



Speech by

John-Paul Langbroek

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard Wednesday, 28 October 2009

MOTION: A1GP

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (5.30 pm): I move—

That this House notes the undertaking given to the House by the Minister for Child Safety and Sport on 15 September that he had satisfied himself the A1GP would compete in the SuperGP; and calls on the Minister to provide to Parliament, within 24 hours, all the information the Minister relied upon to make that statement.

This motion will confirm public confidence in the integrity and dignity of parliament. If this Labor government chooses to use its numbers to protect the member for Mansfield, the Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport, it will further weaken its reputation. The motion calls on the minister to provide to the parliament all the information that the minister relied upon to make the statement he made. If the government were to reject this motion, it calls into question how much the government and the minister can be relied upon to provide information to David Williams. If the minister will not provide that information to the parliament, then that brings into question whether he will provide that information, or whether the government will provide that information, to David Williams, who is undertaking his review. Of course, the Auditor-General, who is fiercely independent, is also conducting a review.

This matter goes to the heart of the doctrine of Westminster ministerial responsibility. We asked questions about this issue in the parliament on 2 September, 15 September and 17 September. At the time we asked completely responsible questions in response to information that we had received from overseas that there were question marks about the A1GP's operations and whether it would be coming to the Gold Coast for the A1GP weekend—the Nikon SuperGP. We asked these questions in a responsible way. I refute absolutely allegations that we in any way tried to undermine the event.

In response to the first question that we asked, the minister read a press release. The second question, which was asked on 15 September, was literally asking if the minister would table the due diligence report undertaken before contracting with A1GP. That was a responsible question. In response, the minister gave an undertaking that he was satisfied. He gave an undertaking that he had reviewed this particular matter and that, as the minister responsible, what he had promised would occur would occur.

It is very obvious now, when the minister says that it is not his responsibility, that he is undermining the integrity and accountability of the government of Queensland. That is why we have moved this motion—so that we can get the minister to explain to this House a number of issues that have been raised about the information that he had. He gave an assurance to the House that he had made sure that he was happy that the arrangements would continue and that the A1GP would be coming. We need the minister, the member for Mansfield, to come clean and prove that his comments were not made negligently. On that day, on 15 September, and I have quoted this before, the minister's response was—

All the advice I am receiving from the partnership management committee of the Nikon SuperGP is that the event is going ahead as planned. It is well planned and it is going to be a great event. Because of the repetitive rumour mongering the opposition engages in—

and I refute that it was repetitive rumour mongering, as has been proven to be the case in terms of what actually happened—

I sought a briefing with the partnership committee about the actions it has undertaken to ensure the contractual obligations of the A1GP will be met for 2009. I have received the briefing and have had personal discussions with the chairman of the A1GP as late as yesterday to satisfy myself that everything that needs to be done is done to ensure this iconic event, which takes place in the electorate of the Leader of the Opposition, remains on track.

That is what the minister said on 15 September—that he had received a briefing and had a meeting with the chairman of the A1GP, Terry Mackenroth, the previous day which, of course, was 14 September. But when we look at the facts of the matter, last week Terry Mackenroth said on the *7.30 Report*—

We dearly, dearly would've liked to have simply said to them, a month ago, or two months ago, 'Look, you are not going to come, we don't think you're going to come, so we're going to cancel the contract.'

The question is: had Mr Mackenroth told the member for Mansfield, the Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport? When did Mr Mackenroth first tell the minister his opinion? Of course, subsequently on 15 September, the minister then came into this place and said, 'No, I had a conversation with Mr Mackenroth yesterday, 14 September, and this event is going ahead.' Yet Mr Mackenroth, by his own words, says that as far back as August—two months before the event—he had had queries about whether these people would be coming.

We also had comments by the chairman of the V8 Supercars, Tony Cochrane, who said on *Stateline*—

And you know after you see that much smoke—

referring to the issue that these cars were locked up, a company had been liquidated and a company had been removed from the stock exchange in London because their financial statements had not been filed properly. The company had not accounted for a loan that was supposedly for the A1GP cars. There were serious financial questions that were being asked—

only an idiot would come to the conclusion 'ignore all that, it is going great guns'. Their cars have been locked up under a marshall warehouse law since the end of May.

The minister needs to answer serious questions and, as this motion says, he needs to answer them within 24 hours. He needs to provide the information that he relied upon to make the statement that things were going ahead. As I have said, the A1GP cars were locked up. A1GP Operations Ltd, a UK company, had been liquidated. The likelihood of A1GP complying with its promises was removed. The vehicles had been seized by Delivered on Time pursuant to a creditor's lien. The liquidator of the company, Tim Bramston of Griffins, did not receive a phone call from the minister, his office, or the Queensland government.

There are also issues with the main company behind Tony Teixeira, the CEO and part-owner of A1GP which, as I said, had been struck off the London Stock Exchange's Alternative Investment Market because it did not file its 2008 financial statements. The statements were late because the auditors of the company refused to sign off on the statements because of an outstanding loan to A1GP.

The heart of this issue is the fact that even though Tony Teixeira may have given the government and the promoters false and misleading promises, it does not excuse the government because it was not reasonable to rely on those statements. The government did not make any effort to test those statements. That is why the minister needs to give this information.

I refer to the A1GP time lines that I have talked about before. There were announcements of an in-principle deal by the former minister for sport, the now member for Sunnybank—the member for Mount Gravatt then. That was in November 2008. But a number of events had been cancelled. The New Zealand event had gone ahead because the New Zealand principal had paid the freight cost to New Zealand. But the Indonesian event had been cancelled and the Mexican event had been cancelled in April. A wind-up of A1GP operations was commenced on 12 May. Yet the minister said in this place on 15 September that he was confident that this event was going to go ahead.

Subsequently, the A1GP was wound up by the UK High Court. We asked the first question about this matter on 2 September. As I have already mentioned, the second and third questions were asked on 15 and 17 September. The minister needs to answer the following questions. Why did we accept the A1GP when the New South Wales government refused to pay a sanction fee on economic grounds? Did the Queensland government contact the New South Wales government and ask for an economic analysis of the A1GP event—or did it just take the word of IMG? Why is the minister, the member for Mansfield, happy to give Queensland a reject that even New South Wales would not accept? Why is the public interest protected only by a due diligence investigation conducted by IMG when \$11.6 million of taxpayers' money is on the table?

There are also questions to be asked about the television broadcast agreements that were in place for the A1GP and questions about the freight arrangements. People who are involved in this industry have told me that if you are going to freight cars you need to have at least a week's notice. Yet the day before that was to happen we had footage of people saying, 'We haven't got a booking, but we'll happily take them if they come.'

Those questions need to be answered by the minister. He needs to provide those answers to this House, and, as per this motion, he needs to provide them within 24 hours. There are numerous other questions about Tony Teixeira and the original purchase of A1GP by Tony Teixeira from Sheikh Maktoum Hasher Maktoum Al Maktoum and Energem Resources, which was struck off the London Exchange. There are also questions of probity. A minister responsible for \$11.6 million of taxpayers' money should have

availed himself of the knowledge, or attempted to avail himself of that knowledge but, as I have already said, he did not seek to test the statements that had been provided.

That is why we are calling on the members opposite to support this motion. Let us not weaken the reputation of the government and this parliament any further. I ask the minister to provide the information so that we can get it out into the open and we can have confidence in the future of Queensland.