




Speech By
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MAJOR SPORTS FACILITIES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (4.28 pm): I rise to add a brief contribution to the debate on the Major Sports Facilities and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I might just agree with the member for Callide for a moment. I am confused why a provision to change the name of Suncorp Stadium to Brisbane Stadium should be in the same bill as other provisions relating to a transport act and riparian land and watercourses. I would like to hear and understand why these provisions are in the Major Sports Facilities and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I think that, when we bring legislation into this place which is important legislation and critical legislation that will directly affect people's property rights and people's ownership rights, then it deserves to have its own bill title. It deserves to be clearly heard and understood and not tucked in the back of an omnibus bill. I know that omnibus bills are part of the process that we need to go through from time to time, but I am concerned that this has been tucked in here.

Let me come to the parts of the bill that I am most focused on, and in my case the first one relates to clubs that are operating in Toowoomba. We have many local clubs operating in Toowoomba. Some are big and some are small. One very big club in my patch is the Toowoomba Sports Club. It is having challenges at the moment and it has had challenges in its history, but its challenge at the moment is finding itself in a safe night precinct. This has the potential to be a bizarre situation because at one o'clock in the morning everybody is locked out, but at three o'clock in the morning they can be welcomed back in again. I think the Cowboys and the Toowoomba Sports Club are the only two clubs in Queensland which find themselves in safe night precincts. I am not sure why on earth the government has a policy to close the safe night precincts earlier than the suburban clubs. Obviously safe night precincts, as the term indicates, should be places that stay open the latest as opposed to suburban areas. The Toowoomba Sports Club is a great club: it helps fund six clubs in Toowoomba. It was formed many years ago and it has experienced its own difficulties. It is a really good example of why parts of this legislation are important, because it is operated under management by the Canberra Raiders. When it went into receivership they came in and managed it and brought it out of receivership, and they now have it to the point where it is contributing greatly to six of the sporting clubs and many other clubs in Toowoomba.

The legislation that we are looking at here, where the Toowoomba Sports Club and maybe the City Golf Club—two of our bigger clubs—may be able to help smaller clubs manage their licences in such a way that they can still contribute to the purpose of that club, I think is very important. One of the clubs that the Toowoomba Sports Club supports is the Toowoomba Basketball Association—an organisation with which I have a strong affiliation, having played for and represented it—so I am pleased that young children and kids in Toowoomba who want to go to state championships receive money from the Toowoomba Sports Club to enable them to do that. The City Golf Club in Toowoomba South, David Janetzki's area, is also a great club that does much good in my region and supports all manner of

causes, including all of the outlying smaller golf clubs. This legislation will help them ensure that smaller golf clubs and other community associations and sporting associations in Toowoomba remain viable.

There is one part of this bill that, particularly for someone like me, is really important. The first time I came to Queensland, one of the iconic things that I did was go to the Brekky Creek and have a steak. I went over to Expo and I was driven out to Springsure—Rolleston, actually—so they could show me what—

Mr Janetzki: Good country!

Mr WATTS: Absolutely good country! I was very happy to go there although, coming from Hong Kong, like a young child in the back seat of a car I did ask, 'Are we there yet?' a couple of times. One of the other iconic things that we did was my friends took me to what they referred to as 'The Cauldron'. We went and sat on the hill and partook in a few beverages whilst watching the Broncos play. There was a ratty old tin shed on the side and they told me very affectionately and very passionately, 'This is Lang Park. This is the home of Rugby League in Queensland.' What was interesting for me is that I had been to Wembley Stadium and Yankee Stadium. I had been to all these big stadiums, but what impressed me was that this was a fairly insignificant stadium to look at—

Mr Cripps: Hey!

Mr WATTS: Hang on—but it carried such a great atmosphere. It is such a fierce place for an opposition to come. I think the name Lang Park should be respected, and there is good precedent for that. Not only does it carry the history of Rugby League here in Queensland but if we go to London we do not go to the London Stadium: we go to Wembley or Twickenham, both feared places for their respective sports. If we go to Madrid we are not going to the Madrid Stadium: we are going to the Bernabéu to play against Real Madrid. If we go to Manchester to play nobody is going to Manchester Stadium: they are going to Old Trafford. The New York Yankees do not play in New York Stadium: they play in Yankee Stadium. Cardiff play Rugby in the Millennium Stadium. There is absolutely no reason at all that 'Brisbane' should be the name of this stadium. This stadium is for the whole state of Queensland. When Queensland play and the maroon shirt is pulled on they go and play at Lang Park; they do not play in Brisbane Stadium. For sponsorship dollars it may have been called Suncorp Stadium, but that is no reason at all to change it to Brisbane Stadium. I passionately believe that the history of Queensland Rugby League must be respected and this must be called Lang Park. I have a real problem with it being called Brisbane Stadium.

By a little quirk of history one of the most successful coaches—mainly because it was only one game, but I will not mention that out loud, John—John McDonald was the first State of Origin coach and he is a great Toowoomba citizen. He coached the Maroons who fought against the Blues at Lang Park. He did not have that history at Brisbane Stadium, Suncorp Stadium or anywhere else: it was Lang Park. I absolutely think that, as the young TRL boys up in Toowoomba are practising and honing their skills to see if they can get a Broncos jersey and one day a Queensland jersey, they do not want to go and play at Brisbane Stadium. For sure they do not want to go and play in Sydney either: they want to play at Lang Park. I find it particularly strange that a government would come into this place and suggest this with no real precedent from around the world that I can find. Yes, there are a few stadiums that are named after the cities they are in, but there are a lot of stadiums that are not named after the cities they are in which have a wonderful history. Will we change the name of The Gabba to Brisbane Stadium II? Will we change the name of any other stadium to represent its city? The fact of the matter is that if you are a cricketer you want to play at The Gabba; if you are a Rugby League player you want to play at Lang Park.

It seems a nonsense to me to trample over the top of Rugby League's history here in Queensland and define it as just belonging to one city. It does not belong to one city: the history of Rugby League in Queensland is a very strong and proud history. It comes from the regions, and Toowoomba is a very proud Rugby League region that has had many players represent it. When they represent Queensland and they come down to the big smoke to play that game, they do not play in Brisbane Stadium: they play in Suncorp Stadium or, as we all call it, Lang Park. That is where they play, and I think to call it Suncorp is a sponsorship deal. Its name is Lang Park. It should always be Lang Park, and I absolutely support the amendment to keep it as Lang Park.

(Time expired)