

**RACING CHIEF'S WARNING**

# 'No reason' to sell the TAB

**EXCLUSIVE**

■ **Gareth Parker**  
State Political Editor

The chairman of Victoria's peak thoroughbred racing body is the latest interstate industry figure to warn WA against privatising the TAB.

Robert Roulston, a prominent bloodstock agent and chairman of Racing Victoria, said the code in that State wishes it could buy the wagering licence back from corporate operator Tabcorp, the company created when Victorian premier Jeff Kennett privatised the State's TAB in 1994.

Mr Roulston said that Mr Kennett had recently admitted he wished he had not sold the TAB and said though Tabcorp had been an excellent wagering operator and returns were strong, the privatisation meant that profits leaked out of the racing industry and into the pockets of shareholders.

"As soon as you privatise, I understand you can take an amount of money up front for it, but you're giving away part of the

future returns to shareholders, so it's not ideal," he said. "Those shareholders, and therefore the directors of the company, may have quite different objectives to those of the industry and its needs.

"So philosophically, I can't see any reason why if you've got a very good vertically integrated model — which WA has — why you would move away from it unless there was a desperate need for a large injection of capital up front."

Victoria Racing tried to bid for the Victorian wagering franchise when it came up for tender two years ago but was blocked by the State Government and Tabcorp's deal was renewed through 2024, or 2026 if it exercises an option.

Mr Roulston said the industry "remains interested in bidding for the licence, because we believe all the money should be captured back within the industry".

"Tabcorp has been a very successful wagering operator, so it is not to denigrate them in any way," he said.

"But at the end of the day, there

is leakage of revenue from the industry to shareholders."

Premier Colin Barnett has said that the TAB will probably be sold, but not this calendar year, and said the Government was yet to make a final decision.

New Racing and Gaming Minister Colin Holt, of the Nationals, has echoed his predecessor Terry Waldron and Nationals leader Terry Redman in saying he would not support a sale unless it was in the best interests of the industry.

---

■ **OPINION** P28