



29 May 2023

Committee Secretary
Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

Australia's preparedness to host Commonwealth, Olympic and Paralympic Games - Submission by Redlands2030

Redlands2030 Inc. (Redlands2030) is an incorporated not-for-profit association advocating good governance and community participation in government decisions about matters and issues affecting the Redlands.

Redlands2030 commends the Senate for establishing this inquiry.

In this submission we will focus on plans to construct a whitewater facility in Birkdale in Redland City, which is proposed as the venue for canoe slalom events at the 2032 Brisbane Olympics.

In our submission we comment on matters covered by the following terms of reference for this inquiry:

- a. the adequacy of existing sporting infrastructure to host Games events;
- 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;
- d. the adequacy of oversight and accountability processes for investments in new or upgraded sporting infrastructure to host Games events;
- 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;
- i. claimed economic and tourism benefits of the Games;
- k. the potential for regions to benefit in the short and long term from Games investments; and
- l. consideration of solutions; and
- m. any other related matters

Introduction

Building an expensive new whitewater facility on public land in Birkdale is unnecessary because the event can be held elsewhere in Australia, at an existing facility.

Building a whitewater facility at Birkdale would negatively impact on the local community who would become responsible for funding the operating costs of an uneconomic facility.

To date, Redland City Council has failed to provide to the community any kind of business case justifying public investment in a new whitewater facility.

The ratepayers of Redland City are already paying the highest rates and charges of any local council in south east Queensland.

The proposed construction of a whitewater facility would likely result in unacceptable environment and heritage impacts on a publicly owned site.

The proposed project has raised many questions about the Redland City Council's poor governance, non-genuine community engagement and lack of transparency.

A new Canoe Slalom Venue is not required for the 2032 Olympics

Building an expensive new whitewater facility in Redlands for the 2032 Brisbane Olympics is exactly the sort of project that the International Olympics Committee (IOC) set out to avoid with its New Norm principles, adopted in 2018. These principles discourage the construction of new venues especially mono-functional venues which cater for a single sport.

Clause 15.3 of the Olympic Host Contract Principles 2032 says the Brisbane 2032 Olympics host and organiser: "...shall maximise the use of existing and planned infrastructure in the Host Country (or, where relevant, outside the Host Country...").

The only exceptions to the rule are if a new venue is supported by viable business plans and/or a new venue fulfils long term legacy needs of the Host Country. There's no evidence that either of these exceptions justify spending about \$100 million on a new whitewater facility at Birkdale.

The proposed whitewater facility is unnecessary because the canoe slalom events for the 2032 Olympics can be held at the whitewater stadium in Penrith NSW which is getting modest upgrades ahead of hosting the 2025 ICF Canoe Slalom World Championships.

The Birkdale Lands

The Birkdale lands were purchased by Redland City Council from the Commonwealth Government in 2019 for \$4.1 million. Together with a small adjacent property on which a pioneering homestead is located, this area is described by Redland City Council as the Birkdale Community Precinct.

The Precinct includes two areas which have been entered into Queensland's State Heritage Register; The pioneering homestead and curtilage known as Willard's farm, and a World War II Radio Receiving Station.

Remarkably, the Redland City Council is litigating against the Heritage Council in an effort to diminish the Willard's Farm heritage area.

The Birkdale lands have well documented heritage environment values which would be severely diminished if a whitewater facility and related facilities are constructed here. The Redland City Council wants to make this a busy money-making place. But when the community had an opportunity to have a say about future uses of this site they clearly expressed a preference for the site's environment and heritage values to be respected.

The Birkdale lands have important environmental values and opportunities. Much of this area is recognized as koala habitat and this could be expanded.

The site contains freshwater aquifers which drain into a mangrove fringed creek draining into the Moreton Bay Ramsar site. This area could be disturbed by the massive earthworks needed for construction of a whitewater facility.

The manner in which this development proposal has been developed and pursued by Redland City Council raises many questions about governance and transparency.

The Conservation Agreement for Birkdale lands

When the Commonwealth Government sold this site to Redland City Council in 2019, it imposed a requirement that a Conservation Agreement be executed.

The terms of this Conservation Agreement have not been made publicly available with Redland City Council claiming that the conservation agreement is considered a confidential document so at this stage (2023) cannot be released publicly. It is understood that a final version of the Conservation Agreement has not yet been signed.

Perhaps this Senate inquiry could assist by shining a light into this dark corner and finding out why the agreement has not been settled and why it is being hidden from the community.

Making this information publicly available may also lead to another matter being addressed which is why the Redland City Council has not yet made an EPBC referral of its plans for development of the Birkdale Community Precinct.

Claims about transport infrastructure

When it was announced in June 2021 that Brisbane was being put forward as the location of the 2032 Olympics, Redland City's Mayor Karen Williams claimed that a whitewater facility at Birkdale would bring forward significant infrastructure, in particular, road, rail and bus projects for Redlands.

"Our community is particularly keen to see the much-needed duplication of the Cleveland railway line and the completion of the Eastern Busway to Capalaba" she said.

The South East Queensland Council of mayors (of which Karen Williams is the Treasurer) some years ago published advocacy documents which estimated the cost of these two transport projects as follows:

South East Queensland Busway	\$ 1,736,000,000
Cleveland Train line duplication	\$180,000,000

It is difficult to conceive that the minor Olympic sport of canoe slalom, with competition for a few days in 2032 in front of at most 8,000 spectators, would bring forward such massive investment in transport infrastructure, particularly given that other parts of south east Queensland are experiencing much higher rates of population growth than Redlands.

Concluding remarks

In this brief submission we have raised a number of points which indicate that plans for developing a new whitewater facility at Birkdale for the 2032 Olympic canoe slalom events are unnecessary, have lacked transparency and could affect the local community detrimentally as well as harming areas of environment and heritage significance.

Redlands2030 would be pleased to provide more detailed information about these points at a further stage of this inquiry including at a hearing.

Submitted by

Chris Walker

Secretary

Redlands2030