

Run deaths: Govt blasted on safety



Mr Adams ... 'issues of public safety'

By BOBWATT

The NT Government abandoned its responsibility for speed limits and safety in the Cannonball Run, Darwin Coroners Court was told yesterday.

Counsel assisting the coroner Michael Adams QC said: "Issues of safety for the competitors almost certainly involved issues of safety for the public as well.

"But these issues were delegated to the organisers."

He said the Government's steering committee was not given the job of evaluating whether the Run should occur.

Public servants were charged with the difficult task of executing what the Govern-

ment had decided was to take place.

"But more critical evaluation of the safety factors was required," he said.

Mr Adams said retired car racing champion Allan Moffat and other Cannonball organisers were not responsible for maintaining public safety.

Fair

It was neither fair nor appropriate that they should be.

In the public interest, the issue of speed, within all the safeguards that were proposed, was fundamentally one for the Government.

Mr Adams said there could be no doubt that the NT Cannonball Run was publicised as a high-speed event.

If the speed limit (of 140 km/h) proposed by the Confederation of Australian Motor Sport (CAMS) was imposed, the event would have lost its excitement.

He said: "Protestations that speed was a minor consideration lacked credibility."

Mr Adams also claimed that had a "flying finish" been used, the four people would not have died.

He said also that the presence of a "civilian" car near the checkpoint might have been a critical factor in the accident, although he did not blame the driver for it.

Mr Adams was giving his summing-up near the end of the coronial inquest into the

• Continued: F4

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'Missing' man in Katherine

A man at the centre of a Territory-wide search was found safe and well in Katherine yesterday.

Police had held grave fears for Noel Andrew Gorman, 39.

Mr Gorman had not contacted his de facto wife Julie Black since October 11, when he had begun to hitch-hike from Darwin to Alice Springs.

Mr Gorman telephoned police yesterday from Katherine, where he had found work, after a Territory-wide media appeal for information on his whereabouts.

Mr Gorman said he had written to Ms Black but the letter had not arrived before she raised concerns about his safety.