

Submission to Inquiry into Australia's preparedness to host Commonwealth, Olympic and Paralympic Games

Submission by:

Mr Anthony Drake, resident of Kangaroo Point in the Griffith Electorate in Queensland.

Background

I am an Australian citizen and reside in Kangaroo Point, an inner-city area approximately 1 km from the Gabba Stadium. I am a former executive and COO of a \$2b pa turnover business.

I take an active interest in politics and the proposals put at all levels of government.

This submission primarily relates to the 2032 Olympic Games in Brisbane.

Submission Summary

I believe the proposal to spend \$2.5billion (likely \$4billion with the inevitable budget blowouts) on demolishing and rebuilding The Gabba stadium for the 2032 Olympic Games is a **manifest mis-allocation and misuse of public monies**.

The Gabba Stadium has been rebuilt and expanded in the past two decades and is a relatively modern stadium. The existing stadium has a capacity of 42,000 and the rebuild will add only an additional 7000 seats. So, this represents a cost of \$357,142 to \$571,248 per extra seat.

Even Mr Coates, former Chair of the Australian Olympic Committee, has commented all The Gabba needs is a lick of paint.

These monies would be much better directed to more important infrastructure and in particular to addressing the lack of investment by the Queensland and Federal Governments in affordable social housing for its citizens who are unable to secure a roof over their heads. \$2.5 - \$4 billion could provide between 6,250 and 10,000 extra affordable homes/units (at \$400k each) for our disadvantaged citizens.

Also, that investment would generate some modest returns by way of rents on this housing. There would be only marginal extra revenue at the Gabba generated by the extra seats for post games events given few events reach the current stadium capacity.

The proposed rebuild also demolishes a local school and the state government has no ability to replace this school within the current residential catchment that East Brisbane State School serves. This is a major detriment for an inner-city community with a rapidly expanding population resulting from the continuing development of multiple dwelling unit blocks.

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Terms of Reference and Issues raised.

(a) the adequacy of existing sporting infrastructure to host Games events;

We are led to believe that the Olympics bid was pitched on the basis that existing infrastructure would be used and that the host city and nation would not have to expend exorbitant sums to host the event.

An increase in seating capacity of 16% is not a sufficient reason to create mayhem in our city with a demolition and rebuild of this perfectly adequate stadium.

(b) investments in the provision of new or upgraded sporting infrastructure to host Games events, which will have legacy applications for elite and community sports;

Devoting funds to other games related infrastructure or other more pressing community needs will create a far greater legacy than a stadium capacity increase of 16% at The Gabba – all for one event lasting 2 -3 weeks.

(c) consultation by responsible state and Australian government agencies with peak national and state sporting representative organisations to ensure any new investments in Games sporting infrastructure meet the needs of elite and community sports now and into the future;

The enhancement by increasing capacity by a meagre 16% does little to meet the future needs of elite and community sports.

(d) the adequacy of oversight and accountability processes for investments in new or upgraded sporting infrastructure to host Games events;

Local community outrage at this waste of money and the demolition of the East Brisbane State School has been totally ignored in this process and decision by the Queensland Government to proceed with the rebuild of the Gabba.

(e) investments into the provision of transport infrastructure to facilitate the involvement of more Australians in the Games;

It is acknowledged that with the Cross River Rail link and new Gabba rail station, The Gabba is ideally suited for public transport. But that does not mean that a rebuild of the stadium is necessary. The Gabba station project already provides for pedestrian access walkways to the existing stadium.

(f) the adequacy and accessibility of, and planning for, accommodation to host athletes, organisers, support staff and Games attendees and future use;

I am aware from my former executive roles that the Gabba has extensive corporate box facilities and these could be repurposed for these needs.

(g) the adequacy of planning for visa requirements for athletes, support staff, officials and visitors seeking to participate in the Games;

Not an area where I can provide meaningful input.

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(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 business in host locations;

This is the major issue for the Inquiry to focus on.

The cost of the rebuild of the stadium is projected at \$2.5billion. This is likely to be more like \$3.5 to \$4 billion after cost blow outs and the cost of establishing a replacement primary school for East Brisbane.

This is a manifest misuse of public monies – all for an event that lasts for 2 to 3 weeks and to create a new edifice for a vanity plaque for a politician on the new stadium building.

Our National and State finances are in very poor shape following the Covid pandemic and there are far more pressing issues that will have far greater community benefit to fund than this stadium rebuild.

(i) claimed economic and tourism benefits of the Games;

Spending billions of our tax dollars for an event that lasts 2 to 3 weeks and provides some showcasing of Queensland and Australia's natural assets is not good use of public monies.

The games will already bring lots of attention to Queensland and Australia. Little additional benefit will be gained in this impact by a new stadium (if anyone even notices).

(j) impacts on housing affordability in areas where proposed Games venues will be located and surrounds;

There will be major disruption to amenity for residents in proximity to The Gabba during any rebuild of the stadium.

Housing affordability is already a crisis in our State and Country. A far better impact on this can be had by diverting the funds from The Gabba rebuild to funding affordable housing.

(k) the potential for regions to benefit in the short and long term from Games investments;

Australia is already a popular destination for tourism. The bump in exposure from the games will have a relatively minor impact on local tourism and amenity and in any case having a new stadium will have little if any impact on this tourism exposure.

(l) consideration of solutions; and

The best solution for our community and for all Queensland and Australian taxpayers is to spend the monies proposed for The Gabba rebuild on accessible and affordable housing in our community.

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(m) any other related matters.

The Queensland State Government proposes to demolish the existing East Brisbane State School and relocate it outside the local area.

East Brisbane, Woolloongabba and Kangaroo Point are areas where multiple unit development accommodation is being rapidly expanded generating a demand for schooling for residents' children.

At present we have two primary schools in the area and within walking distance for children and their parents. – East Brisbane State School and St Joseph's Catholic school.

There is no other site that can provide walking amenity for students and the three proposals put by the Queensland government in their ludicrous consultation survey mean that children will need to be driven or bussed to schools outside their residential area.

This area already has heavy traffic congestion, being on major feeder routes across Brisbane. Adding to this congestion by moving the school outside the area and consequently creating additional traffic is totally counterproductive.