



Speech by

Mr BRUCE LAMING

MEMBER FOR MOOLOOLAH

Hansard 29 February 2000

SYDNEY-MOOLLOOLABA YACHT RACE

Mr LAMING (Mooloolah—LP) (7.26 p.m.): I rise to bring an important issue to the attention of this House. It is important to sport and to Queensland in general and to the Sunshine Coast in particular. I refer to the annual Sydney-Mooloolaba Yacht Race. The race has a 27-year history, but is in extreme jeopardy thanks to a move by Mooloolaba Yacht Club's race partners of long standing, the Middle Harbour Yacht Club. In their wisdom, they have gained the support of NSW Tourism, several other sponsors and media representatives to run a regatta to Coffs Harbour at the usual time of the Sydney-Mooloolaba Yacht Race, possibly sounding the death knell of Mooloolaba's time-honoured race.

In 1999 the race attracted 64 entries, including a large proportion of the major players in the ill-fated Sydney to Hobart race. This number of boats equates to 700 sailors plus their families visiting Mooloolaba and the Sunshine Coast at race end. The main ingredients in the running of any race, the boat owners and sailors, have indicated that they wish to continue the tradition. However, the threat of this NSW-based Coffs Harbour competition places this year's race at risk. To ensure future races to Mooloolaba are as successful as those in previous years, a concerted effort needs to be put into this year's event so that the competition from NSW does not get off the ground.

The Mooloolaba club has approached the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia, who are responsible for the famous Sydney to Hobart race, with a proposal to form a partnership in the running of what is Australia's second most important ocean race. Several attempts have been made to secure a race sponsor, including an approach to Tourism Queensland. All have so far been unsuccessful, mainly due to the short time frame brought about by the Middle Harbour Yacht Club's failure to advise Mooloolaba of their Coffs Harbour intentions. Our concern is that, should Queensland not take up the offer of the CYCA and find a Queensland sponsor for the race, a wonderful opportunity will be lost to the State, particularly when we consider the future. This threat has made us realise how easily our major event could be lost and the effect it would have on the Mooloolaba Yacht Club, the surrounding business community and Queensland in general.

It is an ill wind indeed that does not blow some good. This change has seen the emergence of a far more active partner in the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia. This move has provided the Mooloolaba Yacht Club with enormous commercial opportunities that they have not had the opportunity to fully develop in the past. We as Queenslanders now have a once only opportunity to cement this event into the Australian yacht racing calendar, and we have only six weeks in which to do it. The Mooloolaba Yacht Club, of which I am an active member, is committed to the development of the race and has greeted the CYCA's forward thinking and enthusiasm with great anticipation.

To this end, I am calling on the Government, whether through the Department of Tourism, Tourism Queensland, the Department of State Development or Queensland Events, for assistance with the promotion of this year's race as Queensland strives to avoid losing a major sporting event to a southern State and to set in place an impenetrable barrier against future attacks. The New South Wales Premier has evidently also lent his name to the New South Wales event which, according to Yachting News, will be known as the Premier's Cup. This could well become a battle of the Premiers. I seek the support of all members, particularly the Premier, who is the Honorary Commodore of the Mooloolaba Yacht Club, to ensure that Queensland's most important yachting icon is not lost to New South Wales.