

**Submission
No 219**

INQUIRY INTO SYDNEY STADIUMS STRATEGY

Name: John Bartholomew

Date Received: 24 May 2018

**Submission
No 219**

INQUIRY INTO SYDNEY STADIUMS STRATEGY

Name: Mr John Bartholomew

Date received: 24 May 2018

To the parliamentary committee inquiring into the NSW government's stadiums scam:

Thankyou for opening this inquiry. Since the radical amendments to the EP&A Act that were passed shortly after the O'Farrell government came into power, which included the removal of judicial oversight of projects deemed to be of state significance, projects that have been placed in this category, often with little or no justification, have tended to become, or to have been conceived solely as, rorts of one sort or another. In all cases where this has occurred (the majority it would appear) the NSW public has been scammed out of billions of dollars. Our taxes have been wasted and our assets plundered with no compensating benefit accruing to our state or ourselves.

The proposal to knock down nearly new football stadia just to rebuild them in the same place is just such a scam. As with all the others (too numerous to list here) the initial \$2 billion price tag is likely to be just a foot in the door. Like the ridiculous Tibby Cotter Footbridge to Nowhere that obliterated the culturally significant old Diggers' Anzac Memorial obelisk on Anzac Parade, it is more than likely that the stated cost of this project will blow out by hundreds of per cent, with absolutely no accountability or transparency in regard to what will happen to all that money, and the end result will be that the public has lost a valuable asset and been stuck with a another poorly designed, misconceived blight on our city.

Why is it deemed necessary to completely rebuild, or even to renovate a perfectly usable (had it been maintained by the Sydney Cricket and Sports Ground Trust) stadium in Moore Park, one that has never been more than 40% full of spectators, when so many other parts of Sydney are without high quality football stadia and are surrounded by hundreds of thousands of under-served football (and other sports) fans? Indeed, the facilities for field sports in outer Sydney, where they exist at all, are generally of poor quality and in poorly maintained condition. If this proposal in Moore Park and the other one in Olympic Park was about improving facilities for Sydney's sports lovers, it would be impossible to justify spending billions of (or any) taxpayers' dollars on, unless a program of building and/or improving sports fields and facilities all across the under-served areas of suburban Sydney, where the vast majority of amateur athletes and keen spectators live, had already been completed to the satisfaction of those communities. This has not happened, and therefore the proposed spraying of public money at the Moore Park stadium cannot be considered as anything more than another con job by the NSW government.

The benefit to cost ratio (BCR) for this project is another reason for rejecting it. A BCR of less than 1.0 means that a project's costs will be more than its projected benefits. This project's BCR is well below 1.0, and that should have been the end of the matter for a government that claims to be a competent manager of the public's money, rather than a money laundering gang. The number of worthless projects, and megaprojects, that the NSW government has rushed into construction since 2011 and that have BCR's of less than 1.0 makes the case for establishing a Royal Commission to find out exactly how the planning processes in this state have become so corrupted as to allow wastage of public money on this monumental scale to have occurred continually, and despite many public outcries and condemnatory government reports, over the last 7 years. I hope that such a Royal Commission is recommended by this inquiry.

Sydney has continued its slide down the league table of world's most liveable cities as a direct result of poor planning and corrupt governance over decades. We have the money to build proper infrastructure, and the talented town planners and designers to imagine it into being, yet corruption and indolence at the state government level makes billions of dollars disappear via PPP's and refuses to listen to good advice. This is demonstrated by the decision to continue the needless destruction of what was until recently the magnificent avenue of century+ old trees along Anzac Parade and in the Moore Park precinct to accomodate a poorly planned light rail line and a gold-plated and equally

poorly designed football stadium that no spectators on a salary under \$100,000 will ever be able to afford to use, or even travel to through Sydney's now permanent RMS-engineered gridlock, or its wilfully sabotaged and shockingly under-funded public transport system. This football stadium rort is just the tip of an iceberg of corruptly awarding publicly funded favours to incompetent mates and donors that will see Sydney continue its decline to becoming a typical overcrowded, overpolluted, haphazardly planned and dysfunctional third world city within a few decades. Sydney with its 4 million inhabitants already malfunctions at the same opportunity cost as Cairo with its 25+ million.

The decision to invest billions replacing a stadium that already exists in Moore Park has required spending more hundreds of millions on the bloated new Anzac Parade that will be choked with the 800% more traffic that is forecast to creep out of the St Peters Interchange and Alexandria Traffic Jam, itself part of the insanely wasteful WestConnex tollway (BCR less than 0.4). More still is expected to be wasted on a car park in or under the remains of Moore Park, for the expected users of the rebuilt stadium. Why not simply invest in a proper public rail system that would drop sports fans off outside the large venues (and anywhere else that large numbers of people regularly and predictably want to go) without the necessity for parking thousands of private cars at vast expense? None of this waste of public money would have occurred if Infrastructure Australia's Major Projects Assurance Framework (Gate zero), adopted by NSW in 2012, had been used by the Department of Planning to weed out projects without any chance of producing value for money, like all of those mentioned above.

The government could also have consulted those who pay for and will be the end users of these projects- the public- in a meaningful way, to avoid wasting our money on a series of white elephants. Despite deceitful assurances to the contrary, no public consultation worthy of that name has ever occurred. Proper public consultation, done by people who are actually interested in what the public thinks, and not just hacks hired to conduct a hokey box-ticking exercise designed to produce a project-friendly result, would save billions of public dollars from the PPP bonfire, and result in much better quality projects in a far more socially and economically functional city, better designed and more sustainable than the expensive urban blight we now endure.

Instead, the public will be treated to, and forced to pay for, ongoing destruction of our neighbourhoods such as the Luftwaffe could only dream of achieving, loss of shade and oxygen providing trees and other established vegetation in a rapidly warming world, continually increasing air pollution that kills thousands and disables tens of thousands of Australians each year already, and 24-7 construction noise that lasts for years without ever producing anything that might make the suffering worthwhile in the end.

This stadium rebuilding project, like so many others, is utterly without merit or value to the public, and will function only as a means of transferring the money realised from public asset sales and taxes into the pockets of government donors and fortunate mates, behind the impenetrable screen erected in the EP&A Act amendments of 2012, and most likely from there some of it will make its way unrecorded into the pockets of the politicians and senior public servants who were the authors and facilitators of so many worthless "infrastructure" projects. If you look closely, you will find that most of the real planning is confined to redirecting funds, and comparatively little attention would have been paid to getting things like the design or the (never-to-be-released) business case right. That's the hallmark of a scam