

Email dated 17/7/18 to Sandra Chipchase (DNSW CEO) regarding safety: answers (1/8/18) inserted

Dear Sandra Chipchase

As another disruptive Supercars event draws near, we have some questions for Destination NSW, the body responsible for authorising and promoting the event. Last year we drew your attention to the issue of safety for residents, workers and patrons in an unprecedented track location. We pointed out the inadequacies of the barrier fencing and the proximity of the track to our homes. We alerted you to concerns about how close people would be to the track and how that would pose dangerous risks to health and safety. We asked what precautions there would be to protect residents, workers and patrons from the serious risks associated with the location of the circuit.

Responses were evasive and mollifying. You told us that Supercars had great expertise in managing these events. You claimed they operated at the highest levels of safety. You ignored our safety concerns and your obligations as the sole authority of this event, preferring instead to refer us to Supercars. Supercars' representatives ignored our risk and safety concerns.

We informed you of their cavalier attitude citing the following encounter: a resident asked about flying debris from crashes or bits coming off the cars and road, the Supercars' representative said "it never happens!" The resident gave a recent example where bits of car were propelled over fencing, during a crash and said that if that had happened in front of our home, it would have landed on the balcony and smashed through the lounge room windows. In response, the very defensive, arrogant representative, said "it's like expecting planes to fall out of the sky...it never happens".

The inevitable accident happened. A wheel flew off one car, hurtled over the fence and hit two race patrons standing close to the track. ***This incident was foreseeable and preventable.*** We know that both Supercars and Destination NSW were advised of this risk prior to the event.

Little appeared in the media about the accident. Residents in adjacent homes photographed the incident and the response crews. News teams, usually quick to report on lesser incidents seemed remarkably quiet about the accident.

If the wheel had hit a child (and many ill-informed parents brought small children to stand next to the track) we are convinced it would have been a very serious injury or fatality.

WorkSafe told us there would be an investigation but we have heard nothing of the outcome, nor what agency would examine the incident.

Residents are becoming very worried that a similar or more serious accident could occur at the 2018 event, since there is now a precedent.

**Have you investigated the accident and if so, what were the findings of the investigation?**

*As the relevant authorities, Safework NSW and CAMS investigated the incident, we suggest you contact SafeWork NSW and CAMS in relation to any findings.*

**What remedial procedures and changes will DNSW insist that Supercars implement to ensure no such accident will occur again?**

*Destination NSW will continue to require Supercars Australia to demonstrate that the Newcastle 500 event has been granted the relevant permits from CAMS.*

**What agencies/authorities were responsible for the risk assessment for the Newcastle 500 event?**

*Each agency / authority / stakeholder do risk assessments according to their own needs.*

**Did CAMS contribute to the risk assessment?**

*CAMS and FIA approved the design and installation of the circuit in line with the safety standards required for motor racing circuits. Any risk assessments undertaken by CAMS will have been done according to its own requirements.*

**Could you provide our group with a copy of the risk assessment for the Newcastle 500?**

*See earlier comment regarding the numerous risk assessments prepared in relation to the event. The event cannot proceed without CAMS certification, public liability insurance and risk mitigation actions as previously outlined to you in responses to your multiple emails.*

**Do you have a record of ALL safety incidents that required a safety review and assessment for the complete 2017 Supercars series?**

*This is a question for Supercars Australia. We request you direct your question to Supercars Australia.*

**What changes to track access will be put in place to ensure that ALL people are at a safe distance from debris or other danger?**

*The operations of spectator vantage points and the access between vantage points will be undertaken as part of the overall review of the 2017 Newcastle 500. This also in line with circuit design and sign off by CAMS.*

**What improvements to protective barriers will be introduced for the 2018 event, to**

## **ensure they will prevent ALL debris from leaving the racetrack?**

*There has been no advice from Safework NSW or CAMS that the barriers require re-designing.*

Luckily the 2017 accident did not result in a fatality. Photos of the victims show their obvious distress and pain. Pain killing drugs were administered quickly, but the ambulance drivers were unable to negotiate fast and easy exit from the precinct. The trackside volunteers and workers seemed confused about what route the ambulance would take in order to leave.

In a more serious accident, the time taken to resolve this confusion would have been significant.

## **Have you been advised of the problems that arose when emergency vehicles tried to enter or leave the race precinct?**

*Emergency management agencies have debriefed the 2017 event with Supercars Australia and Destination NSW to plan the 2018 event. All findings that were raised will be reviewed as part of a cycle of continued improvement.*

## **What changes to emergency procedures will be implemented in 2018 to ensure emergency response vehicles can enter and leave without hindrance?**

*As with 2017 event, all agencies are closely involved in access and egress planning for the circuit. This includes NSW Police, Ambulance Service of NSW and Fire + Rescue.*

You would be aware that in all other Supercars locations, there are multiple roads in and around the racing precinct. This is not the case for the Newcastle circuit. We did point this out to you as an issue that warranted due consideration. Bearing in mind the track is located on a narrow peninsula, with only one way in or out, this is a crucial aspect of the race organisation that needs to be addressed.

Another important safety issue is the hurtling bitumen and rubber that occurs during each race. In the Newcastle case, the homes along the track were bombarded by it. We have photos that show the large size of these airborne missiles. Large chunks of road surface were flung against walls. Photos of the emergency road repairs show the extent of road damage caused by the racing cars. The subsequent dislodging of tar and gravel is dangerous, yet Supercars did not reduce the potential danger to passers by. The barrier fencing does not protect homes (or people walking to their homes) from flying debris.

## **What improvements to protective barriers will be put in place to prevent the rain of rubber, bitumen and tar that occurs during racing?**

*Destination NSW has not been advised by Safework NSW or CAMS that revisions are*

*required to the barriers.*

**Will there be public notification of the danger to patrons, workers and residents who are exposed to the flying debris?**

*Supercars Australia places the conditions of entry and notification of potential risks at each entry point to the venue and also on the event website. Destination NSW will continue to require Supercars Australia to undertake a community relations program advising all aspects of the race.*

**Will you direct Supercars to CLOSE access to all sections of the circuit where the debris breaches fencing?**

*If sections are deemed unsafe by Safework NSW, CAMS or any other relevant agency then this will be raised with Supercars Australia to rectify.*

**Will you direct Supercars to eliminate the flying debris?**

*Destination NSW will continue to direct Supercars Australia to provide mechanisms to minimise the likelihood of this type of incident occurring and to provide adequate safety measures for attendees. The rubber debris referenced is to be expected from an event of this nature. Any bitumen is from a section of the track that degraded and has been replaced.*

*Destination NSW will continue to require that Supercars Australia meet the safety conditions specified by the Confederation of Australian Motor Sports (CAMS) during future Newcastle 500 races. In relation to the 2017 Newcastle 500 Event, Destination NSW requested and received CAMS certification from Supercars Australia regarding the suitability of the circuit according to CAMS requirements, including safety.*

*Supercars Australia continues to work with all relevant government agencies to continuously review and develop operational plans for the event based on learnings.*

It is in the interests of DNSW and Supercars to make this risky event safe. We, who live unwillingly and unwittingly on a racetrack, hold you and Supercars accountable for any misadventure that occurs. There were several car pile-ups just a few metres from peoples' front doors. This is a very real concern for us, even if Destination NSW and Supercars do not think so.

We know that Newcastle is the circuit with the most spectators, residents and workers exposed in close proximity to the track. All recorded incidents should be assumed to have at least a similar likelihood of occurring in Newcastle, but with potential greater consequence, where the overall risk is greater.

The accident and car pile-ups are further proof that the location of this race next to homes in a residential, historic precinct is both inappropriate and dangerous to large

numbers of people. There are many, more appropriate locations for such an event in the Hunter region.

At the very least, promoters of the event should offer the highest standards of risk management and protection. This was noticeably lacking at the 2017 event. The race impacts on residents and business owners in a multitude of ways. Overlooked as stakeholders in 2017, residents and business owners await answers to these important questions that affect their health, safety and amenity.

Regards,

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On behalf of Newcastle East Residents Group