



Speech by

Hon. Peter Lawlor

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

Hansard Thursday, 18 June 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Gordon, Mr R; Gold Coast Tourism

Hon. PJ LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Fair Trading) (9.48 am): I, too, would like to associate myself with the remarks of the Premier in relation to the Editor-in-Chief of the *Gold Coast Bulletin*, Bob Gordon. We did not always see eye to eye on issues but we remain good friends. I wish Bob, Maggie and the children all the best in the next stage of Bob's life.

As a member from the Gold Coast and the tourism minister, I know the importance of major events like the Gold Coast marathon to tourism. Major events can be significant domestic and international tourism drivers. That is why the Bligh government has not backed away from its commitment to leverage investment in key tourism events.

Whilst the LNP promised at the last election to cut services, jobs and funding, the Bligh government committed to more tourism funding, more tourism infrastructure and more tourism job opportunities. Specifically, the Bligh government promised an additional \$2 million a year to leverage tourism opportunities from major events.

Despite a tough tourism market and a massive decline in international travel by the Asian market, Gold Coast Marathon numbers have stood strong. I am pleased to say that as of Sunday nearly 19,500 entries have been received, up 30 per cent from the same time last year.

Mr Reeves: You're one of those, aren't you?

Mr LAWLOR: Well, I will be walking; I will not be running, I can guarantee. Most importantly, we have received entries from 33 countries including new ones like Denmark, Hungary, Bermuda and Venezuela. Domestic entries are up 30 per cent from Queensland, 19 per cent from New South Wales and 37 per cent from Victoria.

Japan and New Zealand are still our two major international markets with some good growth from South-East Asia. Japan will have more than 1,200 runners, which is down from 1,882 in 2008. However, considering Japan is deep in recession and reducing travel due to swine flu it is not such a bad result. Additionally, there will be 323 runners from New Zealand, 27 from Taiwan, 57 from Singapore and 41 from Hong Kong—all on par with or up on last year. While team entries have closed, single registrations are open until the day before the event so we can expect these numbers to grow further over the coming weeks.

Many of the runners from overseas will also travel with friends, family and supporters so the total tourism benefit is expected to be significantly greater. Despite the global financial crisis, the Bligh government is keeping events like the Gold Coast Marathon going to ensure our tourism industry and those employed in it have a future.