



NSW Legislative Assembly Hansard

Mount Panorama Motor Racing Amendment Bill

Extract from NSW Legislative Assembly Hansard and Papers Tuesday 26 September 2006.

Second Reading

Ms SANDRA NORI (Port Jackson—Minister for Tourism and Sport and Recreation, Minister for Women, and Minister Assisting the Minister for State Development) [9.11 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I take great pleasure in introducing the Mount Panorama Motor Racing Amendment Bill, which amends certain provisions of the Mount Panorama Motor Racing Act 1989. The purpose of the bill is to increase to five the maximum permissible annual number of events using the whole Mount Panorama motor racing circuit under the Mount Panorama Motor Racing Act 1989. By promoting increased visitation to the area, this measure will assist the Bathurst Regional Council, the owner of the circuit, in developing a significant local tourism resource.

The bill increases the penalties for two offences to a maximum of 100 penalty points each. This measure will ensure that the penalties are commensurate with the seriousness of the offences. It also indicates the determination of the New South Wales Government to promote the maximum standard of safety at motor racing events. Mount Panorama, at Bathurst, is one of the sacred places of motor racing in Australia. It is a national treasure for motor racing. It is one of the major motor racing circuits in the world, and its special character sets it apart from others.

It is perhaps unfortunate that our deliberations today follow soon after the recent tragic passing of Peter Brock, one of Australia's greatest sporting heroes and a major figure in motor racing for three decades. Many of his achievements occurred at Mount Panorama, and for many he will be regarded as the King of the Mountain forever. I expect there to be a special poignancy about this year's Supercheap Auto 1,000-kilometre event in particular, coming so soon after the accident in which he was killed. It is wonderful news that a perpetual trophy will be awarded to the winners of the 1,000-kilometre race, which will be named the Peter Brock Trophy.

Since 1938, when it was a dirt track, there has been motor racing at Mount Panorama, and most of the significant Australian motor racing identities have competed there and created a strong tradition. There are few comparable circuits in the world. The physical beauty of the location is staggering. For many years the mountain was a mecca for Australian motorcycle racing as well, with a special mystique, a long tradition, some significant heroes, and its own folklore. Many motorcyclists regarded the pilgrimage to the Easter races as the high point of their year. Sadly for that tradition, the motorcycles are now gone. Safety concerns have really made it impossible, given the speeds that modern bikes can achieve.

But the cars are still there every year, and thousands of Australians, not just from New South Wales, make the trip in October to see the big V8 race, currently under the name of the Supercheap Auto 1000, and the other events during the five days. This is the major annual tourism event for the Bathurst area. At Easter there is the International Festival of Motor Sport, also over five days, with a variety of motor sport events and entertainment off track. On-track events include a 12-hour production race, historic touring cars, Aussie racing cars, the Australian GT Championship, Hot Laps and a legends race.

The New South Wales Government contributed \$10 million in 2002-03 on a one-for-one basis with the Commonwealth Government to assist Bathurst Regional Council, which contributed \$4 million, in developing the facilities at Mount Panorama as part of the Mount Panorama Regional Tourism and Recreation Strategy. This initiative focuses on the Mount Panorama precinct as the most significant asset among the area's tourism attractions. Mount Panorama has been a tourist drawcard for more than half a century. It is estimated that 2.5 million Australian viewers watch the annual V8 race, which can be seen in some 700 million homes in 54 countries. About 300,000 people drive the circuit every year.

The Government contribution to Mount Panorama has seen the development of larger pit bays, corporate suites, a state-of-the-art control tower, 400 camping sites, spectator mounds, amenities blocks, and an enhanced pedestrian bridge over the pit strait. Mount Panorama is estimated to contribute \$27 million a year and 630 jobs to the regional economy, \$46 million and 810 jobs to the New South Wales economy and 1,500 jobs to the national economy. International visitor numbers are expected to rise from 75,000 to 100,000 bed nights a year with the redeveloped facilities. This is clearly a big bonus for Bathurst. Part of the special character of Mount Panorama is due to the circuit also being a public road. Unlike other venues in New South Wales, it is not regulated according to the provisions of the Motor Vehicle Sports (Public Safety) Act 1985, which applies to motor racing grounds on enclosed land.

The amendments proposed in this bill will assist the Bathurst Regional Council in promoting Mount Panorama, and the beautiful area generally, through an increase in the number of motor racing events it will be permitted to hold each year. The current Mount Panorama Motor Racing Act allows only two race meetings on the full circuit per year, and the proposed amendment will increase the limit to five per year under the Act. This will promote greater use of the facilities at Mount Panorama and increase the flow of tourism to the area with a corresponding financial benefit.

The new arrangement will provide the Bathurst Regional Council with the opportunity to conduct up to five motor racing meetings under the Act, subject to the provision of public safety reports by NSW Police and scrutiny of the circuit and facilities by the relevant motor sports organisations. This is in keeping with current practice, with an enhanced role for the council. It will be important for the council to maintain a close working relationship with police to ensure that the specific public safety requirements of motor sport events are properly addressed.

Being designated "authorised officers", council officers will be important participants in the process of implementing and monitoring safety standards. The provisions relating to penalties under the existing Act have also been addressed. They are primarily intended to act as a deterrent to foolish or impulsive acts and to communicate the seriousness of the safety issues at this unique racing circuit. Some of the existing penalties for quite dangerous behaviour were inadequate and have been increased significantly. For example, should anyone drive a vehicle unlawfully onto the circuit during a race, the penalty could be 100 points, or currently \$11,000. This is appropriate because motor racing events need to be made as safe as possible for all concerned. Similarly, any attempt to place obstacles on the track will attract a penalty of 100 points. Some other lesser penalties will be implemented in the regulation, which will be amended to accompany this bill. Those penalties have been reviewed and, in many cases, will be increased.

Certain administrative matters are addressed in the bill to acknowledge and support the role of the Bathurst Regional Council in fostering activity at Mount Panorama. The important role of the police will continue in fulfilling the requirement for public safety reports to be provided to council and to New South Wales Sport and Recreation. This contribution by the police is crucial to ensuring adequate provision for public safety. In the period following the passage of this bill, it will be important to ensure that local concerns are heard and addressed. The current arrangement for an advisory committee comprising representatives of council, New South Wales Sport and Recreation, police and local residents will also continue, and I am confident that this consultative mechanism will promote co-operation as well as recognition of the interests of local residents in the preparations for motor racing events at Mount Panorama.

The council also will meet regularly with residents and maintain channels of communication with the Mount Panorama Residents Committee. As the frequency of motor racing events increases, this consultative process will assume a greater importance as local people and council assess the impacts. I am confident that the amendments proposed in this bill will assist in ensuring a safe environment on and around the Mount Panorama circuit, as well as promoting the further development of motor racing in New South Wales, and at Bathurst in particular, while also enhancing the prospects for tourism in the area. I commend the bill to the House.