



# ***TRANSPORT AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE***

**Members present:**

Mr SR King MP (Chair)  
Mr CE Boyce MP  
Mr RI Katter MP  
Mrs JR Miller MP  
Mr BJ Mellish MP  
Mr TJ Sorensen MP

**Staff present:**

Ms D Jeffrey (Committee Secretary)  
Ms M Young (Committee Support Officer)

## **PUBLIC HEARING—INQUIRY INTO THE QUEENSLAND TENNIS CENTRE**

### **TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**MONDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 2018**

**Brisbane**

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### **The committee met at 9.26 am.**

**CHAIR:** Good morning. I declare open the public hearing for the Transport and Public Works Committee's inquiry into the Queensland Tennis Centre. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which our parliament stands. My name is Shane King, member for Kurwongbah and chair of this committee. The other committee members here with me today are: Mr Ted Sorensen, member for Hervey Bay and deputy chair; Mr Colin Boyce, member for Callide; Mr Bart Mellish, member for Aspley; Mr Robbie Katter, member for Traeger; and Mrs Jo-Ann Miller, member for Bundamba.

The committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the parliament. The committee will not require evidence to be given under oath, but I do remind witnesses that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. You have previously been provided with a copy of instructions to witnesses, so we will take those as read. The proceedings are being recorded by Hansard and you will be provided with a copy of the transcript. To assist with clarity, can you please identify yourself when you first speak and speak clearly and at a reasonable pace?

The purpose of today's hearing is to assist the committee with its inquiry. Media may be present and will be subject to the chair's direction at all times. The media rules endorsed by the committee are available from committee staff if required. All those present today should note it is possible you might be filmed or photographed during the proceedings. I ask everyone present to turn mobile phones off or to silent mode. I also ask that if witnesses take a question on notice today they provide the information to the committee by 4 pm Monday, 24 September 2018.

**ATKINS, Mr Graham, Deputy Director-General, Building Policy and Asset Management, Department of Housing and Public Works**

**BLOMER, Mr Michael, Facilities Development Manager, Tennis Queensland**

**HANDLEY, Mr Mark, Chief Executive Officer, Tennis Queensland**

**HARRIS, Mr Todd, Chief Executive, Stadiums Queensland**

**SPENCER, Mr David, Group Executive, Asset Management, Stadiums Queensland**

**CHAIR:** Thanks for your assistance and your attendance here today. We also appreciate the submissions you provided to the inquiry. Would each organisation like to make a short opening statement?

**Mr Harris:** Good morning, Chair and members of the committee. Stadiums Queensland is responsible for the ownership and management of major sports facilities that have the capacity to host major sporting and entertainment events. The Queensland Tennis Centre is one of nine venues owned by Stadiums Queensland. The QTC is leased to Tennis Queensland, which hires the venue to Tennis Australia for the annual Brisbane International, and has been engaged to operate and manage the day-to-day tennis activities at the venue.

In 2007 the state decided that the Queensland Tennis Centre would become a major sports facility under the ownership of Stadiums Queensland. This decision was made following the government deciding to accept a proposal from Tennis Australia to change the design of the centre to enable it to host the Brisbane International as a new lead-in tournament to the Australian open.

Following the government's decision in 2007, the additional state government funding required for the design changes to the centre to enable it to host the Brisbane International was transferred from the department of local government, planning, sport and recreation to Stadiums Queensland. Stadiums Queensland also commenced working with Project Services, a business unit in the department of public works appointed as the state's representative to manage the contract with Mirvac Construction Queensland Pty Ltd for the centre's construction to ensure the design and construction of the centre was fit for purpose.

Following practical completion and handover of the tennis centre, it was prescribed as a major sports facility from 2 December 2008, and the ownership of the land and the tennis centre was transferred from the department to Stadiums Queensland. The Queensland Tennis Centre operating lease and the office lease for Tennis Queensland's administrative headquarters at the Queensland Tennis Centre also novated from the department to Stadiums Queensland as a consequence of the transfer of ownership. While Tennis Queensland as the lessee is responsible for the operation of the centre, Stadiums Queensland remains responsible for funding asset maintenance and end-of-useful life asset replacement other than the replacement of the 16 Plexicushion court services.

An asset maintenance plan and capital works plan are developed for the Queensland Tennis Centre on an annual basis by Tennis Queensland and Stadiums Queensland having regard to Stadiums Queensland's availability of funds. Following the January 2011 floods the opportunity was taken to make enhancements to back-of-house infrastructure for the Brisbane International as part of repairing flood damage to the Queensland Tennis Centre. These enhancements were in response to the growth in standing of the Brisbane International as a lead-in tournament to the Australian open.

Since 2014 Tennis Queensland has been working with Tennis Australia and Stadiums Queensland on a master plan to accommodate potential future growth of the Brisbane International. A 1.108 hectare parcel of land adjoining the Queensland Tennis Centre on its eastern side has been set aside from the state government's Yeerongpilly Green development for possible future expansion of the tennis centre. Any future major asset enhancement at the tennis centre utilising this additional land would require state government funding.

Finally, I note for the committee that Stadiums Queensland contributed to some of the information contained in the Department of Housing and Public Works' submission to the inquiry. We are happy to take any questions and assist the committee with its inquiry where we can.

**Mr Atkins:** I would like to thank the committee for this opportunity to contribute to the review of the Queensland Tennis Centre. I would like to start by giving the committee a brief history of the department's role at the time in the delivery of the project.

Construction of the Queensland Tennis Centre was completed almost 10 years ago, in early 2008 and just a few weeks short of the hosting of the inaugural Brisbane International from 4 to 11 January in 2009. The need for the new state tennis headquarters arose some 15 years earlier when the last tournament was held at the Milton tennis centre in 1994. After the site was sold in 1999, Tennis Queensland started the search for a new home.

In late 2005 the government at that time through the department of local government, planning, sport and recreation entered into a development agreement with Mirvac Construction to develop land and build the Queensland Tennis Centre on the site of the old Tennyson power station. At that time and throughout the construction, the department of public works' role in the project was as state's representative. That role meant representing Sport and Rec in the project with Mirvac.

When practical completion was achieved in December 2008 provisions relating to the Queensland Tennis Centre were transferred from the department of local government, planning, sport and recreation to Stadiums Queensland, who are also represented here today. As you would expect after such an extended period, many of the personnel from the department of public works who were involved in delivering the project have moved on. However, we are very happy to assist in any way we can.

**Mr Handley:** Thank you very much for allowing us the opportunity to speak on behalf of Tennis Queensland for this inquiry. I want to reiterate that the state tennis centre was built with minimal contribution from the Queensland taxpayer. It is a purpose-built tennis facility and it is the home of Queensland tennis.

It is the only facility in the country with all grand slam surfaces—hard courts as you see at the Australian Open, grass courts as you see at Wimbledon and the clay courts as you see at the French Open. It is showing its age now. There is a changing tennis landscape. You would have heard in the media over the past three to six months about the World Team Cup and the Brisbane International and there being no more Davis Cup, so attracting high-level tennis events is going to be a challenge moving forward. The facility is at another critical juncture. We are 20 years on since the sale of Milton. We are working through the QTC master plan with Stadiums Queensland on what the Pat Rafter Arena expansion might look like and what a community link to the Yeerongpilly Green development might look like and we are investigating the viability of a second roofed arena. There is competition from around the country. There is further tennis and multipurpose stadia being built around the country in Sydney and in Adelaide and there is the new Perth arena.

The Queensland Tennis Centre currently plays host to a number of events throughout the year, including: the Brisbane International in January; the Queensland Tennis Centre Australian Pro Tour event in September; ITF Junior Championships in July; the Rod Laver Queensland Junior Championships, which attracts over 700 players from around Asia and Oceania and is the biggest junior event in the country; and the Brisbane Age, held in April. It is the home of the \$20,000 Queensland Open, which has a history dating back to the 1890s, and the Queensland Junior Teams Carnival, which is a regionally based team competition at the end of the year. Every holiday period there is a major tennis event at the facility and it is the training facility—when they are home—to Ashleigh Barty, John Millman, Jason Kubler and Lizette Cabrera, who all performed beautifully at the US open along with Sam Stosur.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Queensland government and Stadiums Queensland for all their support. I welcome any questions to assist the committee.

**CHAIR:** I might kick off the questions. We went out there for a visit and we really did appreciate being shown around. It was very interesting noting the clay courts and everything else as well. I spent a fair bit of time at Tennyson power station when it was still a power station and remembering the flooding and everything—and it was tragic to see what happened in 2011. I want to touch on again, to refresh our memories, what you have done since the flooding to make sure we do not go there again? It is quite interesting to see all that work. Can we get someone to touch on that, and maybe a few of you may wish to add something on the flooding.

**Mr Spencer:** I can talk to that. We had a number of flood mitigation strategies. The potential damage by flooding has been minimised by using flood tolerant materials where applicable. We have installed concrete block walls. In the change rooms there are materials that, if flooded, can be hosed off. We have also looked to have loose furniture down there for the players that can be relocated if a flood is impending. Services infrastructure was installed above the current one-in-50 years flood level where that was allowable. Multipurpose rooms are being designed for a one-in-20 years event and they are separated from the players' facilities by an existing one-in-100 years flood wall and the new door openings have been protected by floodgates. I think we saw some of these when we were there. At the tennis centre we updated our flood emergency response plan in response to the floods to ensure that we covered the new doors and so forth in the event of an impending flood.

**Mr SORENSEN:** If there was a Q100 flood or a Q500 flood would that flood the place again?

**Mr Spencer:** Certainly large sections of the site would absolutely flood—some of the court areas, particularly the grass courts and the clay courts, and certainly the multipurpose rooms would flood, which are on the other side of the one-in-100 years flood wall. Indeed, our insurers are aware of that and we would undertake mitigation strategies in accordance with our flood emergency plan to mitigate the damage and be able to turn the site back around and recover more quickly.

**Mr SORENSEN:** We saw what you did inside the tennis centre to mitigate against future flooding events. Can you outline what you consider to be the benefits of the project? How does the Queensland Tennis Centre compare with other facilities both in Australia and overseas? Can you please outline for the committee how the construction of the facility was funded?

**Mr Handley:** I can answer the second part of that, which is how it compares with other stadia around the country. Clearly Melbourne Park is the benchmark. They have three roofed arenas and over 20 courts; it is the home of what essentially is the most viable grand slam behind Wimbledon. We are proud that the Queensland Tennis Centre is probably the second best facility in the country, both from a location perspective and an accessibility perspective. It is quite a tranquil place to play tennis. Darwin has just had a new facility built, which is all hard courts with a couple of roofs on it. There are about 16 courts, so it is a little bit smaller in its capacity. They just held the National Indigenous Tennis Carnival for the first time.

We have 23 courts, three roofs and all grand slam surfaces. Sydney has about 18 hard courts with a 10,000-seat stadium with no roof, which has been problematic during their major event due to weather conditions. We have been very fortunate that the roof went on to PRA for the Brisbane International. Adelaide at Memorial Drive is ageing. I know they have a facility in the pipeline to work with the new Adelaide Oval redevelopment there. Perth has the Perth Arena, which is a multipurpose facility, but the actual state tennis centre at Perth is only hard courts with some clay courts and no centre court.

**Mr BOYCE:** I am not sure who to direct my question to, perhaps Mr Handley. In my lifetime tennis has been very popular. I remember there were tennis courts in everybody's backyard. As a child I remember going to lots and lots of tennis parties. Where do you see tennis as a sport heading in the future? Is it on the decline or is it becoming more popular?

**Mr Handley:** I think it is becoming more popular by virtue of the fact that it is still only one of two sports that you can play for a lifetime. Looking at the participation numbers, it is actually showing an increase in participation post the age of 45. At the beginning of the life cycle we have the best junior development program in Australia, which is the ANZ Tennis Hot Shots, which at the moment for Queensland sees over 110,000 participants yearly through a combination of local schools and also the coach programming. We have in the vicinity of 160,000-odd registered tennis participants that we know of.

Importantly, tennis is the No. 2 sport in the world globally behind soccer, which is an interesting stat we have been able to uncover. We think our competition is more the lifestyle, the walking, the swimming and the cycling, the things that are easily accessible. As far as the individual sports go, I think we are quite healthy.

**Mr KATTER:** I am not sure you answered that second part of the question asked by the member for Hervey Bay about the funding. I think you said at the start of your presentation 'at no cost to the taxpayer' or something like that. Could you expand on that and how it was funded?

**Mr Handley:** Yes. I might get the member for Hervey Bay to repeat the question on the finances.

**Mr SORENSEN:** Could you outline for the committee how the construction of the facility was funded?

**Mr Atkins:** I can answer that. The total budget for the project contributed by the state was \$88.392 million, which included the state's land and funding contribution. That is split into \$49.537 million, which was the value of the land, and the funding contribution was \$38.855 million. In addition, there were external contributions of \$12 million received towards the project.

**Mr SORENSEN:** The benefit that sport brings is very hard to judge. Having these big events is the benefit of the money coming in, is it not? Would you have any idea of the amount of money that comes in from other areas into Brisbane, or into Queensland, from having these international sporting contests?

**CHAIR:** Do you mean quantify the tourism that it brings and everything like that, if that is able to be done?

**Mr Handley:** If it is possible, can we have that as a submission for 24 September and we will go back and do some—

**CHAIR:** Yes, take it on notice, yes.

**Mr Handley:** Yes, we will take it on notice and we will get as much information as we can on the economic impact of those events.

**Mr SORENSEN:** It would be good to get it out into the public arena the benefit of sporting facilities.

**CHAIR:** It has been there for a period of time, with the tourism that it has brought and everything else.

**Mr KATTER:** You said that \$88 million was the sum total of the costs. That was not just the government contribution plus other? That was the total cost of it?

**Mr Atkins:** There was an additional \$12 million contributed to the project by external parties on top of the \$88 million.

**Mr KATTER:** That is the total?

**Mr Atkins:** Yes.

**Mr KATTER:** So \$100 million in total?

**Mr Atkins:** Yes in round figures.

**Mr MELLISH:** My question is for Mr Spencer or Mr Harris. Could you outline the difference in the management model with this event compared to other Stadiums Queensland events? I know that you have some that you manage directly and some that you give other parties to manage.

**Mr Harris:** We have a combination across the nine venues. For this particular venue—and it forms part of the development and the negotiations that were undertaken at the time of construction in recognition particularly of the contribution that Graham has talked about from Tennis Queensland and Tennis Australia—when the facility was built, incorporated into the facility were administrative offices for Tennis Queensland. One of the conditions of the development was that Tennis Queensland would relocate their premises, their administrative offices and then enter into a lease with the state.

That lease was subsequently, on practical completion and commissioning of the venue, novated across to Stadiums Queensland. Tennis Queensland essentially has the overarching lease and we manage the lease on behalf of the state. The courts outside of Pat Rafter Arena are then subleased through an arrangement that Tennis Queensland has with the private operator for the day-to-day tennis facilities and activities that occur at the centre.

**Mr MELLISH:** This question is to Tennis Queensland. In terms of subleasing the facility, is there any scope to increase that in the future? I am thinking of non-tennis related events. Is there any use of that at the moment or is there any trajectory to increase that?

**Mr Handley:** I think the development approval and the current Stadiums Queensland lease allows for the quiet enjoyment of the residents of Tennyson Reach. At the moment, it remains a tennis-specific facility. We have the capacity to run school formals and we had a truck show on the weekend. We are starting to do a little bit more work in terms of flexibility to host the site, but still noise restrictions apply.

**CHAIR:** When we were there I noticed that there were some changes occurring to do with transport and paths. Can someone give us an update on how they are going? I think it was disability access paths from the railway station; is that right?

**Mr Harris:** A significant development is occurring between the centre and the railway station, which is part of the Yeerongpilly development.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

**Mr Harris:** It is a private development. However, as part of the master plan and working with EDQ, the pathway that will join the railway centre through to the tennis centre and the roadway has been realigned. There have been a number of requirements for land to be swapped between the various parties. The roadway has been completed and I think seal is close to or has gone down. The remainder of the development will not proceed prior to this year's Brisbane International, but I think in subsequent years you will see that come on line. Our focus with Tennis Queensland has been to ensure that the pathway is made ready for 4 December to allow for the bump-in to commence for the Brisbane International this year.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much for that. In item No. 32 in your submission you advise that you will seek agreement from Mirvac for the release of the fauna assessment report and the vegetation retention plan. Is there any update on the status of that?

**Mr Atkins:** We have not had a response from Mirvac at this point.

**CHAIR:** Okay. Thanks very much. Are there any more questions?

**Mr SORENSEN:** How is the bird problem going on out there? Have you sorted that out yet, especially the crows?

**Mr Blomer:** We have an annual bird pest maintenance contract in place. We get a company called Birds of Prey and they bring birds of different breeds to try to mitigate our crow-nesting problem at Pat Rafter Arena. Obviously, there is an open roof and it is very difficult to keep birds out. We have also tried lots of other strategies over the years, such as plaster of Paris owls and recorded bird noises and things like that. They all work for a limited period until the birds get used to them. Yes, we have a maintenance contract. They usually come up in the month or so before the Brisbane International and try to scare away any resident crows or other birds in the area so they get the idea ahead of the tournament not to be there.

**CHAIR:** There are no bogong moths like there are at Sydney, though. Are there any more questions? Thank you all very much for that. I note that there was that one question taken on notice. If we come up with anything in our deliberations, are you okay if we send a few questions through—nothing tricky or anything—just to help us with our report? Is that okay from all parties? Thank you very much. Could we get the questions taken on notice back by 4 pm Monday, 24 September? Thanks very much. Thank you once again for your attendance. I really appreciate it. I declare this hearing closed.

**The committee adjourned at 9.52 am.**