



Speech By  
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**MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE**

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## **MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

### **Gabba Redevelopment**

 **Dr MacMAHON** (2.36 pm): On Saturday, it will be exactly three years since the Labor government publicly announced that the Gabba stadium would be torn down and rebuilt for the 2032 Olympics. The state Labor government and the LNP Brisbane City Council had signed us up for the Olympics without any detailed planning and with no evidence to show it was feasible and affordable. Images in the media in April 2021 showed Raymond Park ripped up for a warm-up track and East Brisbane State School wiped out so that the Gabba stadium could host athletics for the Olympics. There had been no community consultation with affected communities prior to this announcement. However, within weeks, a huge community campaign kicked off and has been going hard ever since. I want to give a big public shout-out and congratulations to community groups Rethink the Gabba, Friends of Raymond Park, East Brisbane State School P&C and many incredible local residents in Woolloongabba, East Brisbane and Kangaroo Point. After nearly three years of campaigning, the Gabba plans have been shelved and Raymond Park is safe.

At the heart of this campaign has been the community voice, front and centre. The government never asked this community if family homes could be sacrificed for a warm-up track. The government never asked locals if one of the only sizeable public parks in the area, servicing thousands of residents, including those in apartments and high-rises, could be ripped up. The then minister for education never asked if local kids should be taken out of their school and sent outside of the catchment in order to make space for a multibillion dollar Olympic stadium, and the Premier never asked Queenslanders if we wanted a giant white elephant stadium—a monument to this government's out-of-touch priorities and an abhorrent waste of money, particularly when so many ordinary people are struggling with the cost of living.

Because the community was never asked, we had to tell them. There were huge community meetings, protests, community events and movie nights. The Rise Up festival in Raymond Park showcased how important the park is with a day full of music and celebration. Community reps took the campaign to the media, doing interviews and live crosses for TV. We gathered in the hundreds in the park and outside the school to demonstrate how important these places are and how angry the community has been. Local residents wrote letters and had meetings with government representatives and ministers. Community reps presented at committee and Senate hearings to fight for the park and school. Thousands of people signed community petitions and wrote to the government. Friends of Raymond Park banded together with parents from East Brisbane State School founding Rethink the Gabba, drawing together a huge coalition of community members with a common interest in fighting for our community and our precious community places. The campaign was hard and at many points, this community was treated as expendable and unimportant but the community kept at it together, knowing that the fight for Raymond Park and East Brisbane State School was the right thing to do. They did it—they have stopped the Gabba rebuild and saved our beautiful Raymond Park.

After years of doubling down, blowing out the budget into the billions, ignoring experts and denying the community a say, the Labor government have finally pulled the plug on their ill-thought-out and ludicrously expensive plans for the Gabba stadium. They would have saved a lot of heartache and millions of dollars in public money had they bothered to talk to the community first. However, the fight for East Brisbane State School continues. While the closure is no longer imminent, the school is still potentially at risk of future upgrades to the Gabba stadium. Kids, parents and staff are still facing uncertainty about the future of a state school in a fast-growing neighbourhood. Parents have told me that they are still being stonewalled and are struggling to get information.

I know this fight will continue and this community has shown just how strong ordinary people are when they work together. To this incredible community: you have reminded the government that they cannot ignore everyday people and that things like state education, green space and investing in the community need to be put first. You have made it clear that when communities and important places are under attack, everyday people will not just slink away. People will band together and fight using every tool they can find. You have demonstrated just how strong everyday people are when they work together.