



Speech by

Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

Hansard Thursday, 15 May 2008

MOTOR RACING EVENTS (TOWNSVILLE) AMENDMENT BILL

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (8.30 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Motor Racing Events (Townsville) Amendment Bill 2008. The bill proposes a legislative framework for the development and staging of motor racing events in Queensland. It recognises that Queensland not only has the Gold Coast Indy 300 but also from next year will have another major motor racing event in Townsville in north Queensland following the passage of this bill.

The bill proposes to afford greater flexibility for the staging of motor racing events generally, both existing events and events that will be held in the future in the case of the proposed event in north Queensland. The bill proposes to rename the Gold Coast Motor Racing Events Act 1990 as the Motor Racing Events Act 1990 to accurately reflect its general application and give due recognition to the very significant event that will be held in north Queensland.

Unlike the Gold Coast Indy 300 circuit, which is predominantly a temporary precinct, permanent infrastructure will be established for the Townsville event. The bill includes provision for the development of permanent infrastructure for motor racing events where required. The bill provides that a proposed area for a motor racing event may be declared by gazette. If a proposed area is declared by map or plan, the gazette notice will inform people where and when they can inspect the proposed declared area. The bill provides that certain acts and laws not apply within a declared area during the declared period. Some of these exceptions will also apply during construction of the permanent racing infrastructure. Exceptions do not extend to the application of prescribed standards, for example building standards.

In March 2007 the state government approved a funding package of just over \$12 million to meet the capital costs of construction of the Townsville event precinct and a contribution of \$2.5 million per annum towards the cost of staging the event for five years. The capital costs were first estimated in May 2006 for a potential event in 2007. The Queensland government also required that any escalation in capital costs over the original cost estimate of \$24.6 million was to be met fifty-fifty by Townsville City Council. Townsville City Council initially committed \$2.6 million to the capital costs for the event and half a million per annum for five years as a contribution to staging the event.

The federal government committed \$10 million towards capital costs for the event through its Better Regions program. The cost estimate for construction has increased since May 2006 from \$24.6 million to \$30.7 million. This is largely due to the booming construction market in Townsville and increases in the price of materials and labour over the last three years, which is understandable and happens almost as a matter of course with any project requiring something to be constructed at the moment.

The explanatory notes accompanying the bill state that, if the council agrees to contribute its share of the cost escalation for the construction of the event precinct, the respective funding contributions to the event will be \$15 million and \$2.5 million for five years by the Queensland government for a total contribution of just over \$27.5 million. The Townsville City Council will be making a contribution of just over \$5.5 million plus \$500,000 a year for five years for a total contribution of just over \$8 million.

The explanatory notes also state that the government's position in relation to the capital cost escalation is that the state will only match whatever funding the council contributes in this regard. The

explanatory notes state that if the council does not contribute the full 50 per cent of the additional capital costs then the state will match whatever council does contribute and the event precinct will be scaled down accordingly. This position was the crux of a ministerial statement by the minister for sport on 29 April during which the minister delivered a lecture directed at the new Townsville City Council over who would pick up the estimated cost overruns for the project. During her statement the minister said, in part—

The council needs to confirm it will provide its share—50 per cent of the cost escalation—or explain to the Townsville community why council is not supporting what has the potential to be a great event for the city. For these reasons, the bill which I will introduce this week will sit on the table of this House until such time as the council's contribution to the event is resolved.

The minister went on to say—

I visited the site of the Townsville race earlier this month and I think it has great potential. I also met with the mayor and I think we both want the race to proceed. There are now time imperatives which will make the resolution of these funding issues a priority, and I will continue to talk to the council to effect a resolution.

On 29 April the minister said that the bill will lie on the table until the state government and the council can come to an agreement about the cost overruns. I would assume, although it has not been announced publicly, that the fact that we are debating the bill today means that there has been some agreement reached or some significant progress has been made, otherwise the minister's statement of 29 April would not be accurate. I think it is safe to assume that some agreement has been reached or some significant progress has been made which is satisfactory for the state government to proceed with this bill and it is probably the motivation behind the amendments which are proposed by the minister.

The fact that there has been no public statement that an agreement has been reached is not unusual, but it underlines why the minister's statement on 29 April was unusual. I assume the agreement or the significant progress that has been made has been negotiated in confidence between the state government and the new Townsville City Council and would have been being negotiated in confidence at the time the minister made her ministerial statement on 29 April.

The minister's statement was described as a tirade by the *Townsville Bulletin* on 30 April. The editorial from the *Townsville Bulletin* from that day indicates that the new Townsville City Council believed it was still negotiating with the state government in relation to the costs at the time of the minister's statement. The minister's comments on 29 April were unprovoked as I do not recall seeing public statements being issued by the new Townsville City Council that it was refusing to meet any of the cost overruns. That is what ordinarily categorises commercial negotiations in confidence.

For some time now north Queensland has been establishing itself as a major sporting event destination. The Townsville V8 Supercars event will enhance this reputation. North Queenslanders love their sport, they love participating in it themselves at a community level and they particularly love supporting first-class sport as spectators. The North Queensland Cowboys Rugby League team based in Townsville has been enormously successful in capturing the imagination of north Queenslanders as their local team in the National Rugby League competition. I often wear their pin in the House with great pride. I am not wearing that pin today though because this week is Volunteers Week and I am wearing their pin on this occasion.

Dairy Farmers Stadium, the home of the North Queensland Cowboys, has also hosted the Queensland Reds for Super 14 Rugby Union matches in 2006 and prior to that hosted Rugby Union matches as part of the Rugby Union World Cup in 2003. The stadium will also secure Rugby League World Cup games scheduled for later in 2008. Townsville has a basketball team in the Australian National Basketball League, the Townsville Crocs. The member for Stafford would be disappointed if I did not mention that. Last month Townsville hosted Davis Cup tennis matches and efforts are currently being made to establish a soccer team to represent north Queensland in Football Federation Australia's national A-league competition. On 31 December last year the Queensland Bulls played Victoria in a 20/20 cricket match at the new Riverway Stadium.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wendt): Member for Hinchinbrook, I have given you some latitude. I am looking at the long title of the bill. I cannot determine where you are coming from. Can you point it out to me in the bill?

Mr CRIPPS: I am just trying to make the point that Townsville is becoming a great destination for these major sporting events and I will definitely move on with the contribution in relation to motorsport. In the area of motorsport, the V8 Supercars coming to Townsville will be the second major motorsport event to be held annually in north Queensland. Annually in Ingham we have a car show in the Herbert River district. In 2007 the Ingham Car Show attracted an estimated 20,000 people to the Herbert River district over the course of one weekend, making it the largest motorsport event in north Queensland and probably the largest motorsport event north of Brisbane.

That outstanding response from the people of north Queensland and, indeed, from dedicated motorsport enthusiasts from all over Queensland and Australia in support of the Ingham Car Show in such significant numbers in a regional area is a strong indication of the level of support that the Townsville V8

Supercars can expect to receive. As it will be held in a larger provincial city, the race can reasonably expect to be a very significant event in the new City of Townsville and for north Queensland.

Mr Lawlor: Andrew, were they all purple Valiants at that show?

Mr CRIPPS: No, they were not all purple Valiants. There was quite a number of different vehicles at the Ingham Car Show from vintage to new, utilities and sedans—the whole box and dice.

Mr Lawlor: Sorry I missed it.

Mr CRIPPS: Don't worry, member for Southport. You can get an invitation to come next year. You will be very welcome.

Ms Stone: You are a vintage car, Peter. Don't worry.

Mr CRIPPS: We might enter the member for Southport in the vintage section himself.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wendt): Order! Member for Southport and member for Hinchinbrook, please direct your comments through the chair.

Mr CRIPPS: Most definitely, Mr Deputy Speaker. As the member for Toowoomba South, the shadow minister, pointed out, it would be disingenuous to say that there were not some people in the community who have expressed some concerns about the event coming to Townsville. I am aware of the concerns of the Better Uses for Reid Park group. I acknowledge those concerns, and I am confident that there will be an effort made to limit the impacts on residents and other stakeholders in Townsville when the V8 Supercar event is held annually.

I also recognise that there has been a great deal of enthusiasm expressed by many people in the wider community in the new City of Townsville and, indeed, in the communities in my electorate of Hinchinbrook and throughout north Queensland. The popularity of the Ingham Car Show in my electorate is testimony to the interest in motorsports in north Queensland. The Townsville V8 Supercar event has the potential to deliver a range of benefits to north Queensland, and on that basis I am pleased to support the bill.