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**Submission to the Senate Enquiry into Australia's preparedness to host Commonwealth, Olympic and Paralympic Games**

Introduction:

My name is Stephen Sharry. I am a now retired experienced sport and entertainment facility manager and live at Thorneside in the Redlands on the Eastern edge of Brisbane..

My submission to this enquiry focuses on the proposed 2032 Olympic White Water stadium facility in Birkdale, Redland City. It is based on experience, opinion and research of the issues where that data is available, as well as a desire to see evidence-based decision making and transparency of decisions and the data that supports decisions made easily available and not restricted by the use of FOI Legislation.

## Executive Summary:

The following dot-point outline is a summary of the issues surrounding the proposed White Water stadium facility in Birkdale.

- **KOALA IMPACT:** the proposal negatively impacts important environmental area including Koala habitat and waterway environs. There are currently Koalas on the site and major construction or noisy activity within 2 kilometres will negatively impact their well being.
- **IOC GUIDELINE CONTRAVENTION:** It appears the facility contravenes the new IOC guidelines to not build new single sport facilities where existing facilities are available even in another state or country
- **NO BUSINESS CASE TO SUPPORT DECISION:** the facility was proposed and decided upon without evidence-based decision making principles including a detailed business case and proven demand survey to assess viability
- **POOR COMMUNITY CONSULTATION:** consultation with the local community was inadequate at best, I was involved with the initial consultation days and the consultation report bore no resemblance to the feelings on the day.
- **NO KNOWN DEMAND:** the proposed facility will not serve any appropriate known current demand. Media releases have touted the facilities use for SES swiftwater training however Qld already use Tully in the North of the bState and Wivenhoe dam i9n the South East both more natural and appropriate facilities.
- **PROPOSED FACILITY DUPLICATED:** the proposed facility duplicates the existing Australian facility at Penrith NSW which has recently upgraded at great cost to the NSW State Government.
- **AUSTRALIA OUT OF STEP WITH THE WORLD:** It would result in Australia providing a facility per 13 million population compared to the United States

ratio of 1 per 82 million population, the UK 67 million population and Brazil 212 million population

- **MAY BREACH FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AGREEMENT:** it may breach a Federal Government land purchase conservation requirement over the purchase of the property by the Redlands City Council from the Federal Government.
- **INADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT:** vital road, rail and transport infrastructure upgrades would be absolutely necessary however have not been assessed, planned nor budgeted for.
- **COST BURDEN PLACED ON LOCAL AUTHORITY COMMUNITY:** the facility will cost the ratepayers of the Redlands millions of dollars per year in subsidies.
- **GAMES COULD SAVE MILLIONS:** the proposal commits the Brisbane games to millions in avoidable and unnecessary construction costs and annual maintenance that could be saved or utilised elsewhere
- **MAINTAINING EXISTING FACILITY WILL BE FINANCIALLY BENEFICIAL:** The Penrith facility is already heavily subsidised by approx \$2m per year. By using the Penrith facility, its costs will be lessened, but by building another facility it will split the service provision to a very limited market and worsen the costs for both venues
- **COMMUNITY USAGE COSTS GENERALLY EXPENSIVE:** the access costs for the general public to such facilities is often high at around \$104 per person for 90 minutes with further Government subsidies needed to reduce this.

Overall there is little logic to the decision to build a White Water stadium facility in the Redlands. Given that a detailed business case has not been prepared to even recommend for the facility. The decision appears to have been made based on a whim and the promised allocation of high-value environmental land by the Redland

City Council. I believe Council is split over the project and locals are starting to reject the proposal. Indeed support for the Olympics 2032 across the state is waning which could have an impact on next year's State elections in October 2024 and Local Government elections in March 2024, less than 12 months away.

It appears that the Brisbane Olympic Committee believe they have unlimited funds that can be wasted on facility expenditure which directly goes against the IOC guidelines and impacts valuable Koala habitat as well as being completely unnecessary.

The answer is simple: logically accept the IOC guidelines and the economics and locate the White Water events to the existing upgraded facility at Penrith NSW. The Penrith facility is already heavily subsidised by approx. \$2m per year. By using the Penrith facility, costs will be lessened for that facility however by building another facility in Queensland it will split service provision and worsen the costs for both venues.

As I have stated, the answer is simple, it is Penrith, however, somehow, we need someone, in Government, that is not blinded by self-deception and political myopia, to stand up, ask the right questions and insist logic and environmental and financial responsibility prevail over narrow-minded parochialism and bias. It appears that evidence-based decision making has eluded the Brisbane Olympics 2032 and Redlands City Council decision makers, maybe the Senate can make it right?

The adequacy of existing sporting infrastructure to host Games events:

The new International Olympic Committee guidelines for Olympic venues clearly states that *"for the specific case of mono-functional venues (i.e. venues whose main usage is limited to one sport/event) no new permanent construction shall be required. Instead, competitions should be moved to the most suitable existing venue..... even if located outside the Host City/Country"*. The proposed White Water Stadium clearly falls under this IOC guideline, which was created to reduce the cost of staging an Olympic Games and, a fact that has been ignored by the Brisbane organisers.

There is a fully upgraded facility in Penrith NSW that could easily host the White Water events in 2032. This facility is also heavily subsidised by State and Local Governments to the amount of approx. \$2m per year.

Even the Los Angeles games organisers are investigating using the US National White Water Centre in Charlotte North Carolina which is over 3,000 kms away, instead of building new facilities locally.

Investments in the provision of new or upgraded sporting infrastructure to host Games events, which will have legacy applications for elite and community sports:

There are only 26 pumped water, white water facilities in the world and only 3 in the southern hemisphere. There is a reason for this and it relates to the very high operational costs, the low demand and has resulted in many facilities built for competition and then closed and abandoned later. The cost of using a pumped white water facility for an individual is around \$104 for 90 minutes and requires special training. Even the United States with 361 million population only has 4 pumped facilities representing 1 facility per 82 million people. Building a second facility in

Queensland will see Australia operating at 13 million population per facility. This will place an extraordinary cost for future operations on the ratepayers of the Redlands as well as a legacy of koala habitat destruction.

The following is a quick table showing some of the pumped facilities per head of population;

United States 82 million population per facility

Japan 63 million population per facility

Germany 83 million population per facility

United Kingdom 22 million population per facility

France 21 million population per facility

Australia 25 million population per facility (current Penrith)

Australia 13 million population per facility (proposed Penrith & Birkdale)

The other Legacy will be the opportunity cost of the facility on land purchased by Redlands City Council from the Federal Government with the Council stating they were investigating the site for a University. In times where Australia needs a more qualified population, this is a huge loss.

The adequacy of oversight and accountability processes for investments in new or upgraded sporting infrastructure to host Games events;

The proposed White Water facility has not been costed nor an operational business plan nor demand survey developed after more than a year of discussion and media spin from Council and the State Government yet plans and preliminary works are already commencing with Council attempting fast track planning regulations..

Investments into the provision of transport infrastructure to facilitate the involvement of more Australians in the Games;

There is no indicated forward budget provision at Federal, State or Local level to upgrade the appallingly poor access infrastructure to the Redlands.

- Train access is limited by location and provision of a single line only.
- Bus access is on congested roads with no dedicated busways or plans to provide them.
- Most residents revert to using their motor vehicles resulting in total road congestion during peak hours.

The Redlands is predominantly a dormitory City with limited local job opportunities resulting in heavy commuting to Brisbane and surrounds for employment. There are very limited accommodation opportunities locally.

#### Claimed economic and tourism benefits of the Games

Mention has been made in media releases that the facility will have tourism benefits for the Redlands. The Redlands has very limited tourist facilities and relatively little accommodation available. The facility is located only a kilometre from the Brisbane City boundary and It is likely that tourism benefits, if any, would flow to Brisbane with limited spillover to the Redlands.

#### 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;

See and include all of the above.

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