



Speech by

Hon. K. LINGARD

MEMBER FOR BEAUDESERT

Hansard 27 May 2003

MAJOR SPORTS FACILITIES AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. K. R. LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (9.47 p.m.): The opposition was only advised this morning of the need for this urgent legislation. Based on the initial advice that the objectives of the bill are to put beyond doubt that the Stadium Redevelopment Authority and the Major Sports Facilities Authority have the retrospective powers to enter and perform an agreement on commercial terms for the sale and purchase of land and improvements made upon Suncorp Stadium or any part of it, we support the intent of this particular legislation. The minister advised me this morning that there are differing legal views on whether or not the Major Sports Facilities Act 2001 empowers the Stadium Redevelopment Authority and the Major Sports Facilities Authority to transact with each other on a commercial basis in relation to any land and improvements forming part of the Suncorp Stadium. The minister advises me that the Crown Solicitor has concerns about this. The Parliamentary Counsel, however, does not seem to have concerns, but because there is a need to have this concern finalised by Friday morning that is why the opposition understands why the government wants to put this bill through all stages tonight. That is why we as an opposition did not vote against that. The opposition also notes the comments associated with this bill that—

In developing this Bill, consultation has been undertaken with representatives of the Stadium Redevelopment Authority, the Major Sports Facilities Authority, Queensland Treasury, Department of Innovation and Information Economy and Sport and Recreation, and the Department of State Development.

No objections have been made to the Bill as proposed.

Because the legislation is to be passed with such haste, the opposition has several questions. In the second reading speech the minister stated that any works acquired or to be acquired through the Coordinator-General under the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971 under section 134 may also be disposed of to the major facilities authority under a commercial contract. Quite obviously the opposition wants to know why it is necessary to have this wording.

There are rumours about Lang Park or Suncorp Stadium. In the minister's reply I would like an explanation of what has happened with the northern plaza. On the western area, which is the intersection of Caxton and Hale streets where the northern plaza has passed through the old church grounds, there is a rumour that more land was needed than necessary. If it was that more land was needed than necessary, is this the section that is to be referred to as 'or acquired' or is there another simple explanation? If it is that we are not relating that particular statement to the section on the corner of Caxton and Hale streets where we believe the northern plaza took extra land, maybe the minister—

Mr Mackenroth: Caxton and Hale streets. The church is up the other end—that is, Chippendall Street and Hale Street. Down the Milton Road end.

Mr LINGARD: Right, but the northern plaza certainly passes that corner of Caxton and Hale which I believe was the old section which was opposite the Police Boys Club going up to the hotels. We believe that there was extra land needed there. I ask the minister to give us a guarantee that this section of land does not relate to that statement of 'or acquired'.

We also note that, as we have said, we agreed with the initial objectives of the bill and the reason for it, but then in his second reading speech the minister said that the bill further provides that the Stadium Redevelopment Authority has, and always had, the power to enter into commercial contracts with the Major Sports Facilities Authority to dispose of any part of Suncorp Stadium with

Governor in Council approval. Many rumours have spread about Suncorp Stadium. What I am asking the minister is this: in the initial capital costs in the redevelopment authority, were contracts given to the leasing of certain capital works at Lang Park? The rumour has been that the seats were not provided but were leased. As a result of our checking we do not believe that that is quite true. Is there any other capital work that has been leased as part of the capital works, or is it that this government can give a guarantee that within the \$280 million—that is, within the \$235 million plus \$45 million—all the work at Lang Park has been covered as far as capital cost and the government is not handing over lease arrangements between the development authority and the sports facility?

We would expect that some of the canteen material and equipment may be leased through the managing authority, but we would like to know what the minister believes is in the capital works that is handed over between the redevelopment authority and also the facilities authority. Quite obviously this legislation now means that the Major Sports Facilities Authority will have control over at least five bodies: Suncorp, Brisbane Cricket Ground, ANZ, the Brisbane Entertainment Centre and the Sleeman Centre.

One of the problems with both the Gabba and Suncorp—and I do not disagree with this, but it is a concern that we have—is that if the Lions lease the Brisbane Cricket Ground they must pay a very high lease rate. We accept that. However, it places the Lions in a situation in which they must maintain a very high return. They must ensure that they have plenty of home games and plenty of success to maintain the money needed to pay their lease. Obviously it puts them in a difficult situation because the Lions cannot go anywhere else. We accept that. I believe that the Broncos will be in a similar situation. That is pure commercial practice.

Looking at the expansion of the sport—and we will say Aussie Rules—if they want to use Cazaly's at Cairns, there is quite obviously a difficulty in having a Lions game transferred from the Gabba to Cairns. Here we have a magnificent facility developing at Cairns where obviously Aussie Rules will try to move to.

It is a similar situation with the Broncos. The difficulty is that the Broncos are locked into Lang Park, with a very high lease arrangement which they have to maintain through success and high patronage at Lang Park. What are we going to do in relation to the expansion of complexes such as Cazaly's? What are we going to do with Cazaly's as far as cricket is concerned? How are we ever going to transfer a cricket game from the Gabba to Cazaly's in Cairns? How are we ever going to transfer Rugby League from Lang Park? The minister might say that it is up to the authorities who run it, but I am asking him who makes those decisions? Who will make those decisions in the future? The magnificent development of Cazaly's in Cairns is entitled to a game of Rugby League or a game of Aussie Rules.

I also wish to express concern that, as the Major Sports Facilities Authority assumes control of Suncorp Stadium, it now has the ability to conduct all events at Suncorp without any concern for any existing disputes between subcontractors and the previous contractor, Stadium Redevelopment Authority. So, if Stadium Redevelopment Authority now has a concern about a subcontractor, will this transfer of facilities on Friday mean that the facilities authority can continue to run games at Suncorp without any regard to a dispute between subcontractors and original contractors at Lang Park? Does this limit the ability of subcontractors to retain their money or to gain their money out of any dispute about variances which have occurred at Suncorp?

I ask the minister: now that he is the owner of Suncorp, as the Minister for Public Works seemed to indicate over the last couple of weeks, does that mean that from now on he will answer questions about the financial arrangements of Suncorp Stadium? Why is it that the Minister for Public Works has said in the past two weeks that the Minister for Sport is the owner and he is the builder? Will the minister be the owner after Friday and, if so, does that mean we can ask him questions about the financial arrangements of Suncorp, or is he going to turn around and say, 'No, this is not a government-run authority; this is managed by someone else'? What is going to be his attitude in estimates? Is he going to turn around and say, 'No, we will not answer any questions about Suncorp because that has nothing to do with the government'? So is the minister the owner, as the Minister for Public Works says? Is the Minister for Public Works the builder, as he says. If he is the owner, is he going to take any responsibilities for questions in the House?

I also refer to previous statements I have made about the fact that the Public Works Committee and the PAC have not been prepared to investigate the financial arrangements of Lang Park. This is clearly \$235 million of public money. This is money which has to be repaid, and it has to be repaid by the public. In this case it is being repaid by a levy on poker machines on a certain section of hotels. The fact that they are high earning hotels does not mean that high wage earners are paying for it. This is Mr and Mrs Public whose money is being used. Quite obviously that \$235 million has to be repaid. If the minister becomes the owner after Friday, I believe that we as an opposition are entitled to ask questions in Parliament House and in estimates.

Quite honestly, I believe the Public Works Committee and the PAC should now be entitled to look at Suncorp and that the minister should even be prepared to refer the matter to those committees. This is \$235 million. The Public Works Committee looks at such massive projects as the Normanton bridge, the police station at Mount Isa—all finished, absolutely nothing we can do. But we are not allowed to look at Suncorp. I know that the minister is going to say, 'You are entitled to look at Suncorp.' However, he knows as well as I do that the Public Works Committee and the PAC have not looked at Suncorp. I am asking him why does he, as minister, not refer it to one of those committees. It is \$235 million of public money.

The development of a high-class football stadium has always been the priority of the coalition. As we enter the delirium and the euphoria of the opening of Suncorp Stadium, I trust that the minister will respect the opinion of Mick Veivers, the former coalition Minister for Sport, who always wanted to redevelop—

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr LINGARD: I thank the Treasurer for that. I say quite honestly that Mick Veivers always wanted to redevelop Lang Park. There is no doubt that when the proposal was brought to cabinet we were concerned about the cost of redeveloping Lang Park. Cabinet was presented with a proposal from a private company. It wanted to build a massive stadium at no cost to the public and lease it out. If it had been the case that we could have developed the stadium at no cost to the public, quite obviously we would have looked at it. But still, Mick Veivers supported the concept of redeveloping Lang Park. The idea of a superstadium developed by private concerns at no cost to the public was one that was attractive to many people.

I still believe that Suncorp Stadium will end up being too small. I say that because not many people realise that a competition such as the Bledisloe Cup is run by a private company. That private company asks, 'Who will host the Bledisloe Cup and what will you give us for it?' There is no way that Queensland can compete with Melbourne or Sydney if we have a stadium that has a seating capacity for only 50,000 people. We are competing against a stadium in Melbourne that can hold 100,000 people. But still, there is this concept that a stadium that will hold 50,000 people is going to be large enough. If it is that we compete for the Bledisloe Cup against both Melbourne and Sydney, we will miss out and the public of Queensland will not have an opportunity to watch matches such as the Bledisloe Cup. That is detrimental to us. We still do have not a super stadium. A stadium that holds 50,000 people is nothing. The original stadium held 35,000.

Mr Mackenroth: I've got to say I think it's a super stadium.

Mr LINGARD: I know the Treasurer does. But the Treasurer has to respect the views of former members on this side—as I have said, Mick Veivers and a couple of other people—who always thought about redeveloping Lang Park. I played at Lang Park in 1957. It was Wests' home ground. A lot of people believe that Lang Park/Suncorp Stadium is the home of Rugby League. But that does not mean to say that the coalition was wrong at looking at a concept of a private company building a massive stadium that would hold many more than 50,000 people.

I admit that the euphoria and delirium at the football stadium on 1 June and 11 June will be magnificent. I support the minister completely. I have no doubt that he will give us a rubbish. It should be a magnificent rectangular stadium. But I still honestly believe that in the future we are going to find that Lang Park is not big enough. I only hope for the Treasurer's sake that at the first match at the stadium, as the winger runs down the try line to score a try for Queensland, he does not trip over a loose piece of turf. That would be terrible for the Treasurer. I support the legislation. Certainly the opposition is prepared to allow the legislation to be passed tonight.