

**Submission
No 168**

INQUIRY INTO SYDNEY STADIUMS STRATEGY

Name: Mr Paul Bowyer

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SUBMISSION

My family and I had been regular attendees at Parramatta Swimming Centre since we moved to Northmead in 2010.

When the announcement was made that Parramatta Stadium was to be rebuilt, I was surprised, wondering how the cost could be justified. When, several months later, it was announced that the pool had to go for the stadium, surprise turned to consternation.

No consultation was held with the general community. It was just announced as a fait accompli.

But to me, the most glaring omission in this decision was the lack of any written justification to support it. Just words about the stadium needing to face due north so the grass would grow properly (I received this information from local MP Geoff Lee at a rally held at the pool in 2016).

I felt certain (naively it would seem now), that the decision had to be based on reasoned judgement, with a report that described what the problem with the pool was as, the possible solutions evaluated, and why removing the pool was the only viable option.

At a public meeting about the pool closure in early 2017 I asked Geoff Lee if he knew if such a report existed. He said he didn't (surprising in itself), and he undertook to make enquiries about it. That was nearly 18 months ago. I have followed up 4 times since, most recently in March this year, but am still waiting.

Initially my enquiry was sent from Geoff Lee's office to Stuart Ayres, but more recent followups have been sent to Andrew Constance. I'm not sure why the change. I have been reminded that it's up to the Minister when he responds. Given the passage of time, I can only conclude either the report doesn't exist (in which case, how was the decision made, and how could it be allowed to stand?), or that it didn't stack up, in which case the same questions arise.

Adding just 8000 extra seats for a price tag of more than \$300 million will have a very long payback period, and will require many more events, that will need to be full! That will take decades.

But the stadium budget didn't include the cost of the new pool, which remains unbuilt.

Had that been included, it would surely have destroyed any business case.

Finally, it appears that the open area around the new stadium for events is roughly equal to the area occupied by the old pool. Was it a cynical economic decision, then, that led to the demise of the pool: the payback period would be much shorter if the pool land was turned into a space for hire?

The cost to the community of not having a pool is enormous, and no doubt outlined in other submissions. Many people have probably reduced or

stopped swimming as a result. Was any of this reflected in the business case? And still we wait for our new pool, the building of which will further reduce public open space.

Parramatta Pool should never have been demolished. Once it was thought the new stadium needed the land the pool was on, the new stadium should've been scrapped. A properly constructed business case would've shown this.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission. I hope your enquiry is able to provide answers to these questions and to make recommendations that will ensure ensure that transparency and proper due diligence for future government decisions. And get our pool back.

Paul Bowyer