



**Legislative Council**  
**Sydney 2000 Games Administration**  
**Bill Hansard**  
**Extract**

15/11/2000

**The Hon. G. S. PEARCE** [3.05 p.m.] (Inaugural speech): I speak against the Sydney 2000 Games Administration Bill, which exemplifies all that is wrong with the Carr Government: the arrogance, the lack of ideas and initiatives, the absence of accountability, and the terror of scrutiny. Who would have guessed that when the great John Fahey-led Coalition Government and the city of Sydney won the right to host the 2000 Games we would have the best Games ever and the best ever Paralympic Games. Thanks to the fantastic organising work of all the SOCOG people we have had the best Games ever. The transport, organised by Olympic Roads and Transport Authority [ORTA] was fantastic. ORTA made the trains run on time. The volunteers and the people of New South Wales and Australia made the Games a great success.

This bill is an attempt to rewrite history, to eliminate the witnesses, to bury the records, to bury the carcass before the body is cold, to seal the mine before the workers get out, to sweep the road before the dust settles. This is a crass attempt to claim all the credit, all the glory, for Minister Knight and the Carr Government. The success of the Olympic and Paralympic Games is an inspiration—the proof of the greatness of our political system and our Australian people. That we could aspire, win and deliver are a great inspiration for me to be here. It is a great honour to be selected by the Liberal Party to represent the people in this Chamber, and it is a great honour to replace a fine man, a distinguished parliamentarian and a leading Liberal, the Hon. John Hannaford.

I wish to add my tribute to John Hannaford. He had a successful career as a solicitor before entering this place. He served with great distinction as Attorney General, as a senior Minister and as Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council. Above all, John is a loyal and dedicated Liberal. His motivation is service to the community, his profession, the party and the Parliament. He has made, and will continue to make, a great contribution. I grew up, went to school and to university in times of great political, social and economic change through the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Mentors at crucial times in my life have been women. My mother, Margaret, was born into and grew up as part of a working-class family in Rozelle. She was a bright girl, she had a good education at the local Catholics school, but she did not have the opportunities garnered for women in the decades since.

My mother has endured more than her share of hardship and illness yet she never resiled from her determination to give my sisters, Debbie and Sue, and me the best start possible in life. She instilled in us faith, optimism and caring for others. She taught us that through determination and hard work you can have achievement. But whatever your successes or failures, paramount are charity, generosity and caring for your family. I thank my mum for her contribution to my life and my opportunities. Mum was here yesterday for my swearing in, and she was very proud to be here. Unfortunately, having been afforded the opportunity to make my inaugural speech at short notice, Sandy, my wife, and many of my friends and family who were here yesterday are not able to be here today. I am grateful for their commitment and support. I am sure that they will enjoy the next 2½ years of Parliament. I am grateful for the opportunity to speak today.

I had the good fortune after attending public primary schools at Bundanoon and Wentworth Falls to be educated in the Catholic school system at Bankstown. A commitment to duty, service and community is an integral element of such an education. I also learnt about the great Irish tradition of struggle and rebellion, and I know a bit about the Irish Labor tradition. I was privileged to attend Sydney University, a great learning institution, to be introduced to political history and philosophies and the social, economic and political upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s, and to join in the debate and student politics. Fortunately, I found my way politically to the Liberal Party.

Following my university career—and I might remark, Madam President, you were a prominent radical

during those days—I joined Freehill, Hollingdale and Page, then a Sydney firm of solicitors with an eminent past and a dynamic future. Largely through the vision and energy of the senior partner Brian Page and the dedication of the partners and staff since, Freehills has become a leading international law firm and a significant institution in the Australian business community based in Sydney. My own experience at Freehills was exciting. I participated in many major projects in the development of Sydney and New South Wales and the growth of our dynamic economy. I was fortunate to become a partner when I was 28 and had 17 years as a partner before coming here. During almost all of those years I was supported and encouraged by my assistant, Ann Louise Kitto. I thank her for her dedication.

Importantly, in those years at Freehills I was also able to develop and contribute to my greatest interests: the environment, my profession and politics. During my time at Freehills I was part of a team which established the first international environmental law practice in Australia. That led me to participate in the development of international environmental law and policy as a delegate at the Earth Summit in Brazil in 1992 and at meetings of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] and the United Nations. However, my passion for the environment is not limited to the law but has extended to a very active role in the community in promoting sustainable and responsible environmental practices, most particularly through my advisory and directorship roles in Clean Up Australia and Clean up the World.

As I became active in the Liberal Party I quickly became aware of an icon, Rosemary Foot, AO. Rosemary had been the member for Vaucluse and the first woman to serve in a leadership position in the New South Wales Liberal Party. She was Nick Greiner's deputy. Rosemary has an unflinching commitment to the Liberal Party and the community and has been a great mentor and supporter. I thank her. The Liberal Party in New South Wales has made great progress in reforming itself and preparing for the march back to government in this State. Under the strong leadership of the Leader of the Opposition, Kerry Chikarovski, and another great Australian the honourable Tony Staley, the party has undertaken typical reform, restored the financial strength of the party and is now setting about attracting the candidates and developing the policies to lead a new government in New South Wales.

I am delighted to be in this place because it is the place of genuine debate and review. Indeed, in the last decade it has been the venue of an interesting political experiment. The crossbenchers have come to play a most significant role. However, with due respect to the honourable members, I believe that the politics of a protest vote has a limited future and that the crossbencher experiment will shortly end. The lesson of the United States presidential election is that constituents can no longer waste a vote. I mentioned the subject of loyalty in my earlier comments. It is a great and important issue to me. Accordingly, I make an exception in the case of the Liberal member Helen Sham-Ho, who now feels free to consider herself a former Liberal member. Her case is clearly distinguishable from the other crossbenchers.

The principles which guide us and upon which we act are fundamental. Principles of tolerance, freedom of the individual and merit are key to Liberal philosophy. Indeed, in researching this speech I found some surprising statements of philosophy. I would like to quote a couple. The first statement, just a short one, is:

The individual overall makes up the quality of our nation.

The other statement is:

As a parliamentarian, my struggle and purpose will always be to help create an economic climate where the private business sector can best be assisted and encouraged to offer every Australian a job, to give all Australians a means of securing a future and to allow them to live to a standard that will preserve their dignity and make them feel proud to be Australian.

Surprisingly, the statements I have just quoted were made by the honourable "Professor" Obeid in his inaugural speech on 13 November 1991. Having seen the Minister in action yesterday, I now understand his confusion as to principle and philosophy. I am grateful to Kate McClymont and the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 26 August 2000 for the important disclosure of the Minister's status as professor, courtesy of a report in the Arabic newspaper *El Telegraph*. I encourage honourable members to give due recognition to that status. I am also grateful for the very detailed, if somewhat disturbing, description of the honourable member's past and present business and other dealings. His confused philosophical approach is nothing compared to his murky affairs. I look forward to understanding the honourable professor's explanations of

his disclosures under section 14A of the Constitution. I am also fascinated by the *Sun-Herald* report on 29 October 2000 of the pecuniary interests of the Special Minister of State. I ponder whether Chinchilla on the Bay will become the Minister's Waterloo.

I want to say something about some other concerns of great importance to me. The first is one with which we have all been grappling but, in my view, to which we have not yet sufficiently strongly committed: halting the decline in country and rural Australia and the reinvigoration of those areas. The Olympics served to showcase and emphasise the Australian cultural and heritage attachment to our rural and country base and past. We need to recommit as a society to the future of our country and rural heritage. Part of that commitment is to embrace another great social, cultural and economic change we are now experiencing—the arrival and dominance of new technology and communications. We have been experiencing the opportunities and the changes brought by new technology and communications, but we have really only dipped our toe in the water. We ought to aggressively lead in wiring up New South Wales to the most modern technological opportunities. I commend the Leader of the Opposition for her statement and comments on this topic in the last couple of weeks.

These changes embrace our children, their education, their work, their leisure and other opportunities. They embrace people in country areas, business in New South Wales, and another great social, cultural and economically significant change, the ageing of our population. We have only skirted around the problems, but also the opportunities presented by our ageing population and our longer life spans. The impacts on the health system are significant. The need to provide for superannuation and a proper living standard for our elderly relatives and friends is partly being addressed at the national level, but we have not embraced the policies to ensure appropriate living conditions and facilities, recreation and, most importantly, opportunities for people to continue to make a positive contribution to the community by working—whether in employment, or with community and voluntary organisations—well past their retirement.

Last night I listened with fascination to the adjournment debate. I heard one honourable member applauding the efforts of Australian workers in relation to the Olympic Games and the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow. I thought I was listening to an Australian Labor Party member, but it was a member of the Greens. Of course, there are no real good old-fashioned Australian Labor Party members here, just members of the Carr Government, a government that has shown its true colours in the wind-up of the Olympic Games. Who will ever forget the mean-spirited, mean-minded treatment of Sandy Hollway? Now we are asked to agree to this bill to permit the rewriting of history. The bill is an insult to every person and company that contributed to the success of the Olympic Games and the Paralympic Games.

Make no mistake, the bill will allow the sweeping under the carpet of everything outstanding. The Opposition does not have to have an alternative plan, because the process for winding up the Games was agreed in the original host city contract in 1983, and is reflected in the legislation. The processes were agreed, based on the IOC's experiences of other Games and the understanding of the complexity of winding up such a major event. Indeed, the host city contract of 23 September 1993 includes a number of provisions prohibiting the organising committee, the host city and the National Olympic Committee from changing arrangements without the prior approval of the IOC executive board. I ponder then: Does the Government have approval, and what arrangements has the Government made with the City of Sydney concerning the ongoing financial liabilities arising from the Games?

Or does the Minister intend, later this month when he takes his retinue of newly responsible organisers to Switzerland, to simply dump the news on the IOC? In response to the claim that there will be cost savings as a result of the bill, let me say now that there will be significant unforeseen costs for many of the 4,500 or so people and organisations already identified with contracts to be concluded, and the many as yet unidentified potential claims and contracts for finalisation. The Government has not made the case for the bill, for the haste, or for the very significant change to the arrangements for the conduct and wind-up of the Games. No-one can ever guess the likely inconvenience and cost of these changes. I thank honourable members for indulging me and listening to me this afternoon. The bill should be rejected.