

Save Albert Park Inc. No. A0040971

Mail: Box 1300, South Melbourne BC, 3205. Tel.: 9690 3855 **Email:** saveap@bigpond.com
Office: Community Group Offices, South Melbourne Town Hall, Bank Street, South Melbourne., Victoria.
Website: www.save-albert-park.org.au

Media Release, March 15, 2013

The last big secret of the Melbourne grand prix: how many actual spectators?

Attendance is an important indicator of the prestige and popularity of the Melbourne grand prix. It is reported to the media as a major news item, and is given prominence in annual reports of the Australian Grand Prix Corporation (AGPC). However, we are not allowed to know how the figure is obtained. This is the last big secret of the Melbourne grand prix.

We now know a lot about the event:

We know that the 2013 Melbourne grand prix is set to lose more than \$60 million of taxpayers funds.

We know that \$34 million of that loss will be represented by the race licence fee paid to Bernie Ecclestone's Formula One group.

We know that the race will produce an economic loss at least equalling the financial loss, despite the spending by interstate and overseas race fans who will bring in 'new money' to Melbourne and spend it in hotels, restaurants and the casino.

We know how many grandstand seats there are at the Albert Park circuit, and how many guests can be catered for in the corporate boxes and suites. We know how many general admission ticket holders are likely to be spread around the circuit, behind the crash barriers and on the viewing mounds.

We also know that the ticket sales revenue for the 2011 and 2012 grand prix events could be generated by an attendance of about 60,000 paying patrons, a figure which does not fit the claimed 4-day attendance of 300,000 and a claimed patronage of 110,000.

We know that at past events, turnstiles or ticket scanning systems were not used at the gates and that the AGPC had no way of knowing exactly how many people were within the venue.

We know that since 1996 the AGPC has included event staff, race teams and media representatives (nearly 15,000 of them) in its daily attendance estimates. We suspect that the number of tickets issued (including those issued free) rather than tickets used may also be added in.

What we don't know is how the AGPC determines their daily attendance estimates. FOI requests for this information have been refused on the grounds that release of the information would harm the AGPC's commercial operations. We have resorted to taking the matter to VCAT, and the case will be heard next June.

In the meantime, we are appealing to the media to respect the facts and the public interest and to report the AGPC's 'official' attendance figures in their proper light, as claims made by the AGPC, and not to present them as factually accurate statements.

If, for example, a news story reports that "over four days, 300,000 race fans streamed through the turnstiles", or "race day attracted a crowd of 114,00", Save Albert Park (SAP) would regard this as justifying a complaint to the appropriate regulatory authority.

Complaints by SAP to the Australian Press Council against *The Age* and the *Herald Sun* regarding news reports on attendance have been upheld.

Contacts: Peter Logan, 0412 697 074, or Peter Goad, 0407 192 455