



Speech by

Rachel Nolan

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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MAJOR SPORTS FACILITIES AMENDMENT BILL

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (3.52 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Major Sports Facilities Amendment Bill. The bill facilitates the use of Suncorp Stadium for a major charity concert in aid of those affected by Cyclone Larry. It is a sensible bill which removes the prohibition on the use of the stadium's world-class facilities for this purpose.

The position that the coalition has taken in this debate really represents the most small-minded politics we have ever sadly seen in this place. What they are hoping to do in this debate is let a small minority in a particular part of town hear exactly what they want to hear. What they are hoping is that their message will get through to the small number of people who are directly affected. What they are hoping is that the rest of the residents of south-east Queensland, the many people who live in other marginal Brisbane seats that they would like to win, will never, ever hear that the coalition parties do not want them to go to this charity concert and do not want them to go to other charity concerts like it in the future in this area.

What those opposite want is for their message to be carefully targeted. But let the people of south-east Queensland know that the coalition parties do not want this world-class, \$300 million facility, that the people paid for, to be used by all of the people of south-east Queensland for this important purpose. Let them know that that is what this coalition is saying.

Unfortunately, in this debate we have seen, to some extent, people taking their rhetoric much too far. I heard the member for Gregory suggest that this bill means that suddenly the houses immediately surrounding Suncorp Stadium will be worth nothing. I would give them 50 grand for one. I might even give them 100! This is inner-city, high-quality living. These properties are worth a fortune. These properties have continued to increase in value since the stadium has been redeveloped. They will continue to increase in value into the future. This is some of the most sought after property in Brisbane. Those opposite do not want to believe their own rhetoric on some of this.

The people of Ipswich would regard this view that 'we can have a stadium but we should not use it for many purposes' as really very churlish. The people of Ipswich would give their left arm for a world-class sporting facility in our city. Ipswich is Queensland's fourth largest city. But unlike Brisbane with Suncorp Stadium and the Gabba, unlike the Gold Coast for which we the Beattie government will soon be building a stadium, and unlike Cairns with Cazaleys or Townsville where the people come together to celebrate their Cowboys at Dairy Farmers, Ipswich does not have a world-class regional outdoor events venue.

We are a city with an extraordinary sporting culture and a strong culture of celebrating together through public events. So a stadium for Ipswich is a goal to which our city must aspire but one from which we are sadly a long way away. A comprehensive study commissioned by the Ipswich City Council in 2004 identified the North Ipswich reserve as the obvious site for an Ipswich stadium. This is a finding which I solidly endorse. The reserve is on the river, close to public transport, does not have immediately adjoining residential neighbours and is in an area which is currently being opened up to public access with walking paths, the RiverHeart and the Riverlink development. It is the home of Rugby League in Ipswich. It has been the site of some memorable football battles. I grew up in Ipswich with my father telling me about the

magnificent time when Ipswich beat a touring English Rugby League team in the 1950s or 1960s. There were many memorable Bulimba Cup wins in which Ipswich beat Brisbane and Toowoomba.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fouras): They had the Australian front rower at that time, member for Ipswich.

Ms NOLAN: I appreciate your advice, Mr Deputy Speaker. The North Ipswich reserve is the site where Allan Langer began his professional career, rising to prominence as halfback for the Ipswich Jets. Right now, however, the reserve cannot be considered a major regional stadium. It has seating for just 800 people, well short of the 10,000 envisaged. The site is seriously undeveloped. Sadly the reserve's capacity to fulfil its potential as a major stadium for all Ipswich people is currently being held back by tenure disputes and by an inability on the part of all affected parties to play together as a team.

The reserve is on crown land, leased since the 1980s to a trust which in turn is numerically dominated by the people who have been the backbone of Rugby League in Ipswich for decades, the IRL. In recent years tenure issues and clashes between the IRL, the Ipswich Jets, the council and other parties have made it difficult for the site to be master planned and developed with a single goal of a first-class stadium in sight.

Furthermore, the fact that the site is effectively under the IRL's tenure means the council cannot seek grants through the Major Sports Facilities Fund from the Beattie government in order to develop the site. These disputes have largely been about control of the assets, but they reflect the view of the world which is about protecting today's small patch of turf, not expanding the possibilities for all of us into the future.

The city of Ipswich is set to grow from the current population of around 135,000 to something closer to 317,000 by 2026. Everything I do as the local member is about ensuring that that is quality growth and that it is growth that makes Ipswich a better, more wonderful place in which to live. It is about getting our infrastructure and community facilities properly in place.

A stadium which acts as a host to first-class sport and entertainment should play a central role in that. As such, I strongly urge the parties to put aside their petty differences, to imagine an Ipswich which is bigger than all of us and to work towards that goal of a major, world-class regional stadium for Ipswich.