

RACING AND WAGERING WESTERN AUSTRALIA — HARNESS RACING

Statement

HON COLIN HOLT (South West) [10.01 pm]: Today I asked a question of the minister representing the Minister for Racing and Gaming. Although I am probably one of the only members in this house interested in this issue, I want to raise a few points. I asked questions about the Harness Racing Owners Association of Western Australia. It was revealed through my questioning that it is not a constitutional body. People from the industry have said that they suspect that is the case. The Harness Racing Owners Association has a special place in the Racing and Wagering Western Australia Act 2003, as it was appointed an eligible body by the RWWA board. As an eligible body appointed by the RWWA board, it is consulted with but also has a special ability to vote on the harness racing nomination for the RWWA board. Harness racing, the greyhounds and the thoroughbred sections of the industry have a racing representative on the board. Thoroughbred racing appointed its board member late last year. Harness racing is in the process of nominating its representative to the RWWA board.

Only three, four or maybe five bodies vote for their nominee to the RWWA board. According to the answer I received to my question, the Harness Racing Owners Association of Western Australia is one of those groups that gets to vote for the nomination of the RWWA board, yet, as revealed in my question, it is not even a constitutional organisation. That has to sound alarm bells through the RWWA board or the industry and for the minister, who must ask the question. Even though the nomination comes from the eligible bodies, I think the minister signs off on the nomination to the board or appoints that nominee to the board. The Harness Racing Owners Association has 110 members but it is not constitutional and there is no verification of its constitution. I am not sure how it came up with 110 members. Surely the RWWA board must be wondering how it appoints a non-constitutional organisation as a prescribed body under the Racing and Wagering Western Australia Regulations. Not only does it appoint it, but that appointment gives it the ability to vote on the harness racing nomination to the RWWA board.

When the thoroughbreds appointed their nominee to the board towards the end of last year, there was a bit of controversy. In the past, each eligible body has one vote. The Western Australian Racing Trainers' Association, the WA Jockeys Association, the Western Australian Racehorse Owners Association and other eligible bodies such as the Western Australian provincial training and racing association have all got one vote. There might be six or seven eligible thoroughbred bodies and they vote for that nominee. Last year, that completely changed when it was decided that two particular groups on those eligible thoroughbred bodies, which is Perth Racing and the Western Australian Racehorse Owners Association, got a weighted vote due to their membership. I do not know the exact number of members of Perth Racing but let us say it is 800. I am guessing that the Western Australian Racehorse Owners Association has a membership of about 800. It had a disproportionate say, according to the membership of the appointment of the thoroughbred code nominee to the board. Smaller groups such as the WA Racing Trainers' Association and the Jockeys Association, which were much more invested in the industry than those groups, have disproportionately less say. There was controversy and I asked a lot of questions about that in this house.

We have a similar situation now. I would be very interested to know whether this non-constitutional organisation that has been identified as an eligible body by the RWWA board, which has 110 members, had extra weighting to nominate and vote on its representative to the board. In anyone's language, that has to raise alarm bells about governance—that this special role that eligible bodies play through the RWWA act is not even constitutional. I searched the RWWA website for eligible groups under each of the codes. They all have links to other pages, and they have more information. If we go to the eligible harness bodies, there is one line—"harness racing association of WA". There is no link. People cannot even contact it. There are no phone numbers, no president. Nothing is listed on the RWWA website except one line. There are no links. We cannot even click on the link of the website. I do not know why because it is not even a constitutional organisation. It has to raise alarm bells for the RWWA board. If I am correct in my assumption that the eligible bodies identify their nominee and the minister appoints them to the board, it has to raise alarm bells for the minister, who is potentially required to appoint this representative to the RWWA board, which I think is based on a potentially flawed membership of the eligible bodies. I raise that tonight to put it on the record that I think the minister should show great concern.