

Cannonball speed limit too low, says Moffat [Print Entire Page](#)

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Speed limits set by a motoring body for the Cannonball Run would have made it a "non-event" because a Volkswagen could have achieved them, the race organiser, Mr Allan Moffat, told an inquest in Darwin yesterday.

Mr Moffat, a former racing car champion, said a top average speed of 140 kmh set by the Confederation of Australian Motor Sport was "too conservative".

Mr Moffat said he believed the limit was set because CAMS was fearful of going against "a rule book in their office with no reference to what the environment in the Northern Territory was".

CAMS officials told the inquest they believed their conditions had been accepted by race organisers before a permit was issued four days before the outback car race.

In fact, no speed limit was imposed for the event and, in the competitive sections in which an accident occurred, some cars had to average 185 to 205 kmh to avoid penalty points. Four people died during the last run.

Mr Moffat said he had decided not to reply to a letter from CAMS that set a 140 kmh limit.

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Mr Moffat agreed with Mr Michael Adams, QC, counsel assisting the coroner, that he wanted the CAMS permit and had told the Northern Territory Government it would be sought.

"It (140 kmh) was a figure that you would, quite frankly, do in a Volkswagon, (which) would have made it a non-event - the event would not have taken place," he said.

Two Japanese competitors, Akihiro Kabe and Takishi Okano, died when their Ferrari crashed into a checkpoint 95 kilometres south of Alice Springs. The crash also killed volunteer officials Tim Linklater and Keith Pritchard.

Mr Moffat said he believed Mr Kabe, who was driving, "may have over-estimated his own ability" in correcting the car after it slid off the road into gravel.

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