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THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

BOOKMAKERS ACT 1985

BOOKMAKERS REGULATIONS (AMENDMENT)

Subordinate Law No. 1 of 1997

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

Circulated by the Authority of the Minister for Sport and Recreation

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PURPOSE

The purpose of the amendment is to reduce the minimum bet level applying to telephone betting by licensed on-course bookmakers in accordance with the resolution of the Australian Racing Ministers' and to remove the existing restriction on the provision of information to punters.

BACKGROUND

The *Bookmakers Act 1985* (the Act) governs the activities of bookmakers in the Australian Capital Territory.

Section 41A of the Act provides that licensed bookmakers shall not accept a bet by telephone unless it is equal or greater to the prescribed amount or the amount to be won is equal to or greater than the prescribed amount.

The minimum bet level for on-course telephone betting was established to provide protection to national TAB turnover. Upon the establishment of telephone betting the agreed national minimum bet level was set at \$250 or the bookmaker to lose \$2,000

Of the two prescribed amounts, the first amount is the face value of the bet. The second amount provides an appropriate level of protection for the bookmaker. For example, if the odds to a horse were, say, 100-1, the bookmaker is only required to accept a bet with a face value \$20 to provide a \$2,000 risk.

At the recent meeting of Australian Racing Ministers' it was agreed that the minimum bet level for telephone betting be reduced but that a higher minimum bet level apply to metropolitan thoroughbred race meetings than to provincial or country thoroughbred race meetings and all harness and greyhound race meetings.

Secondly, the existing restriction on the provision of information to punters - which was originally designed to protect the integrity of the on-course pricing service - has had the effect of stifling bookmaker turnover, due to the inability to properly service the needs of telephone punters.

DETAILS OF THE AMENDMENT

Regulation 5A of the Bookmaker Regulations is amended by deleting the existing subregulation (1) and replacing it with a subregulation that provides for minimum bet levels for on-course telephone betting to be:-

- (a) for bets accepted on metropolitan thoroughbred races - a minimum bet of \$200 or the bookmaker to risk \$2,000; and
- (b) for bets accepted on provincial or country thoroughbred races and bets accepted on all harness or greyhound races - a minimum bet of \$100 or the bookmaker to risk \$1,000.

The definition of a metropolitan thoroughbred race meeting is determined by the Australian Jockey Club. As racing in the ACT is currently controlled by the AJC, it is appropriate that those race meetings determined by the AJC as metropolitan thoroughbred race meetings, apply in the ACT.

The amendment to this regulation will ensure that bookmakers operating in the ACT are not at a disadvantage in terms of servicing telephone clients.

Furthermore, the amendment provides for the repeal of Regulation 5B, thereby removing the restriction on the amount of information a bookmaker is permitted to provide to a telephone punter.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The reduction in the level of the minimum bet for on-course telephone betting is expected to result in increased turnover for licensed bookmakers in the ACT due to the greater access to the facility due to the lower betting limit.

In addition, the removal of the restriction on the provision of information to punters is expected to enable larger punters to make betting decisions more quickly, thereby providing the opportunity for greater betting turnover.

On a national basis, Racing Ministers' were not satisfied that the reduction in the minimum bet applying to telephone betting, to the agreed levels, will have a significant affect on TAB turnover.