




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BONNEY

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BRISBANE OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES ARRANGEMENTS BILL 2021

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (4.11 pm): I rise in support of the Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games Arrangements Bill, which will set up the organising committee and board of directors to guide our path towards 2032. At the outset, like all members on the opposition benches, I wish to reaffirm the support the LNP has provided and will continue to provide for Queensland hosting the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

I want to firstly acknowledge two local champions who recently competed in Tokyo: Kai Edwards from Labrador, who was only the third Australian to compete in the 10-kilometre swim, which is an absolutely insane event—yes, I have met him recently and did inform him there are other swim competitions he can do that are not as long; and Maddie McTernan from Arundel, who is a champion Paralympian who represented Australia with pride in the mixed freestyle relay and backstroke. I look forward to celebrating more people from my area who, in just over a decade, will be able to compete just up the M1 not far from where we live.

On the specifics of the bill, in terms of the conflict-of-interest provisions, ensuring the appropriate mechanisms for managing these effectively should be a key consideration of the government. The CCC warned that some provisions may present corruption risks. There were also right-to-information concerns, as identified in a number of submissions to the committee, regarding the provisions of the bill which exempt documents from the RTI Act. The Information Commissioner and stakeholders expressed reservations about that proposed RTI exemption, which they opposed as potentially undemocratic and contrary to the principles of transparency and accountability.

In this debate, as we consider what will lead us to Brisbane 2032, it is also useful to look back on our most recent similar global sporting event to know what we cannot allow a repeat of—that is, of course, the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games, which my electorate experienced some of the highs and lows of. I will say from the outset that it left an overwhelmingly positive legacy for my community. The biggest sporting facility that we had built from that was of course the brilliant Gold Coast Hockey Centre, which is home to many clubs, if not most of the clubs, throughout our city but, most importantly, the mighty Labrador Tigerstix. I certainly hope that it is not too late to try to get the 2032 hockey played there because it really is an exceptional facility, and we would love to have that sport back on the Gold Coast for the games.

Light Rail stage 2 was also built ahead of the games, and that is entirely within my electorate of Bonney. I use it regularly because I live close to Parkwood East station. Although this infrastructure would have been built regardless, the games did speed it up. That is something you can see now because we have not had any light rail construction underway on the Gold Coast in the last four years since stage 2 was finished. The contract has not been finalised for stage 3, and it has been over two years since the funding for that project was initially locked in.

The biggest games legacy my area was promised, though, is the Gold Coast Health and Knowledge Precinct. Over three years since the last athletes left town, I am sorry to say that it is a vision that has not been realised. Some of the key precinct sites are overgrown with weeds and have been abandoned years after the Commonwealth Games. The state government owned land predominantly consists of empty bitumen blocks.

The government did try to rebrand it in the last three years, spending over \$100,000 to rename the precinct 'Lumina'—whatever that means. The big selling point to me is that this is an innovation precinct on the Gold Coast. I have no idea why you would remove that word from the branding or the advertising of the project. The only structure standing on the proposed site behind the temporary fencing that has been put up is a milk crate. That is three months after the then deputy premier and environment minister came on site to turn the first sod, which is normally an indication that construction will be imminent.

Comments from the ministers at the time said that this project would 'support thousands of jobs for Queenslanders and generate \$2.9 billion for our economy', so we urgently need a greater focus from the Deputy Premier, the Minister for Innovation and the Minister for Science to make this precinct a reality. It has so much potential. In an era when people are looking to relocate to Queensland for the lifestyle we offer—there is certainly no better lifestyle than on the Gold Coast—now is the time to attract national and international investment into this precinct. We just need ministers to take up the sales job. It should not be too hard because with everything it has it sells itself.

We should also not forget the local businesses that lost millions of dollars in revenue during the games mostly due to the false projections of large tourist traffic and cars that we were told to expect. Locals fled the Gold Coast in their thousands due to being advised by Goldoc to avoid driving in the city, and visitors did not stay long because there were rules around how quickly you had to get back to your car at a park-and-ride after an event—I think it was within an hour or two. That meant that no-one hung around. It was an absolute ghost town in Labrador and Southport, where many of our businesses were told to prepare for many businesses.

I remember seeing the Cat Empire on the night of the opening ceremony—a band that usually pulls pretty big crowds. It was a very big stage but probably one of the smallest groups of people they had ever played to. What was meant to be a celebration of our city was in many ways a missed opportunity. The sport was great, but there is so much more to one of these major events, and the Commonwealth Games missed the mark in that regard. While our journey to becoming an Olympic host has just begun, the work on making sure these games leave a lasting positive legacy must start now.

A big part of this event will be our credentials as a clean, green sustainable part of the world. That was a huge part of the bid that secured us this event. On the government's current trajectory, however, I have doubts over whether we will become that. They need to start taking their environmental commitment seriously if we are going to get where we need to.

Other than shots of sports and the city skyline, the pitch for Brisbane and Queensland mostly consisted of images of our beautiful protected areas and national parks. A new report released by Queensland's key conservation groups has found the government will take around a thousand years to reach their own protected land target. Our waste industry has also raised concerns about our transition to a circular economy in a recent report. We have the biggest challenges and changes coming for how we process our rubbish, and we need to start the hard work on how to do that better now.

I commend the SEQ Council of Mayors on their comprehensive organics plan, which is a stark contrast to the complete lack of detail in the state government's recent draft Organics Strategy. On renewables, the government is finally putting together a plan—seven years, or 6¾ years given that the Premier takes issue with that slight rounding up, after they made a commitment for 2030. The Auditor-General found last week that the energy minister has been fudging the figures by casually excluding a thousand gigawatt hours of diesel generation from our reporting.

I have said it many times before in this House: the emissions data does not lie. The most recent state and territory greenhouse gas inventories clearly show that greenhouse gas emissions have increased from when Labor came to power in 2015. Despite all their rhetoric on climate change, Queensland is emitting more greenhouse gases than under the previous LNP government and, in fact, emissions from electricity generation have actually increased in that time by a massive 20 per cent.

I will conclude by talking a little bit about infrastructure, which is a key part of the games. In relation to the second M1, in the seventh year of planning we have seen no major work underway, just some surveyors heading out into the area where the road will be built. The Koala Management Plan will not even be released until June 2022, so I have no confidence we will see anything happening anytime soon. We cannot allow Light Rail Stage 4 to the airport to be framed around the games like it is. We need it to happen much sooner than that. Generally, we cannot allow the Olympics to become the point

that we frame all of our major projects around because our population growth means that we need infrastructure much sooner. I wholeheartedly support the Olympic and Paralympic Games, and I urge the government to focus on ensuring that we deal with Queensland's big challenges long before 2032.