



Speech by

## Christine Smith

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

Hansard Wednesday, 28 October 2009

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### MOTION: A1GP

**Mrs SMITH** (Burleigh—ALP) (6.20 pm): The Nikon SuperGP is an event that the people of the Gold Coast and the people of Queensland can be proud of. What I lack in passion, I make up for in loyalty. I attended the event last Sunday, taking my two grandsons with me. While I cannot claim to be a revhead, I certainly enjoyed the event and the boys were ecstatic—seeing V8 races that they have only ever watched on television. This is an iconic event that has been running now for 19 years, and the unprofessionalism of the A1GP organisation should not be allowed to tarnish this event. It is bad enough that the opposition, at every turn, is trying to damage the event and in turn the Gold Coast's tourism industry.

When the loss of the A1GP cars looked like damaging the event, the Labor members on the Gold Coast met with the minister and urged that a plan B be implemented. The minister delivered on his commitment to us by negotiating with V8 Supercars Australia to expand their presence at the event. The Gold Coast is the home of the V8s and I welcomed the opportunity for them to show off in front of a home crowd.

The revised format was a success and the absence of A1GP was barely noticed by those who mattered most—the motorsport fans. The revised racing format, which saw 600 kilometres of V8 Supercars action over Saturday and Sunday, along with the return of the top 10 shoot-out, was outstanding. More than 205,000 people over the four-day event saw more racing action than at any other V8 event outside of Bathurst. Considering the current economic climate, with other events also suffering from a lack of numbers, this number may not have been exceeded even if the A1GP had been part of the event. With the late withdrawal of A1GP, this was a fabulous outcome and a credit to everyone involved. The addition of the Pirtek Australian Legends proved to be extremely popular with fans of all ages and I hope they will take to the streets of Surfers Paradise again next year. The support categories, including the Aussie Racing Cars, the Minis and the Formula Fords, also put on a great show.

The past 19 years of delivering successful motor racing events on the Gold Coast should not be forgotten, particularly when over the past three years alone the event has delivered well in excess of an estimated \$150 million in economic benefit to the Gold Coast and the state. To help deliver this fantastic event, my thanks go to the more than 1,300 volunteers who assisted over the weekend with things like flag, fire and recovery marshalling, and checking tickets at the gates, grandstands and corporate facilities. Your efforts did not go unappreciated and we hope to see you back again for next year's event.

The Gold Coast economy is based on tourism. Any negative publicity does untold damage to small business owners, suppliers and accommodation providers. The front page of today's *Gold Coast Bulletin* and subsequent pages detail Gold Coast City Councillor Susie Douglas's lack of support for the race. I find it interesting that Councillor Douglas and her husband, the member for Gaven, would accept the hospitality in the government box when she does not support the event itself. The *Gold Coast Bulletin*, on the other hand, has made no secret of its support, acknowledging the economic benefits the event brings to the coast.

From the many people I spoke with on the weekend, I believe the V8 Supercars can carry the event. I was told by many fans that, while the overseas cars were a bit of a novelty, V8s are the real muscle cars. To quote a young man at the track: 'Aussies love their V8s. I'll be back next year.' The member for Springwood tells me she has been to motor racing events all around Australia and she found this one to be one of the best. Like her, I look forward to a bigger and better show next year—the 20th anniversary of the event.