



Speech by

Hon. Phil Reeves

MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD

Hansard Wednesday, 28 October 2009

MOTION: A1GP

Hon. PG REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport) (5.45 pm): I move the following amendment—

That all words after 'notes' be deleted and the following words inserted:

- that the Auditor-General will conduct an audit into the Gold Coast Events Corporation, the Gold Coast Motor Events Company and relevant government agencies in relation to the SuperGP event;
- that the Auditor-General has powers to conduct this inquiry including full and free access to all documents and property belonging to, in the custody of or under these entities' control;
- that the Government has commissioned an additional review into the event to be conducted by David Williams;
- that the Terms of Reference for the Williams review include an analysis of the circumstances, provision of conclusions and recommendations for the future staging of the event;
- that the Minister for Sport will provide all information held by his office or himself in relation to this matter to the Auditor-General and the Williams review and any further information that may be requested in this regard; and
- that both the Auditor-General report and the Williams review will be tabled in the Parliament when completed.

The opposition should note that Mr David Williams has been appointed to undertake a comprehensive and independent review of the Gold Coast SuperGP event. Mr Williams is one of the state's most experienced event managers. His independent review will be complemented by the Auditor-General's regular audit, which has been brought forward and will also include an examination of the A1GP contract.

The independent Williams review will analyse the governance undertaken by the event organisers ahead of the 2009 event and will provide recommendations for the future of this major motor racing event on the Gold Coast. I will provide to both the independent reviewer and the auditor all documents available to me regarding A1GP. I look forward to the outcomes of both the review and the audit.

The unprofessional A1GP organisation let us down badly. They misled the people of the Gold Coast, the people of Queensland, the government and the organisers of the Nikon SuperGP. The event promoter and the Queensland government had actively pursued advice from A1GP for several months amid speculation about the financial health of the organisation. Despite all the rumours, they continued to act as if they were coming to Surfers Paradise. They booked and paid for accommodation and the TV broadcast, obtained visas for their drivers and booked pre-race training time at Queensland Raceway. The international teams for the event were also announced and A1GP also continued to provide written and verbal assurances. In fact, I spoke personally to the chairman of A1GP on 14 September, at which time he reiterated to me his assurances that A1GP would be on the Gold Coast in October. Prior to that, on 3 September, he had given that same commitment in writing.

These commitments continued to be received right up until 14 October and included such things as the team lists, accommodation bookings and a letter claiming all financial issues had been resolved. On 17 October the A1GP officially advised it would not be able to participate in the Nikon SuperGP. Upon receiving this advice, the promoter, the Gold Coast Motor Events Co., terminated the agreement it held

with A1GP. Without any concrete evidence that the A1GP would not be turning up, the event promoter had no ability to cancel the contract in place. The contract could only be, and was, cancelled once there was documentary evidence that the contractual conditions were unable to be met. The Gold Coast Motor Events Co. will pursue any legal options at its disposal to take action against A1GP.

Despite A1GP's withdrawal, more than 205,000 people voted with their feet and attended the Nikon SuperGP. That is a fantastic effort considering the current economic climate. More than 205,000 people proved the critics wrong and ensured this event was a success. The SuperGP is an annual motorsport event that delivers business, tourism and sport benefits to the Gold Coast and Queensland. This event is great for the Gold Coast, great for local jobs and great for Queensland tourism.

It is a credit to everyone involved that such a terrific event was put together so quickly. My sincere thanks go out once again to V8 Supercars Australia chairman, Tony Cochrane, and all of the V8 drivers and their teams for stepping up and delivering an exciting new race program. Special thanks also to the Bowden family for their extreme generosity that allowed the Pirtek Australian Legends category to go ahead and Crusher for his great idea. I also acknowledge the hardworking people on the ground and all the volunteers for getting on with the job of delivering the event.

There has been a lot of misinformation about this event circulated by those opposite. The simple fact is that the Gold Coast Motor Events Co. had a contract which it had to fulfil. We could not legally break that contract. However, once it became apparent that the A1GP could not fulfil the contract I stepped in as minister, as any minister should, to ensure this event was a success. I rolled up my sleeves—I did not carp on the sidelines—and worked with the promoter and V8 Supercars to develop an alternative program that was as good as, if not better than, that which was originally planned. Then I went out and promoted the program. Why did I do that? Not to protect my job but to protect Gold Coast jobs.