




Speech By
Hon. Tim Mander

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

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

 **Hon. TL MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (Minister for Sport and Racing and Minister for the Olympic and Paralympic Games) (8.29 pm): Tonight I rise to speak on the Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games Arrangements and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. As the current Minister for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, it has been interesting for me to watch the journey of the former government over the last three years. When we were awarded the Olympics on 21 July 2021—that is, three years and four months ago—it had bipartisan support from the beginning, because the then opposition and now government realised that the Olympics were a wonderful opportunity for this city, for this region and for this state to bring about the infrastructure changes that were so desperately needed, particularly in terms of transport, and that was one of the many reasons that we supported the bid from the very beginning.

The intergovernmental agreement was signed one year and nine months ago, so a lot of time has passed since we were awarded the Olympics and agreements were put into place. Unfortunately, over that period of time we have had nothing but chaotic decision-making when it comes to the infrastructure that is required to bring about a successful Olympic Games. The former government and current opposition—and it wonders why it is in opposition—dillyed, dallied, dithered, deceived and tried to dupe Queenslanders and treated them like dills with regard to the promises that it made.

One of the promises that those opposite made as one of the principles of the Olympics was that 85 per cent of the infrastructure that was required for the Olympics was already in place. However, what they failed to mention is that one of the significant pieces of infrastructure that was part of the 85 per cent was the Gabba. The then government decided that the Gabba was to be the place for the main stadium of the Olympics. One afternoon, then premier Palaszczuk made a press announcement that that was where it was going to be. When she was asked about the cost, she very confidently said that it would cost \$1 billion. When she was asked, 'Have you spoken to the feds at all and when were they advised that this was going to be the location of the Olympics?', she said, 'They know now.' That was when it was going to cost \$1 billion.

It was not long after that when the then government finally decided that it had better do its homework a bit better and the figure for the Olympics came in at \$2.7 billion. Going back to the original \$1 billion announcement, when the then auditor-general, Brendan Worrall, was asked in a parliamentary committee about the business case supporting the \$1 billion and the source of that, he answered, 'I think you'll find the source of that was a press release, from my understanding.' That was the amount of effort and research and investigation that had gone into the first \$1 billion estimate. Then those opposite did their homework and found out that that \$1 billion was actually \$2.7 billion.

In order to provide capacity for an extra 8,000 people in the stadium, a local primary school would be removed. Could members imagine if an LNP government ever did that to a school? Could members imagine that? Not only that, the long-term tenants of the Gabba—the AFL and the cricket—would have

to go to another location. That location would be the RNA and that was going to cost \$137 million. Guess what? They had to pay for it. They had to make a major contribution towards that and dislocate themselves from the Gabba for five or six years. That is why we do not have the first test. We do not have test cricket scheduled over that period of time because of this ridiculous decision made by the then government under the infrastructure minister at the time and now the opposition leader, the member for Murrumba.

What happened then? That was the final straw—asking the AFL and cricket to pay for their own interruption. Not long after that, then premier Palaszczuk realised it was, ‘Bye-bye. I’ve got to go.’ Well, she did not realise it; she got tapped on the shoulder: ‘You’re out!’ Blocker came in, tapped her on the shoulder and said, ‘Away you go.’ She was waiting to beat Peter Beattie’s record, but no—‘Zip, away you go’—and then the left faction finally got its say and the member for Murrumba became the then premier. He then realised the damage that had taken place with the decision-making chaos. He realised the damage that had happened to public sentiment. If anyone had done a survey at that time, not just in the regions but also in Brisbane, most people would have said, ‘Let’s just get out of this mess.’ He realised that damage and he had to jettison everything: ‘No, no, we’re not going to do that. That was a bad decision. We didn’t go through the proper evaluation process,’ even though he was the infrastructure minister, do not forget. It was his responsibility. Rather, they decided to do a 30-day review. It might have been 60 days. I forget how many days it was, but it was the Quirk review. So the Quirk review took place to re-evaluate where we should go.

What those opposite did not realise is that they had picked somebody with integrity—that is not something they are used to—to do the inquiry and he actually did a fair dinkum inquiry. Then through that inquiry they realised, ‘He’s not going to come back with the result that we want,’ so he then started his own evaluation. Despite spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on his own inquiry, the then premier decided to get the department to do one at the same time. Within minutes of the Quirk report coming down, the major findings were rejected—and guess what? We had that unbelievably bad decision to say that we were going to have the Olympic Games stadium at QSAC. One thing I have over everybody else in this room is that I have refereed at QSAC and it is the worst ground in the history of sport. You need binoculars to see the game, and everybody knew that. The many games I had there—and I think most games I did extremely well—

Government members interjected.

Mr MANDER: I said ‘most’, so that is what those opposite came up with. That is when it just fell through the floor and everybody realised what a joke the former government was and how it was taking people for a ride. Thank goodness the adults have finally taken over the government with cool, calm, calculated decision-making.

Mr Dick: What arrogance!

Mr MANDER: I take the interjection from the member for Woodridge—arrogance. He must be beside himself that he cannot take those presidential photos in the office anymore. He now has an office that does not have windows. He now has no windows to gaze out—looking, thinking and pondering, but not about the next budget.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Martin): Member, I ask you to direct your comments through the chair.

Mr MANDER: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for your direction; I appreciate that. Now we have the adults running the government with cool, calculated decision-making doing what those opposite did not do, doing what they were supposed to do. They were supposed to put an independent infrastructure coordination authority together and they did it a couple of months before the election because they were embarrassed into doing it. Again, the then premier realised he had to do something to make it look like they were doing something. They appointed a CEO but nothing else. Now we are in government and we will appoint a coordination authority that is independent and is full of experts—people who actually know what they are doing. This will be done over this 100-day period and the final decisions will be made about the infrastructure that is so desperately needed.

One of the things that we have appreciated is that these games are not just for Brisbane or for South-East Queensland; they are for all of Queensland. That is why there will be at least one regional representative on the coordination authority. That is why during the election campaign we announced the \$250 million Games On! sporting program to fund community sporting facilities not just in South-East Queensland but right across the state. Across the regions people will be able to look at something in their area—whether it is new floodlights, a new sporting ground, a sporting precinct, new surfaces or whatever it may be, swimming pools even—and they will be able to say, ‘We’ve got that because of the Olympic Games.’ That is the legacy that we will have in our local communities, and there will be a lot more than that as well.

Holding the Olympic Games in less than eight years is the greatest opportunity of our generation. London, Paris, Beijing and LA did not need an Olympic Games to build their profile—they did not need an Olympic Games to attract people to visit their cities—but for Brisbane it is a unique opportunity to help us showcase our beautiful region to the rest of the world, and the benefits are beyond comprehension at the moment.

Our aim is to once again get people enthusiastic about the Olympics and to understand the benefits that come with the Olympic Games and look forward in particular to those transport infrastructure projects that are so desperately needed to ease the congestion not just in Caloundra but in Brisbane city as well. It is the biggest issue in my electorate in the north-west suburbs and, of course, in Chatsworth and the eastern suburbs. We want to be able to move around freely, we want to be able to move around safely—we want to be able to get there as quickly as we can. It is not just us, business needs it desperately to make sure that we bust congestion.

There are a couple of other issues in this bill which I will let others speak about. My remit is the Olympics and I cannot wait to see action at last. When people eventually see the coordination authority they will be excited by the calibre of people on it. I can assure people in this House right now of one thing: we will not embarrass this state in front of the rest of the world. We will host an Olympic Games that we will be proud of and that everybody will get behind.