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Minister for Sport

TRANSCRIPT: RN BREAKFAST WITH FRAN KELLY, 7:35am

22 July 2021

Topics: *Brisbane 2032, Tokyo Olympics, AstraZeneca vaccine.*

E&OE...

Fran Kelly:

Well, how good is Queensland? That was the Prime Minister's triumphant cry after Brisbane was awarded the 2032 Summer and Paralympics. It will be the third time Australia has hosted the biggest show on earth, which will come with a price tag of \$5 billion in today's terms, split apparently 50/50 between the state and the Commonwealth. The Federal Sports Minister Richard Colbeck is in Tokyo, where the COVID-delayed 32nd Olympic Games are now finally under way.

Minister, thanks very much for joining us.

Richard Colbeck:

Good morning Fran.

Fran Kelly:

In the end, a contest for the 2032 Olympics was a thumping win for Brisbane. 72 delegates voted for the city, and just five against. What was it about the Brisbane bid that so appealed to the IOC, or was it simply that it wasn't a contest, it was the arithmetics of last man standing?

Richard Colbeck:

Well, there were a number of other countries that were interested, but the bid was extremely comprehensive. It hit all of the things that the IOC look for in a bid now. It complied with their 2020+5 documents. It was put together in accordance with the new norm proposals for bidding for future games. And so, it actually hit every mark and that was very much the feedback that I got back from delegates when I was receiving congratulations from them after the announcement was made. An extraordinarily exciting time for Australia over the next 11 years as we lead up to the games.

Fran Kelly:

And in the new norm, that's effectively a cut price Olympics. It's streamlining the bidding process to reduce the cost. It means rival cities now campaign against each other, and then the Olympics itself are about using- in the main, venues that already exist. This cut price Olympics is expected to cost about \$5 billion in today's dollars, which is less than the Sydney Olympics cost back in 2000. And by comparison, the Tokyo Games will cost \$20 billion which includes the COVID-19 delay that's blown out the budget.

So, what's the key to Brisbane keeping costs down, and can we actually rely on it?

Richard Colbeck:

Well, we clearly need to maintain a discipline as we work our way through the development. But one of the things that was important in the bid is the infrastructure that we're going to be building is largely infrastructure that will be required for the community as that part of Australia grows. So, those investments will be made anyway. In most cases, there'll be some additional facilities that will be built, obviously, for the Olympics. But 85 per cent of the facilities are existing or will be temporary. So, there was a very, very strong focus on minimising costs. We're talking about a difference in the context that Brisbane is not a major capital city. It's a mid-sized metropolitan region, and so that's something that's different in what's occurred in previous times. So, it is demonstrating a path for the future with respect to other cities from around the world that might consider bidding, and using the infrastructure that they have, but the development that comes along with the games in the interests of their local communities in the lead-up to and subsequent to the Games.

Fran Kelly:

And the key to that is in this case, the three tiers of government. The Commonwealth has agreed to share costs. In that agreement, is that for everything? Not just for the \$5 billion around upgrading, building your arenas and the running cost, but for that infrastructure you're talking about? The road and rail links, for instance, between the Gold Coast and Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast. What's that total budget? Do we have that?

Richard Colbeck:

Well, that's still being decided, and that's part of the agreement that the Prime Minister struck with the Premier, is part of agreeing to- that the funding's split, so the Commonwealth and the state will sit down together, will plan out strategically what the infrastructure needs are over and above what would normally have been built. We'll plan that, and then we'll do the costing of it. So, that'll be part of the discipline of maintaining the budget for the games in a genuine partnership. And of course, also working with the councils in the region who set this whole process off by the forward planning work, the strategic planning work they did in the hope of starting a bidding process.

Fran Kelly:

But it won't be a cut price games, will it, in terms of the athletes and the spectators? Can you give that guarantee now, that the Olympic experience for those attending the games and those in the games will be as good as it was in Sydney?

Richard Colbeck:

Well, I think if you listen to what Mayor Adrian Schrinner said yesterday, it might be a cut price games but it won't- certainly won't be a cut experience games. It will be maximising the experience. There'll be three hubs for activities and athletes. We'll be limiting the athlete travel time, and so I certainly think that the experience will be exceptional. That's what Australia does. We've seen that with the games in Melbourne and Sydney. Melbourne, the Friendly Games; Sydney described by Juan Antonio Samaranch as the best ever. And I'm sure that Brisbane, the surrounding cities, and South East Queensland will be aspiring to do just the same.

Fran Kelly:

There'll be, you know, there's a lot of euphoria at this announcement. A lot of people very excited about this, particularly Queenslanders, but not all; a lot of people. But there'll also be people who say, well why are we spending money on this when we've got so much need in the country, in the area of where the Olympics will be held, South East Queensland for instance, there's a lot of disadvantage. What's your answer to that? That somehow this money won't be taking away services from those who need it more?

Richard Colbeck:

Well, I think one of the important things there is that a lot of the infrastructure, as I indicated a moment ago, will be built to service and support people in South East Queensland anyway. I mean, the transport infrastructure that's required, the Games Village will be redeveloping areas that will provide accommodation post-games and support. All of those things are going to be contributing to the economy. The projections from the work that was done in support of the bid indicated a \$8.1 billion economic boost to South East Queensland, \$17 plus billion nationally, over 120,000 jobs and 90,000 in South East Queensland, so these are all very positive economic benefits that will support the development, the infrastructure, and the community in Queensland, but also nationally.

Fran Kelly:

Minister, there's been plenty of criticism in the run up to this of the delegation, you, and the Premier, and others being in Tokyo for this announcement given it was almost a lay down misere. But now the Games are underway, will you be attending the opening ceremony tomorrow night? There's reports that you and the Premier were ordered to do so by AOC President John Coates.

Richard Colbeck:

Well, I'd already agreed that I would be attending and in my view, we've just been awarded the biggest sporting event on the planet. My view is that being here, I should attend the opening ceremony, so I will be. I haven't had a chance to confirm that finally with the Premier last night, but I was sitting next to her when John Coates made his particular intervention. But, I think we need to respect the IOC. That's why the delegation came here in the first place. I don't believe that it was a complete lay down misere. If we hadn't been here, I don't think yesterday would have happened the way that it did. The IOC could very well have voted to go back to continuous dialogue and start looking at some other cities. The fact

that we came here, we presented, I think that was fundamental in the decision that was made last night.

Fran Kelly:

The competition's only just started, and already the number of cases associated with the Games, with athletes and officials and employees, is around- is already above 80. The Chief of the Tokyo Organising Committee has not ruled out cancelling the Olympics if there's a spike in infections. Could that still happen? Is there talk around the Olympic Organisation there, and where you are, the venues, that that could happen?

Richard Colbeck:

Look, I suppose it sits in the background, Fran, but I think the real desire here is to maintain the disciplines that are very, very strict with respect to athletes, separation of the community here, from those that have come in for the Games. When I was talking to President Bach yesterday, they were very resolute in ensuring that their protocols are being followed to protect both the athletes and the officials over here, but also the people of Tokyo. We are very, very grateful that Tokyo, Japan, have us here to undertake these Games right now. We all know how difficult COVID is and they're doing it hard just as...

Fran Kelly:

[Interrupts] Okay.

Richard Colbeck:

... many other nations are around the world. And so this is a significant event. It'll bring a lot of joy to a lot of people and we ought to thank the people of Tokyo for having us here, and very much appreciate that they are having the Games on.

Fran Kelly:

Richard Colbeck, you're also the Minister for Aged Care, and today we learn a Sydney nursing home, the Palms in Kirrawee, will be locked down for two weeks after a nurse tested positive for COVID. The nursing home says all the residents are vaccinated but not all of the staff, so, you know, it's a direct result, really, of the failure on the vaccination front. The Prime Minister, yesterday, appealed to the vaccine advisory board, ATAGI, to relax its advice on AstraZeneca so more Australians can get vaccinated. The shortage of Pfizer, obviously, has slowed this down. Do you support that stance? Would that speed up the vaccination drive for aged care workers?

Richard Colbeck:

Well, obviously, the availability of the AstraZeneca vaccine that we have in Australia, and using that across more of the community would speed up the vaccination process and the work that ATAGI does is always risk-based, and we've seen that quite clearly demonstrated with some of the advice that they've given to Government. It's a very, very difficult situation [indistinct]...

Fran Kelly:

[Interrupts] Would you wish the advice from ATAGI had been different?

Richard Colbeck:

Well, I think we all would have preferred that we didn't have the issues that we've seen occur with the AstraZeneca vaccine. We want to get as many people vaccinated as quickly as possible. I think we've seen the positive effects of the vaccination regime, particularly in the context of residents of aged care where we've had a number who have contracted the virus but their illness has been quite mild. Now, that is great news and if you compare that to the circumstance that we faced last year, when COVID got into residential aged care facilities, we all braced ourselves for the impact.

Fran Kelly:

Alright.

Richard Colbeck:

So far, we haven't seen that here in Australia this time, and it shows the benefits of the vaccine program. So, getting as many people vaccinated as quickly as possible is what we all want to see.

Fran Kelly:

Minister, thanks for joining us.

Richard Colbeck:

Thanks very much, Fran.

Fran Kelly:

Richard Colbeck is Minister for Sport and Aged Care Services. You're listening to *RN Breakfast*.