



Speech by

Hon. KEN HAYWARD

MEMBER FOR KALLANGUR

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PRIVATISATION OF TAB

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (6.34 p.m.): I think tonight's debate in this Parliament is a very important one. When we talk about a debate such as this, we need to talk about some of the history of this matter. I have just heard the two members from One Nation who said that basically they are against privatisation, they are against changing or doing anything to the TAB and there is nothing that we could do to shift them. The reality of life is that, when we talk about the TAB in Queensland, we have to realise that it only commenced operations in Queensland on 11 August 1962. So people such as One Nation members would have been arguing in 1961 "do not bring in the TAB".

Those sort of arguments are silly because they fail to recognise two important things, that is, as we all know, history is evolving and changing all of the time. In this world, as we are now, we have to deal with the changes that are occurring in technology and the demands that that technology causes in raising capital. Organisations such as the TAB just do not exist on thin air. We do not put the massive computer technology in for nothing; we have to do that by raising significant amounts of capital.

I think we all know the history of why the TAB started in Queensland. Basically, it was founded out of the increasing incidence of illegal betting via SP bookmakers. Of course, at that time the betting laws in Queensland were very restrictive. If punters wanted to have a bet in this State, they were required to attend a racecourse and bet with a registered bookmaker. Would anyone seriously suggest in this year that, if people wanted to have a bet, they had to go to the racecourse and they had to bet with a registered bookmaker? No, because the reality is that history changes. Of course, for some people it changes; for most of us it changes.

The TAB came into existence and it offered legalised betting and some protection from the law. Of course, it got rid of the problem that was occurring with SP bookmakers, which was the extension of credit. So it got rid of one of the worst aspects of SP bookmaking. Importantly, it also provided to clubs throughout the State profits from the TAB. Through people betting off the course, the money was able to go back to those courses.

What we have had here and what we are going to have is a series of myths about the TAB. The first one, of course, is that the TAB provides profits to the Government. The reality is that that does not happen; it never has. It has never provided the Government with profits from wagering. All profits from the TAB are reinvested in the racing industry for prize money and infrastructure development. As the member for Crows Nest said, the industry itself wants the change. That is the reality.

The argument about job losses is a complex argument, but the reality is that there have been no forced redundancies from the sale of the TAB in New South Wales or in Victoria. Of course, if we sit on our hands and do nothing and do not raise the necessary capital that is needed, privatisation is going to be forced upon us. As the Minister said, as technology changes and the ability is there for a person to get on the phone—even the One Nation mob opposite can get on the phone and make a phone call to Victoria and bet through the Victorian TAB or, if they are in New South Wales, they will bet through the New South Wales TAB. So technology is changing. Surely they know how to use a phone. That is the problem. Of course, some advantages come through changing technology. As the Minister said, pay TV racing has had the effect of increasing employment opportunities.

The issues of technology are driving our society. Whatever one thinks and whatever one does, in the end that is going to determine where jobs are. What is important about this is that the Government has ensured that a redundancy package for any TAB person who loses their job is in place, whether it is related to the sale of the TAB or not. They are the two issues that we have to deal

with. The other myth, of course, is that the Queensland TAB can compete effectively in its current state. The reality is that the TAB now faces increasing competition from other forms of gambling. There are now forms of legalised gambling that many years ago people thought would never be possible.

Time expired.
