



Speech by

Mr G. HEALY

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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PRIVATISATION OF TAB

Mr HEALY (Toowoomba North—NPA) (10.14 a.m.): This Government has effectively torn the thoroughbred racing industry in this State apart. What absolute political thuggery to suggest, as the Premier has done publicly, that the Government should bypass the Queensland Principal Club in any further discussions on a TAB privatisation package! What absolutely abysmal negotiating skills this Government has displayed in the past few weeks when it cannot resolve an issue that will have a monumental effect on the racing industry in this State over the next 10 to 15 years.

Let me remind honourable members that the legislation set up to establish the Queensland Principal Club as the democratically elected body to administer thoroughbred racing in this State is Minister Gibbs' own legislation. It was Minister Gibbs who believed that the only truly democratic way to administer thoroughbred racing in Queensland was to wrest it away from the Queensland Turf Club and give it to the Queensland racing industry as a whole to administer.

What have we seen in the past few weeks? Because the Queensland Principal Club has quite rightly exercised its democratic right to question the Government's proposal on a suitable TAB privatisation package, the Premier has arrogantly and dictatorially indicated that he will simply bypass the QPC and deal directly with the 154 race clubs throughout the State. Well, good luck, old son!

Let me also remind honourable members that the entire racing industry gave an unequivocal stamp of approval to the previous coalition Government's privatisation package. Let me make this quite clear: that package had Treasury approval. Why has the advice to this Government changed? I reckon it is a fair sort of bet that the money that was there for privatisation back in 1997 has been shifted to accommodate and to fund 1998 election promises of the Beattie Labor administration.

I tell those opposite not to come bleating in this place and saying that the coalition package would have sent the industry broke in a few years. We know what the Treasury advice was in 1997. We saw the figures. We know it could have been done successfully. This Government has effectively put at risk any sort of successful sale of the Queensland TAB. This Government has put at risk thousands of jobs in the Queensland racing industry. Let me tell those opposite that the great majority of people in the Queensland racing industry know what a stuff-up this Government has made of the whole issue and they will not forgive the Government for it.
