



Speech by

**Hon. RUSSELL COOPER**

**MEMBER FOR CROWS NEST**

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Hansard 22 October 1998

#### **PRIVATISATION OF TAB**

**Hon. T. R. COOPER** (Crows Nest—NPA) (6.11 p.m.): I have great pleasure in seconding the motion. This is not a case where people have been screaming and yelling in an attempt to convince others that this is the right way to go. I was the Racing Minister when we started to move towards privatisation. In moving from stage 1 to stage 2, the corporatisation side of the process, we involved people from across-the-board and I kept the current Minister fully informed. We brought together people from all sides of politics, such as Ian Brusasco, Jim Kennedy, Craig Black and John Crowley, who are heavily involved in what was a fragmented industry. If one could get the people from the harness racing, greyhound and thoroughbred industries together and one achieved some unity, it would be nothing short of a miracle. However, that sort of thing happened, not because we said that the industry must privatise but because the industry itself wanted to privatise. People in the industry know very well that the chances of surviving against the Victoria and New South Wales organisations are slim, if not almost hopeless. No-one can tell me that the consultation process has not taken place. It has taken place and it has been going on for months and months. The industry itself was constantly saying, "When are we going to bring this together? Let us bring it together." I table all of the press releases and any other information that people may want.

To those people who are having trouble making up their minds, all I can say is that a lot of work has been done, and members opposite cannot claim otherwise. They can catch up on it. I say that quite openly and in the friendliest possible way, because we are only speaking for the industry—all the people whom the member for Toowoomba North mentioned, the little players and the big ones, and all of the people who enjoy racing and want to see the industry competing with the southern States. For example, the other day this case was presented to me: in Queensland, a racing pool can get 2 to 1 for its horse, but it will be listed in Sydney at 7 to 1. People know damn well that we are on a loser up here. Therefore, this is really about sticking up for the industry.

Control of the industry will stay in Queensland. TAB headquarters will always stay here. Under the coalition, the racing industry was going to be in a position to control and own the TAB. Therefore, both sides of the racing industry would have controlled it. Such things are possible under the scheme that we have going. However, if we wait and procrastinate, the industry will lose badly.

To give people a rough idea of the benefits that would have flowed to the racing industry, in the first year it would have received approximately \$20m. That money could have gone towards increasing prize money, improving infrastructure and so on. That was to be done by cutting taxes from 34% to 28% in the first stage. We were ready to rock and roll with Stage 2, which would have seen the tax rate drop from 34% to 25%. Therefore, the Government of the day would have forgone \$20m-odd in revenue, which is a massive hit for the industry. The coalition planned to forgive a \$31m debt, which would have provided another massive hit for the industry, and give it \$10m up front to boot. That package was worth an extra \$20m to the industry. That was the sort of thing that it hungered for, and still does. The people who talk about the loss of jobs and those who want to listen to the Janice Mayes of this world are backing a loser. Janice Mayes does not know what she is talking about and it is unfortunate that people listen to her.

There has been a tremendous and rare unity in the racing industry, be it intracode or intercode. A common purpose can bring the three codes of the industry together, and the common purpose that exists is to privatise so that the industry can have total control of its own destiny. It will be able to grow and expand in Queensland, Australia and various parts of the world. That is the modern way; that is the

information technology way. It is going to happen anyway and we do not want to be left at the start. This is far too important.

I feel sorry for those who say they want more consultation, because there has already been so much consultation. We must give the racing industry a chance, because the industry covers all political bounds. It affects the little people, the big people, everyone who loves a bet and everyone who owns a horse or a dog. The coalition is supporting and sticking up for those people. For heaven's sake, let us get on with the job. As I said, I used to keep the current Minister informed of what we were doing and I know full that the Minister, Ian Brusasco and people from either side of politics support privatisation.

Time expired.

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