



Speech by

John-Paul Langbroek

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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BETFAIR

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (10.12 pm): I take this opportunity to give an update on an issue about which I have advocated action in this House for some time. Members may recall the private member's bill that was introduced to protect Queensland's racing industry from the threat of Betfair and similar online betting exchanges. The bill was unashamedly modelled on Victorian legislation that was brought in with the same aim in November last year. It was to stop Betfair from being able to publish Queensland racing fixtures and to restrict wagering to approved providers who contribute back to the racing industry, which Betfair does not.

The Beattie government rejected the private member's bill, labelling it 'untested'. Well, the test results are in and the legislation has passed with flying colours. The 'untested' Victorian legislation has effectively stopped Betfair from operating on Victorian racing. However, it is now negotiating to pay a fee so that it can operate. I cannot help but wonder how the members for Toowoomba North and Fitzroy feel now about 'untested' legislation, after seeing just how effective the private member's bill introduced by the coalition could have been in Queensland.

Racing Victoria's integrity department and senior management are now able to evaluate, without fear, whether they want to grant approval for Betfair to operate in Victoria on their terms. This is all because Victoria safeguarded itself and its racing revenue by stopping Betfair from just setting up shop. Racing Victoria now decides whether Betfair can operate in Victoria, not Betfair. Victoria saved itself from the potentially devastating effect of Betfair on its racing industry. It is now able to dictate whether or not it will allow Betfair to enter the Victorian racing landscape. Racing Victoria holds the upper hand—an upper hand afforded to it through its government passing safeguarding legislation.

The Queensland government did not care to give the same advantage to Queensland Racing. It sat on its hands and rejected the coalition's call to action. It was reported in the *Australian* only yesterday that Racing Victoria and Betfair are now conducting a series of meetings and negotiations to work out how a working relationship can be arranged. I table a copy of that article.

Racing Victoria is obviously seeking an appropriate economic contribution to the Victorian industry from approved operators, which may include Betfair but only after a decision is reached as to how much Betfair will give back to Victorian racing. Therefore—unlike Queensland, thanks to members opposite—by not lying down and letting Betfair sneak into its industry, Victoria is now in a position to gain a contribution from online exchanges. Betfair is prepared to pay the Victorians because legislation was framed that stopped it from operating there in the first place.

I call on the minister to try to extricate the same deal for Queensland that Victoria obtains from Betfair. I call on the minister to ensure that he attempts to have any fruitful discussions that Betfair may be willing to have with Queensland. As far as I am concerned, the minister is obliged to at least try. The minister and the government failed to protect the industry by rejecting the coalition's private member's bill. Do something now—get some redemption and something back for the racing industry.

Tabled paper: Courier-Mail article dated 23 May 2006 titled Betfair set to get licence in Victoria