



Speech by

**Hon. R. GIBBS**

**MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA**

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Hansard 22 October 1998

#### **PRIVATISATION OF TAB**

**Hon. R. J. GIBBS** (Bundamba—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing) (6.20 p.m.): I am happy to second the amendment moved by the member for Gladstone. I understand that One Nation is to move an amendment. I am happy with that amendment also. I accept that amendment. In saying so, I agree with what the member for Gladstone said. In an hour it is impossible to have a constructive debate about what will probably be one of the most important issues for the Queensland racing industry in the future.

I accept that the member for Toowoomba North has brought the motion to the House in a spirit of goodwill, but I question the politics of his doing so this evening. However, although there will be a difference in the wording of the motion, broadly speaking there will be some bipartisanship displayed this evening. I was going to move an amendment as follows—

- that all head office functions currently undertaken in Queensland remain in this State;
- that a redundancy package is in place for employees in the extremely unlikely event of job losses at the TAB;
- that market conditions allow for a favourable sale price;
- that the final package provides fair and equitable value to investors in the TAB Queensland;
- that the sale of the TAB only proceeds with the support of the racing industry and is subject to ongoing contractual negotiations between the industry and Government; and
- that it be subject to the industry's support for the Racing Industry Strategic Plan due to be completed later this year.

Obviously one of the grave concerns that people have—and it is a legitimate concern—relates to the jobs of the Telebet operators of the Queensland TAB. I accept that. I think anybody coming from the Labor side of politics who did not accept that would be out of touch. I remember in Opposition that that was an issue that I discussed with the then Minister, Russell Cooper, on a number of occasions.

As a result of my concerns about that matter, I have recently given a direction to the board of the TAB to commence negotiations with the ASU in a spirit of trying to work out a proper and equitable outcome that would cover any redundancies that may take place as a result of corporatisation or privatisation. I do not believe that there will be job losses under either of those circumstances.

Recently, as a result of the introduction of home viewing on Sky, we have seen a massive growth rate in the TAB. Approximately another 40 operators have started at Telebet. The working hours that they have been offered have increased by about 60%. Home betting accounts, which normally run at about 210 new accounts per week being opened up at the TAB, are being opened up at in excess of 1,000 per week at present.

The threat to future job security at the TAB will not come from corporatisation or privatisation. The biggest threat to jobs at the TAB will be technology changes in the future. I do not have the answer to that. I do not think any member in this House has the answer to that. Earlier, I was telling some members that the Hong Kong Jockey Club has almost perfected a system that I understand will be put in place at the New South Wales TAB possibly within the next 18 months to two years. People will record a phone bet straight into a computer. The computer will voice identify people's accounts and the wager will be laid. That is the way technology is going. I do not know how that can be stopped.

The other issue that people have a concern about is that head office functions must remain in Queensland. I agree with that. It is a State institution of Queensland. That is why I share with members from One Nation and other members in this Parliament a commitment to ensure that whatever form, if it is approved by the party conference, that the sale should take—and, again, I remember that we shared this point of view before—it must remain primarily in the hands of Queensland investors. There is no intention on behalf of me or the Treasurer to allow the New South Wales TAB or the Victorian TAB to take up the majority shareholding in it. That is not the aim at all. Certainly, I would see that part of the strategic plan of the TAB in the future would be to try to be a bit predatory in relation to South Australia or the Northern Territory——

Time expired.

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