days. Questions must relate to the operations and budget of the off-budget authority. The chair will allow as many questions as possible. Questions and answers should be short and to the point.

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by noon on Friday, 2 June 2023. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system to submit their questions.

I give the call to the member for Roe.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** My first question refers to page 289 of budget paper No 2, volume 1. Under asset investment program, I refer to paragraph 1.1 and the \$5.4 million for the development of wagering products. I asked the minister before about the sale of the TAB, which obviously did not go ahead. Can the minister enlighten us about “the development of wagering products” and what the TAB is doing to improve its suite of products now that the sale is not taking place?

**Mr R.R. WHITBY:** I might refer that answer to Mr Edwards.

**Mr I. Edwards:** The line item for wagering systems and products refers to enhancements to the wagering business. We always planned for the non-sale of the TAB, should that be the ultimate outcome. Such that it was, we will continue to invest in the products in the way we planned to prior to that process.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** To remain relevant in a competitive market with the likes of Sportsbet, Ladbrokes and others that already have much more advanced innovation, will the department bring some of the technology from competitors into the mix with the TAB?

**Mr R.R. WHITBY:** Mr Edwards.

**Mr I. Edwards:** We do have various business-to-business arrangements with other parties. No immediate changes are planned to that, but that is not to say we could not change it at some point in the future.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** For not only technology but also the capital value of the TAB, is the minister disappointed that the sale did not go through?

**Mr R.R. WHITBY:** I would have to say yes because I think that was the desire of the government and the first priority was a positive outcome for racing and all codes. We do not control the market and we were not going to sell it under a price that did not represent fair value or was on fair terms. I think the appropriate decision was made under the circumstances. We indicated that whether or not it was sold, we would continue to work in the best interests of the industry.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** If, let us say, a new bidder turned up out of nowhere, would the government consider re-looking at the sale of the TAB?

**Mr R.R. WHITBY:** Are you making an offer, member? How much is your farm worth again?

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** One dollar!

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** The member for Moore might be able to handle it but I do not know if I can.

**Mr R.R. WHITBY:** The process is closed and we need to provide certainty for industry. It went through a period of uncertainty when the sale process was happening, but obviously there was a key assurance to the industry all along that it would be supported and that the outcome we secured would be best for racing. To answer the question, the sale process was led by Treasury and it is not my role to speak on behalf of the Treasurer. I will not do that but the key thing we need to know is that the process has been finalised. We are beyond that now and we want to provide certainty and stability for the industry.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I refer to paragraph 1.2 on page 289. It reads —

\$1.2 million for racing infrastructure improvements at various thoroughbred, harness, and greyhound sites ...

Can the minister enlighten us on what those are?

**Mr R.R. WHITBY:** I think that is pretty self-explanatory. It is for some of the basic infrastructure around courses, whether they be thoroughbred, harness or greyhound. It is important to note that this table does not include any funding to race clubs. It is for Racing and Wagering Western Australia's capital expenditure on owned assets. There is other money provisioning funding provided to the race clubs from which they can improve their infrastructure.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I refer to paragraph 1.3, which reads —

\$2.8 million for specific head office building improvements and building maintenance throughout the Authority.

Can I get some detail there?

**Mr R.R. WHITBY:** The headquarters is quite ageing. It is from back in the 1980s. If members have been there, they would recognise it is a very 80s building that requires ongoing maintenance. It is a large premises and obviously even ongoing minor maintenance and upgrades can be expensive.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** My question is around the asset investment program. It relates to small country racecourses. Toodyay has not had a race meeting of late. Has any investment been considered for the Toodyay race club to enable it to get back on its feet and conduct races again?

**Mr R.R. WHITBY:** I might get David Hunter to that question.

**Mr D. Hunter:** The situation with Toodyay at the moment is the club is still in operation but conducting its race meetings at Belmont Park. There are some issues to work through with its local government authority around tenure of the land, the lease expiring and investment in the public facilities there going forward. Unfortunately, at the moment its facilities are not fit for purpose.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I presume once the hurdle is cleared with the local government, the minister's organisation will be keen to assist them.

**Mr D. Hunter:** Obviously, our grants program is finite with funds so that is something we would need to work through. We do not have external infrastructure funding outside what we generate through our own wagering business and race field fees. Our focus tends to be on racing assets such as tracks, stalls, running rails and safety aspects, so I could not give a guarantee that we would be in a position to fund public facilities for Toodyay.

[4.20 pm]

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I have a final question about that. Is there any detail about any country racing infrastructure, whether it be harness or thoroughbred? Is there any detail of any clubs receiving improvements in infrastructure as part of that \$1.2 million?

**Mr R.R. WHITBY:** Yes, a range of clubs would be receiving support, but I think it is important to note the definition that Mr Hunter provided, which is about the obligation for Racing and Wagering Western Australia to fund the racing infrastructure per se. The other community type venues are the responsibility of the local community, so something like a function centre on the course or that sort of facility. In many communities, local government often plays a role in owning, funding or supporting those. Those facilities have multiple roles. They can be event facilities and other clubs and organisations can use them. It is true that in many towns it is important to sustain and support facilities, and many clubs look outside racing to maintain and support them.

**The CHAIR:** That completes the examination of Racing and Wagering Western Australia.

*Meeting suspended from 4.21 to 4.30 pm*