



Speech by

John-Paul Langbroek

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard Wednesday, 9 November 2005

BETFAIR

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (10.07 pm): I rise to express my concern about the recent announcement by the Tasmanian Labor government that it intends to give the betting exchange Betfair a licence to operate in Tasmania. This decision could and will have broad implications for the Queensland racing industry. I applaud Minister Schwarten for his criticism of Betfair.

Betfair will only bleed money from the Queensland racing industry because it will be able to take bets on Queensland races without putting any money back into the industry. The Queensland racing industry is extremely important to this state. It provides not only entertainment for many Queenslanders but also revenue that is spent on improving our state. I believe that an amount of \$68 million goes into general revenue and only \$2 million is returned to the industry. What shocked me the most was reading in the *Courier-Mail* on Friday the Premier's claim that the TAB would be able to look after itself. What an irresponsible thing for the Premier to say. Minister Schwarten rightly recognised that Betfair poses a risk to the Queensland racing industry both in terms of the integrity of the industry and its ongoing viability. The Premier went on to say that he did not expect rival gambling agencies to sit back and let this be the only operation. We need the government to make it clear whether it supports the TAB or whether it will be allowing other gambling agencies to have a footprint in this state.

Queensland Racing has made it clear that it vehemently opposes Betfair operating anywhere in Australia and has warned that betting exchanges in Australia could provide a temptation to fix races. This is because betting exchanges allow punters to back a horse to lose, so cheating can become a reality in our racing industry. The story got worse today when it was revealed that the Premier of Tasmania, Paul Lennon, had enjoyed the hospitality of PBL on Melbourne Cup day. PBL, who are partners with Betfair in the proposed Tasmanian betting exchange, hosted Mr Lennon at its tent just days before he announced his government's intention to support the betting exchange.

During question time in the Tasmanian parliament yesterday, Premier Lennon admitted to the Liberals that he had indeed partaken in the hospitality of PBL. I am hopeful that Mr Lennon will make clear that no deals were done prior to him announcing his intent to grant Betfair a licence to trade in Tasmania. I hold out hope that the legislation to grant Betfair a licence will not pass the Tasmanian upper house, but I will not be holding my breath.

If Betfair is granted a licence in Tasmania, I encourage the minister for racing, with the opposition's support, to do everything in his power to prevent Betfair profiting at the Queensland racing industry's expense. The minister stated in a media release last Thursday that legislation from the federal government would be required to stop Betfair from taking bets on Queensland races. However, the Western Australian minister for racing, the Hon. Mark McGowan, raised the possibility of passing legislation in Western Australia that would prevent the unauthorised usage of race fields by Betfair. I would urge the minister to consider something similar. The Victorian racing minister hit the nail on the head—

Time expired.