

8 April 2021

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
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Submission re Australia's Preparedness to host Commonwealth, Olympic and Paralympic Games

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to this inquiry. I present this submission as a private community member, a resident of Kangaroo Point. My submission addresses matters specific to the Olympic and Paralympic Games and focuses on issues relating to the impact on the local community. The terms of reference which this submission pertains to are:

- d) the adequacy of oversight and accountability processes for investments in new or upgraded sporting infrastructure
- h) the costs and benefits to the Australian community of investments in infrastructure to support the Games including any impacts on local government, communities and businesses in host locations

Context:

I am a long-term resident and homeowner in Kangaroo Point, located close to the Gabba stadium. Like many residents in Woolloongabba, Kangaroo Point and East Brisbane I initially welcomed the decision for Brisbane to host the Olympic Games with the decision for the Gabba stadium to be a key Games venue. However, it quickly became apparent that there are serious implications for the local community and that the impact on the local community has been trivialized. The limited communication that has occurred with residents has been consistently dismissive and contemptuous.

Kangaroo Point, East Brisbane and Woolloongabba are rapidly growing inner city suburbs with increasing numbers of high-density dwellings. This presents both opportunities and pressures. It is, and will continue to be, important that this area is populated by a diverse population – age, household structure, income range etc that is supported by key community infrastructures such as schools and parks,

Raymond Park

Kangaroo Point has a very low proportion of parkland in relation to resident population. Much of its parkland (Kangaroo Point Cliffs and Captain Burke Park) is heavily used by people from across Brisbane and visitors to Brisbane. Raymond Park is the only park in the area which is specifically focused on the needs of Kangaroo Point residents and is precious to the local community. The park is a source of connection within the community and a place for mental health and well-being – precious resources.

On current plans Raymond Park is destined to be the site for the warm-up track. This is reported to be a 'temporary' structure but the scale is huge – including a significantly sized stadium. This project will remove the park from the community for several years in the leadup to and after the Olympics. It will involve:

- resumption of private houses;
- loss of historic trees which can never be replaced;
- loss of all the other park facilities -sports fields, picnic grounds, dog park, outdoor fitness area - for many years.

In an area of rapid growth and precious few local outdoor resources, this is a devastating loss.

East Brisbane State School

The East Brisbane State School will be lost to the community as part of the expansion of the Gabba facilities. There is no realistic alternative being offered to the local community – all options presented require all local children accessing state primary school facilities to attend school outside the local area.

A primary school, accessible by walking/cycling/scooting, is an integral part of a local community. Schools form the heart of a local community. When families move into an area, one of their first considerations is the location of the local schools.

The loss of a local school has the potential to strip this community of families with children – a long-lasting and disastrous outcome – all to support a short-term event.

Communication and Consultation

The local community is a key stakeholder and there should be powerful consultative structures to enable the community to have meaningful input and for their issues and concerns to be heard, recognized and valued.

Instead, community members are becoming increasingly distressed and distrustful as they are not even provided with useful information about the basis of decisions – let alone involved in exploring options.

Examples of questions and concerns include:

- Why are the existing facilities at QEII not being used for the Games? The former Commonwealth Games site has a full-sized stadium and warm-up track. Or Carrara? It seems that the oval footprint at the Gabba is not large enough for an athletics track so the government is undertaking a huge and expensive rebuild. It is incomprehensible to many community members why the Gabba is being used, with a massive redevelopment cost, when there are existing facilities that meet the requirements. It is also possible for the Gabba venue to be used for other Olympic events, including opening and closing ceremonies, with modest upgrades. There may (or may not) be good reasons for this decision but the community has not heard anything that helps them understand this decision.
- The 'options' presented for the loss of the local primary school did not even consider looking locally for an alternative site. The Government has extensive powers to resume local sites as part of the related planning provisions so it is beyond belief that a suitable site cannot be found. It appears that there is simply no interest in addressing the community's needs. The community is open to a school facility with a design that is suitable for an inner city location but the planning authorities are simply not engaging with them to seek solutions.
- The resumption of housing for a 'temporary' warm-up track is unconscionable. In a media interview, the Qld Deputy Treasurer referred to these homes as 'a handful of houses' and

made it clear that because it is not a large scale resumption, these home-owners are unimportant and irrelevant.

- Why are alternative sites for the warm-up track not even being considered? If it's a temporary structure, there must be other locations that can be used that will cause less devastation to the local community.

Comments in relation to relevant Terms of Reference

d) the adequacy of oversight and accountability processes for investments in new or upgraded sporting infrastructure

Currently, there is absolutely no consultation mechanism for the local community area affected by the upgraded sporting infrastructure and this is a serious gap in oversight and accountability. The local community is a significant stakeholder and should be a participant (with teeth) in the oversight and accountability structures. There should be mechanisms for genuine consultation and input. The disrespect that has characterized communications to the community to date is abhorrent and should be condemned.

h) the costs and benefits to the Australian community of investments in infrastructure to support the Games including any impacts on local government, communities and businesses in host locations

in relation to the impact on the local community, at present it appears to be heading towards a net negative impact. There is well-publicised information about enhancements to local rail transport and a cross-river pedestrian bridge, which will be helpful to the community. However, the loss of a local primary school is catastrophic to the community and will have an appalling impact on the demographics of the area into the future. This is a long-lasting and totally negative impact.

Similarly, the loss of the only local park in Kangaroo Point including resumption of houses and destruction of historic trees – for a 'temporary' structure is unconscionable.

In relation to both of these impacts – they are entirely preventable if the planning authorities engage constructively with the local community and engage with a will and commitment to find local solutions. The Olympics are a wonderful opportunity for Australia but the needs of the local community should not be treated as inconsequential – rather they should be of paramount importance.

Yours sincerely

Annette Hogan

