



**REX PATRICK**  
Senator for South Australia

Senator The Hon Eric Abetz  
Chair, Senate FADT Legislation Committee  
Parliament House  
PO Box Canberra ACT 2600

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*ERIC*

Dear Senator Abetz

I have read with interest the submission made to the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee by Mr John Coates AC, President of the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC), concerning the *Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Bill 2020* and my proposal that the Bill should be amended to bring the AOC within the scope of the Bill. The text of Mr Coates' submission has been posted on the AOC's website.

It is unsurprising that Mr Coates has chosen to 'go nuclear' in response to my call for Australia to boycott the Winter Olympic Games scheduled to be held in Beijing, in the People's Republic of China, in February 2022.

The AOC President has a long history of jealously defending the AOC and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) as institutions above and beyond political, moral influence or judgment. Mr Coates' opinions on these matters have been forcefully expressed on many occasions over his long service with the Olympic Movement which included his current role as an IOC Vice President. Regrettably, Mr Coates' underlying views represent an antiquated and self-serving vision of international sport which ignores basic respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and is outdated and untenable.

Human rights must come ahead of sport. International sporting activities that are conducted in the shadow of gross human rights violations are clearly at odds with the values that Australians hold dear. These considerations are particularly important in relation to the Olympic Games, which are occasions of considerable international significance and political importance for host countries.

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Despite naive claims to the contrary, sport has always been inextricably linked to politics. Dictatorial and authoritarian regimes crave the spectacle and supposed legitimacy conferred by major sporting events, the Olympic Games especially. That was infamously the case with the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin. It's also been so in more recent times, notably the 2008 Summer Games in Beijing which attracted considerable criticism owing to China's poor human rights record.

In 2015 the IOC chose Beijing as the host city for the 2022 winter games. The IOC was undoubtedly influenced by the large commercial opportunities associated with the Chinese market. The Olympics is big business, bringing with it lucrative television and media coverage rights. But the 2015 decision was unquestionably a serious error, debasing the Olympic ethos and further eroding the power of sport to bring together people of good will.

Beijing has again started the Olympic countdown drumbeat, but the human rights abuses that cast a shadow over the 2008 Olympic games have grown a hundredfold.

The Chinese Government has forced upwards of one million Uyghur people in Xinjiang into harsh internment camps. Credible reports of forced labour, torture and other brutalities have emerged.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has further cracked down on free expression across China, and a new national security law has been imposed on Hong Kong to crush democratic freedoms there.

At least two Australian citizens are among foreign nationals now held as political hostages, facing trumped up "national security" charges.

Australian journalists have been harassed and threatened before fleeing on threat of detention. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has warned that Australians are not safe in China, owing to the risk of arbitrary arrest and detention.

More than 180 human rights groups from around the world have called on the IOC to pull back from holding the winter Olympic Games in Beijing. The Interparliamentary Alliance on China, comprised of MPs from across the political spectrum and around the globe, has backed that call.

US presidential candidate Joe Biden has described the repression of the Uyghur people as genocide. US President Trump's National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien has said: "If not a genocide, something close to it going on in Xinjiang."

British Secretary of State Dominic Raab has not ruled out Britain boycotting the Beijing Games over the "egregious human rights abuses" against Uyghurs, saying that while it's his "instinct to separate sport from diplomacy and politics", there "comes a point where that might not be possible".

It is against this background that Mr Coates and the AOC refuse to engage on China's human rights violations, saying that's a matter for others to address.

What Mr Coates does insist on, however, is the absolute autonomy of the AOC. He's very keen to emphasize the AOC's financial independence, but barely acknowledges the many hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars spent by the Australian Government on elite sports development, without which the Australian Olympic Team would be uncompetitive and a shadow of its size and strength.

Australian Governments and taxpayers have made huge down payments to support athletes who compete for Olympic medals. It's simply not correct to assert that the Australian Olympic Committee and Team operate largely free and taxpayer support.

Mr Coates further asserts that an Australian boycott of the Beijing Games would see Australia expelled from the international Olympic Movement, our athletes unable to compete at any Games, and Brisbane's bid for the Olympic Games in 2032 'destroyed'.

These are very big claims that lack credibility.

Notwithstanding his position as an IOC Vice President, Mr Coates can't predict what the IOC response to a boycott will be. The international circumstances of a boycott are not yet known and his claims are highly speculative and self-serving. I would certainly hope that Australian action would not be taken alone and the signs are evident that an international boycott movement is gaining momentum.

As more and more Western democratic leaders acknowledge and speak up about China's human rights violations, especially the genocide against the Uyghurs, then it's more likely other countries will also boycott.

Mr Coates' response should be read against a backdrop of a clear trend in which participation in the Beijing Games is increasingly politically contested. Both sides contesting the US Presidential election are using the word 'genocide' to characterise the actions of the Chinese regime. Australia's Foreign Minister and our Sports Minister should be consulting with their international counterparts and advocating action.

Mr Coates further suggests that legislation that would give the Australian Government authority to review and direct the AOC with regard to participation in an Olympic Games would amount to undue influence over the autonomous nature of the AOC. He further asserts that would lead the IOC to expel Australia from the Olympic Movement. Again I point out that Mr Coates does not know what the international context of any Australian action will be and that his claims are highly speculative.

I would also point out that the autonomy of the national Olympic Committees in many countries is questionable at best. In particular, no-one would seriously suggest that the Chinese Olympic Committee is independent of government influence when its membership is comprised entirely of Chinese Government officials and Chinese Communist Party members. Like all institutions in China, the Chinese Olympic Committee is totally controlled by the Communist regime which is directly responsible for gross human rights violations (including I might add political hostage taking and arbitrary detention of Australian citizens). If the IOC were serious about enforcing the provisions of the Olympic Charter, China would not be a member.

It is duplicitous to claim that our national Olympic Committee must be beyond politics and legislated direction whilst conveniently ignoring the composition of the Chinese Olympic Committee.

Perhaps the most incredible of Mr Coates' claims is that an Australian boycott of the Beijing Games would "destroy" Brisbane's 2032 Games bid. This unsupported claim is tantamount to a threat, and is deliberately included in his submission in an effort to scare off any further consideration of these matters.

It should be noted that Mr Coates has already made some misjudgments about the 2032 bid process, for example claiming publicly that Mumbai had effectively dropped out of the race only to be corrected by the chair of the Indian Olympic Association. It is far from clear that Brisbane is a front runner in a bid selection process that, in the past, has been bedeviled by political influence and, in some cases, outright corruption.

It is noted that has been estimated a successful bid will require an at least \$900 million of Federal and State funds to contribute to a currently projected \$5.3 billion budget stage the Summer Games in Brisbane.

Irrespective of any Australian boycott of the Beijing Games, the current state of Australia-China relations is such that China and its growing number of allies and clients will likely fiercely oppose an Australian bid. When China is boycotting our goods and imprisoning our citizens, does anyone think they won't put in a major effort to effectively veto Brisbane's bid?

If Mr Coates' overall position were to be accepted, one could only conclude that the Olympics Games and Australia's participation in these events must exist in a complete moral vacuum. One might ask what scale of human rights violations would trigger any response from the IOC or the AOC. That may change with the introduction of human rights principles in the IOC's Host City contracts for the 2024 Paris Summer Games and other Games thereafter. In a fast-changing world of international relations, those principles must be applied to the 2022 Beijing Games.

Many countries fall short in respect of basic human rights. However the Chinese Communist regime's violations are on such an enormous scale that they cannot be ignored, downplayed or whitewashed.

There cannot be neutrality when we're talking genocide.

Although the AOC is an independent incorporated organisation, its activities play a prominent part in Australia's international profile and Australia's participation in the Olympic Games should at all times be consistent with our national values including strong support for fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms.

My view is that the Australian Government should take any decision to boycott the Beijing Games. The Government should consult with the AOC, but in the end, it should be a decision of the Australian Government, not the AOC, and not individual athletes, whether the Australian National Flag is displayed in the Beijing Stadium.

My proposed amendment to the Foreign Relations Bill will ensure that the Australian Government has clear authority to oversee the activities of the AOC as far as they relate to Australia's foreign relations including support for human rights.

The amendment will bring the AOC into the scope of Australian entities covered by the provisions of the Bill; and will include the International Olympic Committee, National Olympic Committees in other countries, and Organising Committees for the Olympic Games within the definition of a Foreign Entity under the legislation.

If the Federal Government can oversee the international arrangements of state governments, local governments and universities, it should definitely be empowered to supervise the AOC. Other national governments clearly exercise a large measure, if not total control over their National Olympic Committees.

I note that Mr Coates declined an invitation to attend a meeting of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee. Consequently he is not available to be questioned about his assertions, nor for that matter, about precisely where the AOC would draw the line on what level of human rights violations would be unacceptable to themselves and the IOC.

Mr Coates' claims that the sky will fall in are not credible; they are highly speculative and obviously self-serving.

Australian athletes, and our Australian flag, should not be used as stage props for a regime that in the shadow of the Olympic stadium commits genocide.

I attach, for the information of the Committee, a copy of my speech to the Senate on 6 October 2020, and my media release of 9 October 2020.

I will shortly forward to the Committee the text of my proposed amendment to the Bill.

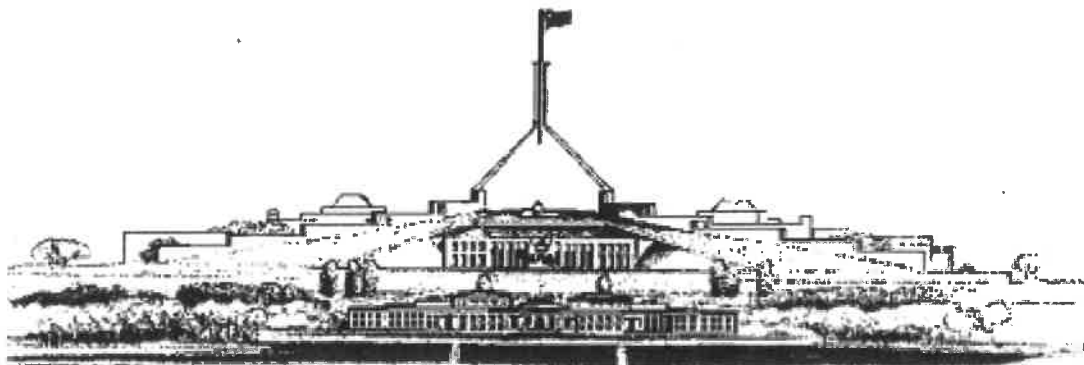
Yours sincerely

Rex Patrick  
**Senator for South Australia**  
17 October 2020



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**THE SENATE**

**PROOF**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**China: Human Rights**

**SPEECH**

**Tuesday, 6 October 2020**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

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## SPEECH

**Date** Tuesday, 6 October 2020  
**Page** 93  
**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Patrick, Sen Rex

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**Senator PATRICK** (South Australia) (22:06): In February 2022, just 15 months away, the People's Republic of China will host the 24th winter Olympic Games. This will be a big moment for China. The attention of the world will be focused on Beijing, the first city ever to have hosted both the summer and winter Olympic Games, having previously hosted the 2008 summer Olympics.

The Olympics are supposed to be an apolitical event, and many people like to think that sport should be separate from politics. But the reality is that sport is, and always has been, inextricably linked to politics, to national pride and to the interests of governments which seek to use sport to boost their prestige domestically and internationally. When China hosted the summer Games in Beijing in 2008, the Chinese Communist Party promoted the occasion as a demonstration of China's new-found status as a global power. The 2008 Games attracted plenty of criticism, especially with regard to China's poor human rights record, including repression in Tibet and the Chinese government's violation of a pledge to allow open media access. However, the Chinese Communist Party went all out to present the Olympics as confirmation of a long-held nationalist dream. Any criticism was denounced as an insult to China.

Many people will remember the highly organised demonstrations of strident Chinese nationalist sentiment that accompanied the Olympic torch relay as it progressed throughout Australia's cities. The 2008 games gave the Chinese Communist Party more leverage to suppress political dissent. Efforts to suppress any political unrest before and during the games contributed directly to the rapid expansion of China's internal security forces, and that all-intrusive power has grown every year since then.

In 2015 Beijing was selected as the host city of the 2022 winter Olympics, beating Almaty in Kazakhstan by just four votes at the International Olympic Committee. The IOC's 2015 decision aroused further concerns and complaints from human rights groups. Two years later, in February 2017, the IOC belatedly introduced human rights principles into its future host city contracts, the agreements between the IOC and the cities chosen to host the Olympic Games. The key provisions of the new host city contracts provide that a host city's national Olympic committee and organising committee for the games agree to prohibit any form of discrimination, to protect and respect all internationally recognised human rights and to implement internationally recognised anticorruption standards. The IOC is to establish a reporting mechanism covering these principles and standards. These principles and arrangements will first apply in the 2024 Olympics in Paris, France.

But where does that leave the 2022 winter Olympics? Beijing has already started the Olympic countdown clock, but the human rights concerns that cast a shadow over the 2008 games have grown a hundredfold. Early last month, more than 180 human rights groups from around the world called on the IOC to pull back from holding the winter Olympic Games in Beijing. Weeks before that, the campaign of US presidential candidate, Joe Biden, declared that the Chinese Communist Party's repression of the Uighur population in Xinjiang amounted to genocide—the gravest charge that can be made under international law. US President Donald Trump's administration is reportedly considering making a similar declaration.

There is no denying the deeply sinister developments in Xinjiang. In what amounts to a massive exercise in political, religious and ethnic cleansing, the Chinese government has forced a massive number of Uighurs, probably upward of a million, into internment camps. It has pressured them to relinquish their language, culture and religion while subjecting them to forms of political indoctrination—something human rights groups have called brain washing. Torture and other brutal punishments are also reportedly widespread. There are also reports of forced sterilisations and abortions as part of a state-sanctioned effort to drive down the Uighur birth rate. Researchers at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute have meticulously documented evidence of the Chinese government subjecting Uighurs to forced labour, including selling that labour to companies across China. This industrial-scale repression is supported by a vast array of identity checks, sensors, cameras and tracking and monitoring technology in what is arguably the world's first high-technology surveillance state. All the while, the

Chinese Communist Party churns out propaganda claiming that its policies towards the Uighurs are necessary for national security and warns Western media and governments not to pry into its internal affairs.

Of course, China's human rights violations are not limited to the mass persecution of Uighurs. Across China, President Xi has cracked down on any free expression of opinion, employing the Ministry of State Security to harass, detain and prosecute any person seen to express dissent. We've also seen the effective end of the special status of Hong Kong and the one country, two systems policy—enshrined in international treaties—through the use of the new national security laws to crush democratic freedoms in the territory. China has also cracked down on the international media, and engaged in what amounts to state directed hostage taking. A prominent Chinese Australian writer and a Chinese Australian journalist are amongst those held in arbitrary detention, facing potentially grave national security charges.

These circumstances have led the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China to call on the IOC to reconsider staging the 2022 Games in Beijing. Senator Eric Abetz has also included himself in that call. The standing of the IOC will be gravely harmed if they allow themselves to provide a global, public relations platform for a brutal, authoritarian and, indeed, totalitarian regime that, as Joe Biden rightly says, has engaged in what amounts to genocide. However, we must be realistic about the IOC's keenness to deal with this issue. They are affected by the delay of the Tokyo Olympics to 2021. That will have affected their funding, and they won't have much appetite realistically to call for the Beijing winter Olympics to be moved elsewhere.

We need to think about this. It's my considered view that Australia must take a lead and say 'no' to the winter Olympic Games. After all, the Australian government's current advice to its citizens is that, quite apart from the circumstances of COVID-19, they should not visit or remain in China owing to the risk of arbitrary arrest and detention. Are we seriously thinking of sending media and our athletes and spectators to China under those circumstances? If we think things are going to change, then we're wrong. The circumstances are getting worse and worse in China. President Xi intends to go harder in suppressing dissent and dealing harshly with ethnic minorities in western China.

As I said, there are people already arguing that we shouldn't boycott the winter Olympics. Liberal MP, Dave Sharma, has claimed that any boycott would be counterproductive. Senator Wong, the foreign affairs spokesperson for Labor, has said she wants the Olympics to put a spotlight on China, including its human rights record. I'm more inclined to agree with former Socceroos captain Craig Foster, who has said that while international sporting organisations are not responsible for human rights violations in a host country they are directly responsible if they allow 'mega events to be used to whitewash broad scale abuse occurring under the shadow of the stadia'. Some will say that an international boycott won't be effective—that it won't change China's policies. That could be so, but that's beside the point. The question is whether Australia is prepared to lend legitimacy to a deeply authoritarian and morally bankrupt regime. I don't think we can afford to do that. It would send precisely the wrong message to the world about the values we advocate and support.

Australia should boycott the Beijing winter Olympics, and we should announce that decision soon. We shouldn't leave it to the last minute; we should allow for this to be organised. We should compensate the Australian Olympic Committee and the Olympic Winter Institute of Australia, and we should let our athletes know and support our athletes. We cannot go and stand on the playing fields of a regime responsible for genocide and human rights abuses on a vast scale. Australia should boycott, and take the lead in announcing that decision.

# AUSTRALIAN OLYMPIC COMMITTEE SHOULD BE SUBJECT TO NEW FOREIGN RELATIONS LAWS

9 October 2020

Independent Senator Rex Patrick will move an amendment to the Federal Government's new foreign relations legislation to ensure the activities of the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) are consistent with Australia's support for internationally recognised human rights and fundamental democratic freedoms.

Senator Patrick will seek to amend the *Australian Foreign Relations (State and Territory) Arrangements Bill 2020* which is intended to ensure greater coordination of Australia's international interactions through Federal oversight of arrangements made by state government and other entities.

"Although the AOC is an independent incorporated organisation its activities play a prominent part in Australia's international profile," Senator Patrick said.

"The Olympic Games are occasions of considerable international significance and political importance for host countries; and Australia's participation should at all times be consistent with national values including fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms."

Senator Patrick said the proposed amendment were prompted by the forthcoming 2022 Winter Olympic Games to be held in Beijing, China.

"Dictatorial and authoritarian regimes crave the spectacle and supposed legitimacy conferred by major sporting events, the Olympic Games especially."

"Chinese President Xi is looking forward to the 2022 Beijing Games as a massive propaganda spectacle that will whitewash gross human rights violations including genocidal policies directed at the Uyghur people of Western China, the suppression of fundamental freedoms across China including Hong Kong and the arbitrary detention of Australian citizens on bogus national security charges."

Senator Patrick said that in these circumstances it would be morally wrong for Australia to give the Chinese Communist regime legitimacy through participation in the Beijing Winter Games.

"We need a very clear Australian stance in support of fundamental human rights and freedoms," Senator Patrick said. "However, the Government indicated in the Senate that Olympic participation is a sole responsibility of the AOC, with the AOC saying they have nothing to do with politics."

"We need to cut through this impasse and ensure Australia's participation at the highest level of international sport is consistent with our national values of fair play, decency and honour. Respect for human rights must be fundamental to our Olympic engagement."

While the AOC is an independent organisation, Australia's Olympic sporting achievements rest heavily on support from taxpayers, directly and indirectly, including through major investments by Sports Australia and the Australian Institute of Sport to support the development of elite athletes.

"My proposed amendment to the Foreign Relations Bill will ensure that the Australian Government has clear authority to oversee the activities of the AOC as far as they relate to Australia's foreign relations including support for human rights."

The amendment will bring the AOC into the scope of Australian entities covered by the provisions of the Bill; and will include the International Olympic Committee, National Olympic Committees in other countries, and Organising Committees for the Olympic Games within the definition of a Foreign Entity under the legislation.

"If the Federal Government can oversee the international arrangements of state governments, local governments and universities, it should definitely be empowered to supervise the AOC"

Senator Patrick also reiterated his call on the Government to confer with the AOC to bring about an Australian boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games.

"The Australian Government should move without delay so that Australia's winter Olympic athletes know where they stand. Our athletes should not be used as stage props for a regime engaged in genocide."



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Authorised by R. Patrick, Level 2, 31 Ebenezer Place Adelaide SA 5000

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