




Speech By
Stephen Andrew

MEMBER FOR MIRANI

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MOTION

Olympic and Paralympic Games

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (4.46 pm): I rise in support of the motion calling on the Queensland government to cancel the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. No significant public polling was ever done to test Queenslanders' support for these games, but there can be little doubt that the games are increasingly viewed as extravagant and wasteful, particularly by those in the regions. The fact is, most Queenslanders are simply too worried about the cost-of-living emergency, the shocking state of our roads, exploding population levels and the worsening housing crisis.

Last week, IOC president, John Coates, publicly advised the government to scrap its plans for replacing the Gabba with a \$2.7 billion Olympic stadium. Coates was quoted in the *Courier-Mail* as saying that the Gabba rebuild risked turning people against the games altogether, and admitted that the Olympic movement was 'on the nose in Brisbane'. Even Labor must admit that spending \$2.7 billion to replace a perfectly good stadium—while there are critical shortages in crisis accommodation facilities and affordable housing—is pretty hard to justify. An extra 1.2 million people are expected to call Queensland home by 2032, bringing the state's population to 6.5 million. There are growing fears that the state will not cope with this population influx and the surge of visitors in the lead-up to the games.

In 2023, a damning survey revealed that most Brisbane residents have no faith in the city's transport network. Almost 80 per cent of residents say that they are not confident the transport network will cope with the influx caused by the games. Brisbane residents rated the quality of the SEQ motorways and congestion levels as 'the worst' and said that 'reducing traffic gridlocks is their No. 1 priority'.

Queenslanders are currently facing the worst housing crisis the state has seen in generations. The Olympic build will force housing costs higher, robbing the market of vital materials and labour. Then, there is the massive corruption risk posed by the games. In 2021, Labor introduced the Brisbane 2032 arrangements bill, which provided conflict of interest exemptions for elected officials that are appointed to the games' organising committee. The CCC said, 'We have serious concerns with this aspect of the Bill, as it presents corruption risks' especially as this body is 'likely to be involved in the management of substantial public funds'. This bill also amended the RTI Act exempting the organising committee from the state's right to information laws.

In 2022, an exemption was granted to the Brisbane 2032 Organising Committee from having to prepare any financial statements for the 2021-22 financial year. According to the 2022 report by the Auditor-General, the exemption was in response to requests from the then premier. The committee, he said, should be required to submit financial statements and the annual report for the most recent years of 2022-23. I did ring the Audit Office and they are putting in a report. There was a report before the end of last year and there will be a report in the next couple of months.

Whether another exemption was sought and granted, we did not know at that time. To top it off, the then deputy premier announced last year that no independent watchdog would be set up to oversee the games' multibillion dollar infrastructure program, as had originally been planned. So it is exempt from conflict-of-interest rules, exempt from our RTI laws, exempt from submitting financials and exempt from independent oversight. What could possibly go wrong?

I would like to acknowledge the amazing job done by the member for South Brisbane, whom we are all praying for at the moment, who stood up for her community and called the government out over the extreme cost of these games and the lack of consultation and pointed out that the plan to destroy a neighbourhood school and park for a four-week event was absolutely ludicrous. I could not agree more.

Right now Queensland is experiencing unprecedented levels of financial distress. Last month QCOS released a report showing that working families in Queensland are spending \$200 more than they earn each week just on bare essentials. Petrol, gas, electricity, bread and milk are up 10 per cent. This is on top of the record high rents and soaring lending rates. It is beyond foolhardy to be tipping billions of dollars into building these extravagant stadiums and sporting venues. Even Victoria's dreaded Dan Andrews could see that. Labor should take a page out of their Victorian comrade's book and scrap the entire project—lock, stock and barrel.

I wholeheartedly support the motion. I think we should look forward to the 2032 games and realise that our financial position may not be what we think it will be. Situations are changing—and even the government say that—daily on a worldwide scale. That is why there are continual cost blowouts of up to 100 per cent from this government. I think we need to be realistic and have a look at scrapping the games.