




Speech By
Hon. Brent Mickelberg

MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

Record of Proceedings, 28 November 2024

**BRISBANE OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES ARRANGEMENTS AND
OTHER LEGISLATION BILL**

 **Hon. BA MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.22 pm): This being the first time I have risen in this parliament, I congratulate all returning members and new members for the exceptional speeches we have heard so far today and I am sure the many more to come. In particular I congratulate the Speaker, a man who I call my friend—a man of integrity, a man of capacity—who I am sure will do an exceptional job as Speaker. He guided Battie and I through our first three years on committees. We were a bit of a handful. He did a good job of that. I am sure he will do a similarly capable job in guiding the parliament over the next four years.

I rise to speak to the Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games Arrangements and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I will start my contribution by focusing on the Olympics related aspects of this legislation. As the public are aware, the Crisafulli government has committed to appoint an independent infrastructure and coordination authority to conduct a review and to map out the venue infrastructure and transport needs for Queensland and the games and report in 100 days. We did that because in the last 1,226 days since Queensland was awarded the games, nothing has been achieved other than chaos and crisis.

First the Labor government committed to rebuilding the Gabba at a cost of a billion dollars—a billion dollars that the Auditor-General said was made up in a press release. That was, according to the government, a made-up figure and it quickly grew to \$2.7 billion. Then the then premier Miles, sensing that Queenslanders had turned against the games, needed a quick circuit breaker so Graham Quirk was appointed to do an independent review and he came up with a plan B. When then premier Miles and Labor found out that plan B was going to be a new stadium, a stadium that they knew would be hated by most Queenslanders who were suffering in the middle of a housing crisis of Labor's making, they came up with a plan C—QSAC. Wasn't that an ordinary idea?

Just about every single stakeholder has been critical of the cost of that proposal, which was also announced without any proper analysis, just like the Gabba. It would be \$1.6 billion for a largely temporary venue with very little legacy for Queenslanders. Even Buderim local and Queensland Olympic legend Raelene Boyle, who won a gold and a silver at the 1982 Commonwealth Games at what was then QEII, what is now QSAC—I was one at the time—thinks that QSAC is not up to the job, despite the fact that Raelene recognises that QEII was up to the job in 1982. Raelene said in media—

The QSAC Stadium is very appropriate for the Commonwealth Games—it is not certainly appropriate for the Olympics ... Too small. Too insignificant. The athletics stadium is the centrepiece of the games. You need to be able to do a respectable job for the athletes around the world.

Those are Raelene's words, not mine.

QSAC was chosen because of political expediency. It was chosen without any consideration of the transport needs. It has no heavy rail station anywhere near it. The nearest heavy rail station is 2½ kilometres away from QSAC. As a consequence there would have been a reliance on shuttle buses for

events. How many buses do we reckon that would have taken? I have been told by the department that the initial evaluation showed that they would need a fleet of between 276 and 370 buses. That equates to a line-up of buses 4½ kilometres long—a 4½ kilometre bus traffic jam just for QSAC. Two bus hubs would also be required to support spectator access, one to the east and one to the west of the venue and that is due to the space constraints that exist and in order to facilitate efficient operations. Those hubs in Griffith University and at Nissan Arena that is adjacent would require new permanent or temporary bus loading infrastructure to support safe passenger movements. There would also be limited legacy benefit from that infrastructure.

At least three temporary event park-and-ride facilities would also need to be established to service QSAC. Those facilities would then also be serviced by shuttle buses. Temporary modifications and intensive crowd management would be required at public transport hubs, including at the train station, at Garden City and at Griffith University busway stations just to support the games operations. Games operations would necessitate significant traffic management around the stadium, including a full or partial closure of Kessels and Mains roads, two major thoroughfares in that part of the world. That would cause significant disruption to the local community and the broader road network. This significant impact on the local traffic network has never been disclosed to the residents of Macgregor or Nathan or other nearby suburbs prior to the election. I would suggest that this debate might be an opportunity for the member for Toohey to clarify if he knew about these significant local impacts. Did he know or did he choose not to tell his constituents, or was he kept in the dark by the then minister for transport and main roads, the member for Aspley? QSAC is an example of what happens when you do not plan properly.

The good news is that with the passing of this bill the chaos and crisis will end. This bill marks a fresh start for the Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games. We are going to assemble a group of experts who will investigate all of the options. They will consider the needs of the community. They will consider not only the transport needs for the games but also the transport needs for Queenslanders in years to come. I can advise that the Department of Transport and Main Roads stands ready to assist the new body in their considerations. For this government, transport will not be an afterthought; it will be an integral part of the deliberations. So too will local sporting infrastructure be a priority for this review. We need to see a legacy of local sporting infrastructure.

Groups such as the Sunshine Coast Hockey Association and the Buderim Wanderers Football Club stand ready to support the review to deliver both infrastructure to assist the games and a lasting benefit for my community, and to provide for grassroots engagement into the future. That is what should have happened 1,226 days ago when we won the games. Rather than the petty politicking, the back and forth, the glitz and the glamour, we should have had a calm and considered approach to planning and executing the plan for the games.

I now turn to the parts of the bill that relate to industrial relations matters. Queensland is a growing state with a growing need for infrastructure. We need better roads, better rail, more bikeways and more homes. That infrastructure can only be delivered if we have an efficient and productive construction sector. The LNP wants all workers to be safe. We want all workers to be well paid. The Crisafulli government is committed to driving productivity on work sites for Queensland workers as well. I note that the re-establishment of the Productivity Commission is currently a matter before the House as a part of the government's agenda to get productivity back where it needs to be. The passage of this bill and the subsequent investigations will take time. However, we also know about the devastating impact of the CFMEU tax and how that is affecting productivity. That is why this government has taken decisive action to suspend the industrial relations elements of BPIC.

This legislation seeks to deal with the weaponisation of workplace health and safety by the CFMEU. This is about the actions of the CFMEU. The actions of the CFMEU in weaponising worker safety have been all about increasing their power. I noted with interest that the member for McConnel gave the example of a tragedy that occurred in recent works when two workers were injured at Newstead. All members of this House would agree that that was a tragedy and that the death of any worker is unacceptable. It is something that all members would abhor. Therefore, anything we can do to ensure that workers are safe on site must be considered. However, I feel the member for McConnel was being disingenuous with her example. I draw her attention to page 4 of the explanatory notes in relation to the notice-of-entry requirements for WHS entry permit holders. It states—

An exception is included so that this notice requirement does not apply in circumstances where a worker is exposed to a serious risk to their health and safety, emanating from an immediate or imminent exposure to a hazard. This exception will ensure there is still an appropriate mechanism to enable WHS entry permit holders to enter a workplace without delay where there is a serious risk to workers which requires urgent attendance.

I do not know the finer detail of that individual incident, and neither does the member for McConnel, but I would contend that there was an imminent threat that could have been addressed under the provisions that exist in the proposed amendments. That is what this is about. It is about ensuring workers' rights while restoring productivity and stopping the CFMEU from weaponising provisions that were implemented by a weak Labor government and a weak premier who was installed by the CFMEU. That is why we are here today.

Look at the flags outside. Look at the graffiti. Look at the conduct of the CFMEU and the ETU outside the parliament yesterday. The CFMEU think they own construction sites. They say when the next concrete pour happens. They say who enters sites and who does not. They get to say which subbies get contracts and which do not. It stops now.

Just last week we read reports of the Cross River Rail Woolloongabba site being shut down due to the actions of CFMEU officials who turned up on site unannounced. The police were called, but not before the CFMEU officials delayed a critical crane lift for the station structure. The cynic in me thinks that could be linked to the fact that the CFMEU are currently in EBA negotiations with the main contractor on Cross River Rail and that perhaps they were trying to be deliberately disruptive. Ultimately, that will be for the courts to judge.

Ultimately, site safety is the responsibility of the primary contractor, yet right now they are unable to stop union officials coming onsite, without warning or notice, to bully and intimidate their staff. A couple of weeks ago I visited the bridge project on the Centenary Motorway and I spoke to workers onsite. I note that the member for Moggill was also onsite. The workers told me they feel threatened by the CFMEU. The CFMEU were coming over the fence. They have had to employ security guards and install CCTV cameras at considerable cost because the CFMEU are seeking to bully and intimidate workers.

This is about protecting worker safety. Psychological safety onsite is just as important as workers' physical safety, yet time and time again those opposite have chosen to ignore the actions of the CFMEU and militant unions. No-one denies that unions play an important role in the workplace. I certainly do not deny that. I accept that reasonable unions that want to conduct themselves in accordance with the law and in the interests of their members play an important role. However, that is not what the CFMEU does and this government will not stand for it.

Requiring unions to provide a 24-hour notice of entry will allow primary contractors to ensure that staff can be appropriately supported during visits from aggressive unions such as the CFMEU and protect them from the psychological harm that they are often forced to endure. WHS entry permit holders will still be able to immediately enter a workplace without prior notice, as I identified earlier, in circumstances where there is a serious risk to health and safety. This is about installing a balanced approach that ensures that a respectful dialogue can occur between unions representing workers, the workers themselves and site managers and that serious and immediate safety issues can be dealt with.

This bill also removes provisions that would have allowed photos and videos of workers to be taken without consent and potentially misused. I am sure we have all heard the stories of onsite managers having their kids filmed as they go to school by militant unions wanting to make a point. While this bill does not address those matters, it demonstrates how photos and videos can be weaponised by those who seek to do harm. Imagine you are a site manager who prides himself on the way he maintains safety onsite. Suddenly, a video from your site emerges on social media. It is taken out of context and presented in a way that attacks your professionalism. Under Labor's laws, that would have been a common occurrence.

There is only one enforcer of workplace health and safety in Queensland and it is not the CFMEU. The Office of Industrial Relations is the enforcer of workplace health and safety. Unlike those opposite, we do not believe that the Office of Industrial Relations should be a wing of the CFMEU. Anyone who does the wrong thing onsite should be prosecuted with the full force of the law. The Office of Industrial Relations will follow due process. They will gather evidence in the appropriate way. We will not allow workplaces or workplace safety to be politicised by militant unions such as the CFMEU. We will not sell out workers for political gain, as the former premier did when the CFMEU installed him. This LNP government will choose workers over the CFMEU. This LNP government will fight for workers—unlike the Labor Party, which abandoned their roots years ago.