




Speech By
Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR HILL

Record of Proceedings, 14 February 2024

MOTION

Olympic and Paralympic Games

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (4.55 pm): I fully support the motion that was moved by the member for Hinchinbrook, which states—

... immediately commencing the necessary steps to cancel the Brisbane Olympics and redirect the \$7 billion of funds towards improving state government services and infrastructure and nation-building projects in regional Queensland.

I really believe that my constituents would 100 per cent support funding that they have been denied for decades going back to the regions. Today I was reminded that I was elected 20 years ago. Coming down to Brisbane for the first time, I could not believe and was quite amazed when I saw all of the massive infrastructure projects here in Brisbane. There was not one but two \$60 million footbridges—this is going back 20 years—a \$500 million sports stadium, a \$1.8 billion second Gateway Bridge, the \$4.8 billion Airportlink and tunnels constructed everywhere. Now 20 years later, we have the \$7 billion Cross River Rail.

When we went back to rural and regional Queensland there were railway station closures. We would see the government close down a railway station. Then the next minute the lad porters and the stationmasters lost their jobs and their children had to be pulled from school because there were no jobs there. Next minute the corner store would close down and then the hotel would close down—all from one railway closure. Then we saw the maternity services close down and mums had to drive 500 kilometres to a major city and stay in a motel for three weeks to give birth to their baby. We had potholes on most of our single-lane highways and there was nothing in the way of nation-building projects.

We have worked hard and come a long way to close this gap and now we are going to have the Brisbane Olympics. People would have to be delusional to believe that regional Queensland is going to be better off; they need only look at the track record.

The last time we held an Olympic Games was the Sydney Olympics in 2000. Yes, it did put Sydney on the world map. Yes, it was good for the city and infrastructure projects. It is now 24 years later and it will be 32 years since the Sydney Olympics when the Brisbane Olympics kicks off. However, it is a completely different world now compared to what it was back then. We did not have the cost-of-living crisis we have today. We did not have the housing crisis we have today. We did not have the unaffordable insurance like we have today. We did not have the skyrocketing fuel and electricity prices that we have today. It is a completely different world.

While we are down here talking about the Olympics, Far North Queensland has just come out of a major disaster where five major highways were cut off, sending residents, businesses and the farming community to the wall. At this present moment none of them are talking about the Olympics. We have been calling for an upgrade to the major arterial roads in regional Queensland for decades. Instead, the government wants to—and this is why we have been calling for this—spend \$7 billion on the luxury item

of a two-week party in the south-east corner which no other city in the world wanted. If this goes ahead, we know that it will take our contractors away from North Queensland. The funds will be directed to the Olympics and away from our sporting clubs, our infrastructure projects and our schools. It will all be put on the backburner.

We have been calling for these vital infrastructure projects that are very important to our region. We could spend the money to fast-track the inland highway that links Cairns to the Tablelands. For 30 years we have been pushing for that. The Bridle Track will tunnel through the range and take only 30 minutes, not an hour and a half, saving the 44 closures a year. What did the state government and federal government do? They spent money on bringing in speed monitoring cameras as the way to solve the 44 range closures. The North Johnstone Transfer is a pipe connecting the North Johnstone to the Barron—something that was pushed 55 years ago—to supplement the farming industry. I wanted to bring all of these issues to the attention of the House, but time has run out.

(Time expired)