

Question

22.6.2011

TOUR DOWN UNDER

Mr BROCK (Frome) (14:18): My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier inform the house of some of the highlights of the new race routes announced last week for the 2012 Tour Down Under?

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Ramsay—Premier, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Social Inclusion, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Sustainability and Climate Change) (14:19): I would like to thank the honourable member for Frome for this question. Of course, his involvement in the race a couple of years ago in terms of his advocacy for the Clare Valley to be included in the Tour Down Under was not only strong but it was also successful and we saw the start in the Clare Valley. Of course, earlier this year Clare was not in the Tour Down Under schedule, and the honourable member has had a number of conversations with me since, and I have some very good news.

I was delighted last week when the Tour Down Under race director, Mike Turtur, announced the race routes for next year's events which will run from 15 to 22 January next year. Each day of the seven-day race is going to be a major event in and of itself. One of the jewels in the crown will be the gruelling finish, this time for the first time at the top of Old Willunga Hill, and it is on the penultimate stage on 21 January, but that is jumping ahead and I will come back to that in a moment.

I am thrilled to see that the race is returning to the Clare Valley which this year had a 'bye', so it is great to see that it is back in the race next year. The Clare Valley is one of the most enthusiastic regions when it comes to the Tour Down Under and, as I said, the member for Frome has been (in what may be an understatement) extremely keen for the race to return to Clare, and I want to thank him for his forceful advocacy.

I can understand why because the benefits to the local community are obvious. Clare Valley locals were not only excited about watching the race when the Tour Down Under was last held in Clare, for the first race start that ended in Tanunda that day as I recall, but they also made hay from the influx of tourists and visitors.

Thousands of people turned up to see the start of the race in the main street of Clare in 2010 and local retailers, wineries, hotels, restaurants, and bed and breakfasts all benefited from the influx of crowds. The people of the Clare Valley prepared for the race for months in advance. I remember driving through the region in the period leading up to the race and seeing giant haystacks next to the roads carrying messages of welcome for the riders and audiences.

This year the race will finish in Clare on the first stage of the Tour Down Under, and that is on day 1, so it is a finish rather than a start, and I have no doubt the people of the region will again go all out to make this an event to remember.

Stage 1 on 17 January next year will be a great town to country race. Significantly, the race will begin in the City of Prospect for the very first time. I know the Mayor of Prospect, David O'Loughlin, is very excited about securing the race start. Again, he has been a forceful advocate. He is already in negotiations with the Mayor of Clare, Alan Aughey, about ways in which the two centres can unite to jointly promote the start and finish of the race day.

Like the celebrations in Clare, Prospect will go all out for their race start. The city has already decided to move its annual Prospect Food and Fashion Event, normally held in November, to the night before the race start on 17 January next year and they will be blocking off the newly upgraded main street of Prospect and holding, in the mayor's words, 'the best party Prospect has ever seen'. The mayor is particularly proud of the main street's \$4 million upgrade—funded with the help of the state government—which has transformed a fairly ordinary arterial road into a village heart.

I might just mention that for the first time ever, the Prospect event will include a professional sprint race on the day before the race start—on the rest day for the Tour Down Under on the Monday. Cyclists from around Australia and locally will be invited to take part in the 200-metre sprint bike race down the main street for cash prizes. This has not been done before at any of our race starts or finishes but, as I understand it, these sprint events are quite common in Europe at the start of pro-tour cycling races.

So, this is all part of the excitement of stage 1 of the race, and, again, I congratulate the member for Frome for his advocacy efforts to re-secure the event for Clare—and without his advocacy it would not have happened.

We are all looking forward once again to the great events that go with the other race starts in Lobethal, Unley—with their big street party the night before which has become an annual party not to be missed—and Norwood and McLaren Vale.

For the first time in the event's 14-year history, cyclists will finish stage 5 on the penultimate day of the race, at the top of Old Willunga Hill, after a challenging Skoda King of the Mountain climb, which Mike Turtur assures me will be a spectacular finish. A new classification process will be used for the first time next year, with each climb given a rating between one and three, determined by the level of difficulty. Category 1 will cover the hardest climbs, Menglers Hill and Old Willunga Hill.

So, the 2012 Tour Down Under will be just as big, eventful, and as exciting as the previous races, and in terms of television coverage, millions of people will again see magnificent South Australian regions in all their summer glory as they shiver through their cold European and North American winters, so there could not be a better promotion for our tourism and wine industries. I am looking forward to making some further announcements—

Ms Chapman: How much for Lance Armstrong this year?

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. M.D. RANN: You want to know about Lance?

Ms Chapman: Yes—how much?

The Hon. M.D. RANN: Now that I have detailed that all roads lead to Frome, let me just say that I will be making some announcements about some of the spectacular stars who will be both participating in the 2012 Tour Down Under and also attending.