




Speech By
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Record of Proceedings, 23 May 2024

**BRISBANE OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES ARRANGEMENTS
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Dr MacMAHON** (South Brisbane—Grn) (5.26 pm): I rise to speak to a bill to establish the Games Venue and Legacy Delivery Authority. We are really pleased that an independent authority will now exist. It is something that should have existed years ago, but the authority has been vested with some pretty serious powers alongside elements of this bill that will continue to cut everyday Queenslanders out of decision-making. Let us see where the lack of transparency and lack of consultation has got us so far.

Up until just a few months ago the government was planning on demolishing the Gabba stadium, taking a local school with it. This went against the advice of the IOC and other organisations. All of this was done with no consultation with the community, no conversations with families at East Brisbane State School, the players at the local soccer club whose clubhouse was going to be bulldozed, nor the apartment building residents who were about to lose access to one of the only bits of green space in the area. It was only because these people spoke up and ran a huge community campaign that the government backed down from this absurd plan. All of this uncertainty and the waste of public funds might have been avoided if the government had listened to the community from the beginning. An authority itself will not be the answer as long as Olympics planning continues to be run in the dark. I would have thought that the Gabba debacle would have taught the government the lesson that you ignore everyday people at their peril. There are elements of this bill that show the government is not really interested in what communities think, particularly with the powers vested around planning and land acquisitions.

I want to touch briefly on the Host City Contract. The authority will have the power to coordinate and integrate the planning and delivery of state, Commonwealth and local government obligations under, or related to, the host contract. The host contract consists of a number of different documents, some of which are public and some of which are not. The published documents include the generic operational requirements document and a principals' contract, but the Host City Contract also includes documents agreed to by the IOC and the government like the games delivery plan and candidature commitments. From what I can tell from the questions we have been asking, the full list of these documents has not yet been made public, so we are looking at legislation that refers to documents that the public has not yet seen. I would be very happy to be corrected on this, but from what I can understand we do not yet have the full Host City Contract in front of us for public scrutiny.

There are also ongoing concerns about transparency and right to information. The Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games Arrangements Bill 2021 baked in a lack of transparency. We pushed at the time to ensure that the Right to Information Act would cover all documents between the organising committee, the AOC and the IOC, but this blanket exemption was unjustified. These RTI exemptions raise serious questions regarding the expected conduct of the organising committee and concerns with

how this will flow on for the authority. The Office of the Information Commissioner commented on this veil of secrecy, which will continue to blanket the Olympics planning processes and may also impact this new authority, saying—

Given the close relationship between the authority and the corporation, more documents would potentially be subject to this exclusion.

That means that more Olympics decision-making will be shielded from access to right to information. It seems that the government is willing to abrogate established democratic principles of responsible, democratic governance for the Olympics and, as a result, we have no way of knowing how decisions are being made, what deals are being made or which stakeholders are benefitting in the background.

Given the lack of transparency, it is crucial that the government does not gift control of the authority to people who will not be thinking about the long-term benefits for Queenslanders. Part of this bill gives the authority the capacity to override local planning rules in order to push through Olympic developments. This includes being able to put in place priority development areas and the capacity for the authority to acquire land. The explanatory notes state that this is—

... necessary for the authority to be able to use streamlined development processes where an existing process would threaten the timely delivery of a venue or village.

The bill requires the authority to consult with the Coordinator-General but states that—

The Minister and the authority are not required to consult any other person, including an owner of the land, before the Minister recommends the making of the regulation.

This bill justifies these extraordinary powers on the basis that the state government has binding obligations under the Host City Contract that need to be complied with. A tool like a priority development area that overrides local planning rules and cuts everyday people out of decision-making will be used to push through large, often very controversial developments and used to push through Olympics venues, with the main criteria being whether or not we are able to meet our requirements under the Host City Contract which has not been made public. We are being told to just trust that these powers will be vested in this authority for the purpose of building Olympics venues and meeting the requirements of the Host City Contract as opposed to what Queenslanders actually need in the best interests of everyday people.

I want to touch on the cost. The budget for the Olympic Games has already ballooned by billions of dollars. On top of budget blowouts, as we know, the majority of Olympic Games are money-losing ventures. The Olympics by and large are not a generator of economic activity but a sinkhole of public funds. Research has found that, for mega events like the Olympics or the World Cup, in most cases costs exceed revenue and they have a negative financial value. Queenslanders have already paid millions of dollars for the planning of venues that are not even going ahead now. Queenslanders have already paid nearly \$3 million for a failed plan to relocate East Brisbane State School to Coorparoo and also about \$4 million on a consultancy. Where has this money gone and what benefit has there been for Queenslanders?

People have talked about long-term legacy, as if the Olympics is the only way we can deliver the kind of basic infrastructure that we need in Queensland. The government could just get on with building the public transport and the public housing that we need. This could be a vehicle to deliver a world-class public transport system, vibrant public spaces, investment in community sports facilities and livable, affordable housing, but there is no real indication that these things will be delivered, particularly when we know now that decision-making is being built around what is in a Host City Contract that we do not know the details of.

We know that the Olympics has a negative effect on housing security in many Olympic host cities, and this is well documented. Brisbane, without significant government investment, will not be immune to these impacts. Documented impacts from other host cities include the displacement of people for Olympics infrastructure and gentrification. In Paris students have been kicked out of student accommodation so that it can be used for Olympics accommodation. Upward pressure has been placed on the cost of rent and the cost of houses, homes are being turned into short-term accommodation and Olympics villages being privatised and not turned into genuine affordable accommodation afterwards. Without action now, these Olympic Games will fuel the existing housing crisis even further. The games will push up the cost of rent even further and we will see people kicked out of their homes in moves towards gentrification that are solely for the Olympic Games.

It is also worth thinking about the composition of this authority. A number of people have talked about how there would be a benefit in making sure that there is representation from regional areas, but one of the key missing factors at the moment is the ability for everyday Queenslanders to have a say in how billions and billions of dollars of public money will be used for the Olympics which may not necessarily be for the long-term good of Queensland.

We know that there have been a number of amazing former athletes and experienced sports administrators involved in decision-making so far, but we also have a whole range of very wealthy elites with very poor track records who are at the head of Olympics decision-making. I have criticised Andrew Liveris in the past. He has a history of using company funds to throw lavish parties and using the company's private jet. He was personally held liable for thousands of dollars of misused funds, and this is whom we have at the top of Olympics decision-making in a system that shields decisions from right-to-information requests. Where is the benefit for Queenslanders?