

# *Failed Bids and Losing Cities: Adelaide's Failure to Secure the 1962 British Empire and Commonwealth Games*

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Adelaide has bid for the Empire or Commonwealth Games on three occasions — 1962, 1998 and 2006 — failing to achieve success on each occasion. This article will explore the strange story of Adelaide's failed 1962 bid because at one point it appeared that Adelaide was assured of hosting the 1962 Empire Games. Adelaide had been selected as the nominated Australian city and there were no international rivals. The story of Adelaide's failure provides a fascinating insight into the politics of the bid system for the Empire (Commonwealth) Games in the 1960s and the bid machinations of this era. The article will contend that the best interests of Australian sport and even profit were of little interest to state and local governments and the Australian British Empire and Commonwealth Games Association (ABECGA). It will be argued that South Australia was poorly treated in the 1960s and the bid's failure was detrimental to the development of sport in the state.

During the 1990s there has been growing interest and debate about the operation of the bid system particularly in the Olympics because it has become increasingly obvious that the system is unwieldy, heavily politicised and lends itself to corruption. British journalists, Simson and Jennings attacked the bid system, and the International Olympic Committee in general, in *Lords of the Rings*, published in 1992.<sup>1</sup> Most of a special issue of *Sporting Traditions* of November 1994 (vol. 11, no. 1) was devoted to a debate on how Sydney won the bid for the 2000 Games.<sup>2</sup> Rod McGeoch and Glenda Korporaal's *The Bid* provided an 'official' account of Sydney's bid success.<sup>3</sup> The revelations in late 1998 and early 1999 of a culture of impropriety and inducement concerning the Salt Lake City bid for the 2002 Games only intensified the intense scrutiny of the bid system.

So far almost all attention has focused on the Olympic bidding system and there has been far less study on bids for other hallmark events, such

as Commonwealth Games, Grand Prix and other lucrative international events.<sup>4</sup> There has been increasing competition within Australian cities (and in other countries) to secure such events. While academic authors are unsure about whether the benefits of staging hallmark events outweigh the costs, state politicians seem to have few doubts.

So far the Olympic bid literature and media scrutiny have focused almost entirely on the winners (and the 'cheaters') and few have explored the losers, how they cope with a losing bid, what happens to the investment and the development of sport in that city. And what is the long term effect and cost of becoming a losing city? Adelaide has been a chronic loser of Commonwealth Games bids. There are similar stories at the Olympic Games. Melbourne beat Buenos Aires by just one vote in 1949 and in the 1990s the Argentinian city was still chasing this elusive dream though it pulled out of the race before the final vote. Other bids seem to ignore public opinion and interest though Canadian scholar, Helen Lenskyj and the internet 'Bread not Circuses Coalition' Newsletter have started to document the potential social cost of a possible Toronto bid for the 2008 Games.<sup>5</sup> A large crowd in Berlin cheered wildly when the city was eliminated from the 1993 bidding for the 2000 Games.

### Hosting the Games

In recent times Australian cities have been obsessed with hosting an Olympic or Commonwealth Games and other hallmark events.<sup>6</sup> No less than five Australian cities — Adelaide, Brisbane, Darwin, Melbourne and Perth — expressed an interest in staging the 2006 Commonwealth Games. Competition between the Australian capitals is intense. In simple terms the main rewards appear to consist of international exposure, leading to an anticipated tourist influx and economic windfalls. Staging the Games can also result in improved sporting facilities and social infrastructure, such as transport networks, tourist accommodation and event management expertise.

For South Australian sporting leaders in the 1950s the main reason to bid for the 1962 British Empire and Commonwealth Games (as it was then known) was to improve the state's poor sporting facilities. In 1950 the state did not have a cinders athletic track, an international standard pool or a velodrome. It was widely believed that to properly stage the Games new facilities would need to be built. Such facilities would be of lasting benefit to local athletes long after the Games.<sup>7</sup>

After attending the 1950 Auckland Empire Games, Tom Wigley, the Chairman of the South Australian division of British Empire and Commonwealth Games Association, and State President of weightlifting, decided Adelaide should bid for the Games. After consulting other sporting administrators in South Australia he was further encouraged to bid for the Games by James Eve, Secretary of the Australian British Empire and Commonwealth Games Association (ABECGA), at the Vancouver Games in 1954.<sup>8</sup>

Wigley proposed the idea to the South Australian Olympic Council, which during the early 1950s was undergoing a rapid period of development.<sup>9</sup> While the Olympic Council was predominantly a fundraiser for Olympic teams, it had been developing plans to build new sporting facilities. Staging the Empire Games fitted this agenda perfectly.

In 1954 the BECGA (SA) was re-formed with Ron Aitken, who had moved the original motion for Melbourne to bid for the 1956 Olympics, as President and Wigley as Secretary. Both men held the same positions for the Olympic Council. In February 1955, Wigley visited the Adelaide City Council Town Clerk, William Veale, and proposed that Adelaide bid for the Games.<sup>10</sup> After further meetings, the Adelaide City Council was convinced that the proposal was sound, although some elected members initially disagreed with one councillor calling the project 'too silly for words'.<sup>11</sup>

In July 1955 the City Council formed the 'Invitation and Investigation Committee' to detail Adelaide's bid.<sup>12</sup> The Committee set to work on sites and costings for the first stage of the bidding process, the nomination of the Australian bidding city in September 1956. The city nominated as Australia's proposed host city would be put to a British Empire and Commonwealth Games Federation meeting to be held during the Melbourne Olympics. The meeting would decide the Games city. Since Australia had only hosted the British Empire Games once — in Sydney in 1938 — it was likely that the Australian bid city winner would be selected as the Games city.

After the announcement that Adelaide would bid for the Games, a number of possible sites were canvassed. The Mannum Tourist Committee, for instance, wrote regarding the staging of events on the Murray River,<sup>13</sup> and other sites across Adelaide, including Woodville, Elizabeth and St Peters were proposed as possible venues.<sup>14</sup> Aitken commented wryly on the range of possible sites: 'we are yet to receive bids from Oodnadatta or

Maralinga, but they may come'.<sup>15</sup> The Invitation Committee resisted these plans, because it wanted to have the events as close to the city centre as possible. The Committee developed its draft budget and prepared the bid papers. The Invitation Committee officially applied in June 1956 for the right for Adelaide to bid as the Australian city for the 1962 Empire Games. However, Adelaide was not the only city interested. Perth also bid in August 1956, though its package was significantly smaller than Adelaide's.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Australian Bid Vote**

The Australian vote on the bidding city was held in Melbourne on 1 September 1956. Adelaide sent its Lord Mayor, John Philps and Town Clerk, Veale, to speak on the city's behalf. A number of delegates suggested that the matter be postponed so they could look more closely at the rival bids, but this motion was defeated. The conference voted by thirteen to three in favour of the Adelaide bid.<sup>17</sup> The announcement of the vote was greeted with loud cheering.

The Adelaide bid was placed on the agenda of the Empire Games Federation Conference to be held in Melbourne during the 1956 Olympics.<sup>18</sup> However, the Federation meeting deferred its decision until the Cardiff Empire Games in 1958. This occurred because Adelaide was the only city proposed and it was suggested that an Indian city might wish to bid for the Games. The delay was to permit such a bid to be developed.

Perth Lord Mayor Harry Howard was 'bitterly disappointed' at the September decision.<sup>19</sup> He felt it was 'completely unfair' that the Adelaide Mayor had been allowed to speak to the Conference. Howard believed that the matter was not over until a city had been formally nominated as host city. He continued to develop Perth's bid, ignoring the September 1956 vote.<sup>20</sup>

By comparison, the South Australian Bid Committee, perhaps assuming that it had the Games 'in the bag', cautiously proceeded to finalise its funding package. During this process some grand projects were considered, including a £470 000 stadium in the south Parklands. However, a tight rein was kept on the budget because there was an estimated £1 006 300 required to be spent, including £231 000 for upgrading Adelaide Oval and £124 000 for improvements to the City Baths. The budget did not include all the expenses for staging the Games, it did not cover housing expenses for instance.<sup>21</sup> The Town Clerk, Bill Veale, took the Games plan and draft budget to South Australian Premier Thomas

Playford, who reacted negatively: he stated that 'the estimates were overloaded'.<sup>22</sup> Playford would not commit the State Government to partly fund the project unless the Commonwealth put up a large percentage of the total expenditure, the state's finances were, he said, already 'over taxed'.<sup>23</sup> As a result the Investigation Committee drastically scaled down its estimates to £675 000. The plans for the City Baths and new cycling track were dropped.<sup>24</sup>

Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies committed £100 000 for the bid winner, and stressed this was the limit to Commonwealth funding.<sup>25</sup> Playford promised £50 000 per year over four years.<sup>26</sup> The largest financial contribution came from the City Council with £250 000.<sup>27</sup>

Such funding arrangements left a considerable hole in the bid's finances and gave Perth Lord Mayor Howard ammunition in his fight to reverse the decision. After much speculation on 1 April 1958, Howard announced Perth would officially renew its Games bid.

At the February 1958 BECGA National Conference in Melbourne, a motion was put rescinding Adelaide's right to the Games. The South Australian delegation, led by Aitken and Wigley, were caught unawares but objected strongly. However, the Chairman Sir Harold Alderson allowed the motion even though it was not on the agenda. The motion passed. Then followed a motion to allocate the Games to Perth, but this too was defeated. The meeting decided that the next conference in Sydney in June 1958 would decide the issue of the Australian bid city for the 1962 Games. At that meeting each city would have an opportunity to state its case. The successful Australian city would then be proposed at the Cardiff Conference.<sup>28</sup>

The Adelaide bid team was thrown into disarray. It had been preparing for the Games for eighteen months and now had to re-contest a race which it thought it had already won. It is difficult to ascertain why this meeting chose to overturn the previous decision. It might have been aided by Adelaide's slow progress, but given the event was four years away this seems difficult to sustain. Clearly, other factors were at work, and without doubt Perth had lobbied delegates to reopen the vote. There is no report of how individual delegates voted, although it was widely felt that the swimming delegates were strong opponents of Adelaide's bid. Adelaide retained enough support to keep the bidding process open. However, it would have been a scandal had Perth been awarded the nomination at this meeting, having not 'formally' restated its case.

The Invitation Committee regrouped, and prepared a new, more detailed case for Adelaide's candidature. It focused on Adelaide's 'advantages' over Perth such as easier access to the eastern states, 'better weather', the commitment of the City Council and State Government and the plans for up-to-date facilities. There was also the promise that there would be television coverage in 1962 and the Adelaide promoters argued that the city would provide better accommodation for athletes and tourists.<sup>29</sup> The submission read in part:

The men who have to choose between Adelaide and Perth have a big responsibility to the future of amateur sport in Australia. They know that it will be many years before the Games are next held in Australia, that the Games provide a rare and valuable opportunity for focussing public attention on amateur sport and that Melbourne's handling of the Olympic Games has set a high standard which must be matched.<sup>30</sup>

The Perth bid also attempted to capture the high moral ground and played on sentiment:

In deciding on Perth a great national gesture will be achieved. Western Australia and its people undoubtedly suffer in many ways by reason of the few opportunities of more intimate contact on a national plane with the peoples of the eastern states.<sup>31</sup>

While Adelaide's bid had been scaled down, the Perth budget, originally small, had been greatly expanded so that it now tripled Adelaide's bid promises. The Perth bid was made more attractive by a further £300 000 for housing, which was guaranteed by the Western Australian Housing Minister.<sup>32</sup> The Perth budget of £2 225 000 included an allocation of £600 000 from the Perth City Council.<sup>33</sup> Lord Mayor Howard, not unexpectedly, faced some public criticism for such lavish ways. The Western Australian newspapers were critical<sup>34</sup> and one anonymous disgruntled 'Sandgroper' felt sufficiently aggrieved to send a letter to the Adelaide Lord Mayor. He wrote (in typed capitals):

BLOWHARD HOWARD OF PERTH IS NOTED FOR HIS ECONOMY WITH THE TRUTH ... WESTRALIANS DISASSOCIATE THEMSELVES FROM ANY OF HOWARD'S MANGY SLIMY BACKDOOR TRICKS.<sup>35</sup>

To stay in the race, Adelaide had to find more money. Lord Mayor Hargreaves convened a special meeting on funding, where he said:

It is entirely a matter of pounds, shillings and pence and unless we are prepared to work and see that the money is raised, we might just as well give up the idea and let Perth take our position.<sup>36</sup>

Playford contacted Menzies asking for more money, but was refused.<sup>37</sup> According to his records, Playford lobbied Menzies in four phone calls, two telegrams and three letters, but achieved no success. This failure to secure further Federal funds led to a delay in finalising the Adelaide budget and a further scaling down.<sup>38</sup> In one letter to Menzies Playford wrote that more money was needed 'to avoid having the Games inadequately staged in Adelaide, and without a Commonwealth grant of £250 000 this would be inevitable'. In an attempt to counter any claims that the South Australian Government was not interested in staging the Games, Playford drafted a letter confirming the commitment of £200 000 over four years — a sum that had already been promised — to the project that was attached to the bid papers.

Playford believed that staging the Games represented a potential loss to state revenue. He clearly stated his opinion in a letter to the Woodville Council:

with only limited capital improvements the costs will probably be in the order of £500 000 and I feel that the loss on the Games might well be in the order of £250 000.

While no doubt the city that issues the invitation would receive some support from the Commonwealth and the State Government, it is inevitable that it will have to find a very substantial sum to cover the deficiency between receipts and expenditures.<sup>39</sup>

Playford and others in the State Government may have also questioned whether staging the Games would produce any hoped-for economic benefit for the state. Such a view may have gained support from their inquiries into the finances of the 1956 Olympic Games. The Secretary of the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce wrote to the Adelaide City Council that:

The feeling ... is that more harm than good was done to business, as the Games, which ran on until December 8th, were responsible for the normal Christmas buying being

delayed and curtailed. Certainly there is no record of a large turnover being achieved during the period of the Games. I suggest that it may be difficult to support the theory that such functions are good for business and it may therefore be advisable to concentrate on the good public relations, etc., which such events create.<sup>40</sup>

Similar comments were made in a letter from the Secretary of the Victorian Cricket Association to the South Australia Cricket Association (SACA) about the expenditure on the Melbourne Olympics: 'I have grave doubts as to whether we shall ever see a statement of Receipts and Expenditure for the Games; all we know is that a lot of money went down the drain ...'<sup>41</sup>

Clearly the 1956 Olympic Games were seen by some groups at the time as a financial drain and even failure — which seems contrary to the belief entertained by some contemporary state premiers. With the permanent fixtures at the Melbourne Cricket Ground for the 1956 Olympics paid for by the members of the Melbourne Cricket Club, and not from the receipts of the Olympics, the SACA was wary about incurring debt from the staging of the 1962 Games at Adelaide Oval.<sup>42</sup>

The benefit the Games may have had for the state was clearly more longer term. The Empire Games fitted Playford's model of state development, Public spending was directed toward projects that would produce infrastructure that provided scope to further develop the state's economy, such as the South Australian Housing Trust and the state nationalisation and ownership of electricity and water utilities, and so on. Staging the Games in 1962 may have enhanced South Australia's tourist profile and accommodation and improved its sporting facilities. While Playford supported the Games concept, no Australian politician had been more careful with expenditures than Playford and his miserly approach to government finances had both positive and negative consequences.<sup>43</sup> Playford had for many years neglected social policy in favour of economic development.

The South Australian BECGA was determined to test and strengthen the State Government's commitment to the Games at the time of the 1958 Games when it was raising money to send athletes to the Games. With the bid in mind, it was able to convince the State Government to contribute £1000 to the appeal, twice as much as any Olympic or Empire Games appeal had previously gained from Playford. The Association put the matter bluntly in its letter:

The present appeal involves the prestige of South Australia. By quickly obtaining our quota to send our athletes away, we will win recognition in Games circles as a city capable of getting things done. It will help terrifically in clinching our case for 1962.<sup>44</sup>

Meanwhile Howard was publicly criticising the Adelaide bid. Howard argued that it was not possible to consider the bid properly if it did not have a complete budget or plan of events.<sup>45</sup> Howard also attempted to undermine Adelaide's bid with conference delegates.

Shortly before the April meeting, Ron Aitken (who was General Manager of South Australian Brewing) visited Sydney for a brewers conference returning to Adelaide by ship. Les Duff, President of the Australian Boxing Union and a delegate to the Empire Games Conference, was on the same ship. Duff was on his way to Perth ostensibly for a holiday, a trip that was later claimed to be at the Perth Games Committee's expense.<sup>46</sup> Aitken asked Duff how he would vote and, according to Aitken, Duff unconditionally supported the Adelaide bid.<sup>47</sup> During his fortnight in Perth 'Duff studied all venues and conferred with WA Sporting officials'.<sup>48</sup> Duff's behaviour, at this time and later, suggests that he may have been less than truthful when he made his unconditional assurance to Aitken.

### **The Second Bid Decision**

The final decision on which Australian city would bid was taken in Sydney on 6 June 1958, just weeks before the Cardiff Games. Adelaide's case was perhaps weakened because Aitken, who was South Australia's only voting delegate, was unable to attend the meeting due to illness.<sup>49</sup> He asked International Olympic Committee (IOC) member Hugh Weir to act as his proxy. Perth tourist Les Duff meanwhile offered to collect Tom Wigley and Reg Blythman, the Adelaide bid presenter, from the airport before the meeting. Intriguingly, he chose not to honour that offer and left the two South Australians temporarily stranded. Instead it was alleged that he collected delegates he believed could be lobbied into supporting the Perth bid.<sup>50</sup> After waiting in vain at the airport the South Australians made their own way to the conference, arriving just before the start of proceedings.

In deciding the format of the meeting the Chairman, Harold Alderson announced that all delegates would have an opportunity to speak and that the delegate to his immediate right would be the first speaker. Weir

and Aitken had hoped that Weir would speak first so he would be able to claim the right of reply.<sup>51</sup> However, Alderson's order of speakers gave this privilege to Les Duff. It is not known whether the order of speakers was a matter of chance or design, but it soon became clear that it gave Duff and the Perth team a significant advantage.

Misinformation in the debate did not assist Adelaide's cause. Victorian Swimming official, Len Phillips, referred to an *Adelaide Advertiser* report that claimed six (of the fourteen) Adelaide City Councillors were opposed to Adelaide bidding for the Games. However, it is more likely that only two or three Councillors were opposed to some aspects of the bid. There was no record kept of the Adelaide City Council's votes on the issue, however, all the motions on the Games bid were supported by the Council. While it is certain that some members of the Council expressed some reservations about the bid, the above report exaggerated the extent of opposition to the bid. Further, Phillips failed to state that the same newspaper report confirmed that the Council had allocated £250 000 to the Games. The expression of such opinions helped create lingering doubts that may have swayed delegates.<sup>52</sup>

After the two cities had each put their case fully, Duff had the final say and re-stated Perth's case. He spoke emotionally for 30 minutes from a thirteen-page prepared speech.<sup>53</sup> Perth won the secret ballot by nine votes to seven.<sup>54</sup>

### **Why Perth won the bid?**

The central argument Perth used against Adelaide's bid was its limited facilities and lack of assurances from the State government and City Council that suitable facilities would be built or made available for the Games. The opponents of the Adelaide bid also pointed to a lack of commitment by the SACA, who were concerned about the impact of the Games on its finances and the scheduled international cricket tours, casting doubt on the credibility of the Adelaide bid plans for the Adelaide Oval.

Despite his parsimony Playford was enthusiastic about the Games. However, the Adelaide bid suffered from a perception of inactivity due to the State Government and City Council's inability to make final decisions regarding facilities and funding. This was caused by Howard's lobbying of delegates, by the ambiguity of the bidding process for the 1962 Games and the untimely death of the Adelaide Lord Mayor Philips,<sup>55</sup> who had been a key factor in winning the bid in 1956. His successor J P Hargreaves,

appeared initially less enthusiastic than Philps.<sup>56</sup> With the opposition of some councillors, the City Council's support was increasingly seen as half-hearted as the decision drew near. Sydney newspapers carried reports that Hargreaves was not in favour of the Games.<sup>57</sup>

This false perception was assisted by the Adelaide City Council's belief that it should not have to re-win a vote it had already won in 1956. Mayor Hargreaves wrote to Aitken:

In all circumstances I do not think Adelaide should be called upon to support a firm decision already taken and after discussion with the appropriate committee of the Council it has been decided that a representative of the Council should not attend the meeting but that the meeting be informed of our attitude as expressed above.<sup>58</sup>

This view was reinforced at the City Council Finance Committee meeting of 4 June 1958 when a further reason was suggested. Councillor Edwards said 'I do not like the Lord Mayor not going'. To which the Chairman replied, 'it would embarrass our Lord Mayor, because the Games have already been given to us'.<sup>59</sup> The Lord Mayor of Perth wasn't embarrassed, he realised how important Philps was to Adelaide's win in 1956 and resolved that he would be at the meeting. He stated that he would actively lobby delegates.<sup>60</sup>

At this point there appears to have been an attempt to prevent the Lord Mayor of Adelaide being at the final meeting. The ABECGA Chairman Sir Harold Alderson, who had allowed the unusual proceedings in Melbourne, sent a telegram to Lord Mayor Hargreaves that appears misleading and out of place. It stated: 'assure only delegates will be present'.<sup>61</sup> Alderson also controversially barred the press from being in the Conference room during the presentations and voting, and had the matter decided by secret ballot rather than a show of hands, with all ballot papers destroyed after the count.<sup>62</sup> He also supported the 1956 international vote being delayed. While Alderson claimed publicly to support Adelaide, he may have revealed his far from bipartisan role days after the 1956 vote. When asked by a newspaper about Perth's bid, at the Federation Conference during the 1956 Olympics, he stated that 'Every consideration will be given to both cities'. However, after the meeting an Australian official reminded Alderson that Adelaide's application for the honour of host city had already been accepted in preference to Perth.<sup>63</sup> When interviewed many years later in 1995, Ron Aitken indicated that he

believed Alderson, had been induced to favour Perth.

This is one of the disgraces of the Federation President, Sir Harold Alderson ... whom I'm sure was bribed in some way, trips and so forth ... It was a disgrace to the Federation.<sup>64</sup>

The unusual sequence of events over three years suggests, at least circumstantially, that this may have been the case.

For many delegates the whole decision process was tainted. Mr Hodsdon, the delegate of the Amateur Athletics Union stated that:

My union considers that the Melbourne decision to rescind the decision awarding the Games to Adelaide was entirely wrong ... [the final] decision was unjustified, and in our opinion, a great shame.<sup>65</sup>

IOC member Hugh Weir immediately commented upon the one-upmanship of the Games bidding process: 'This is a far cry from the first British Empire Games in Canada in 1930, which were a simple family party'.<sup>66</sup> Weir predicted that given the size of the Perth budget 'financial problems' would arise'.<sup>67</sup>

The Perth public were enthusiastic about the Games once the bid had been secured and Harry Howard received a 'big welcome home'. Howard stated that 'there is no individual who can escape the impact of the Empire Games ... The coming of the Empire Games to Perth will be a highlight in the history of the State'.<sup>68</sup>

### **Failure of a Games Bid**

The South Australian sporting community believed that hosting the Empire Games would leave a lasting sporting legacy, but in truth the downward financial revisions put the long-term benefits of hosting the Games into doubt. The Adelaide Oval was to be a temporary home for athletic events and no cinders track would remain in place after the Games. Likewise the City baths were only to receive a minor upgrade and cycling was to be held on the dirt track at Daly Oval in suburban Woodville, a facility that was at least 60 years out of date.<sup>69</sup>

With the failure of the Games bid, these facilities were not upgraded. In 1963 the national swimming championships were taken from Adelaide because it did not have an acceptable pool, and the swimming officials who sat on the Games board made it clear that they would only support the city that was prepared to build new international standard facilities. Adelaide was not.

The Games may also be an example of Tom Playford's style of interstate relations coming back to haunt him. Former Commonwealth minister, Dr Jim Forbes, has suggested that Playford demonstrated such parochialism in his dealings with the Commonwealth, especially after the *Uniform Tax Act* (1942), that he pioneered the confrontational nature of State-Commonwealth relations.<sup>70</sup> In other words, Playford taught the states to be difficult. Playford's appeals for extra funding may have fallen on deaf ears because of the strained relations between Menzies and Playford.

The bid also demonstrates the meagre resources committed to sport by the South Australian Government. Sport was not a high priority for the Playford Government and it was difficult to prise any support from Playford for new and expensive sporting projects.

For the South Australian sporting officials involved there were some aftershocks. Within months Ron Aitken resigned as President of the South Australian Olympic Council and BECGA(SA), with lack of support a major contributory factor. Tom Wigley and Reg Blythman were subsequently overlooked for these positions.<sup>71</sup>

## Conclusions

To win the Games Perth had to override some public opposition and to budget lavishly. It effectively outspent Adelaide and won the Games primarily for that reason. The issues raised against the South Australian bid were the same the Olympic Council and local sporting associations had been advocating action on for decades. To rub salt into the South Australian wound, Harry Howard wrote requesting financial assistance from the Adelaide City Council and the State Government in 1960 and 1961. He stated:

It is direct financial assistance we need if we are to stage the Games in a way which will reflect international credit on Australia as a whole. We shall act as hosts to the British Family of Nations on your behalf. You will agree I am sure that we need your backing so that one of Australia's most beautiful but least populous capitals may be a worthy host on behalf of the larger eastern states.<sup>72</sup>

After three trips to the Cabinet room, the South Australian Government made a grant of £2500. Playford approved payment two weeks before the opening of the Games.<sup>73</sup>

For his part in the drama Les Duff said to the *News*: 'I did nothing at the meeting that was unethical. I merely exercised my rights as a delegate.'<sup>74</sup>

Tom Wigley, the pioneer of the Games bid was given a 'handsome mulga wood plaque' by the ABECGA.<sup>75</sup> Ron Aitken assessed Perth's Games in the following way: 'To be honest, Perth put on a much better Games than we ever could. They were prepared to spend the money and, well, we were not'.<sup>76</sup>

The nature of Australian sporting officialdom has long been considered to be highly political in nature. The perception of the 'amateur official' as being petty, self-centred and egocentric has been commented upon frequently.<sup>77</sup> The Olympic Movement has no monopoly of political machinations when it comes to winning a bid to host a Games. This may be partly because the character of Australian officials — Olympic and Commonwealth — shared common territory and views. For over three decades the South Australian Olympic Council and the Commonwealth Games Association were usually scheduled for the same night because the personnel of the two committees, with only a few exceptions, was the same. Moreover, the hard fought nature of sporting politics appears to be a consistent trend. The failed Adelaide bid of 1962 demonstrates that highly complex political games, dubious practices and even possible inducements were a part of the culture of the Australian Commonwealth Games bidding system.

This article also suggests that any attempt to win a bid is doomed to failure unless it has the full support and generous backing of the local authorities. Anything less and even the whiff of opposition can be exploited by the opponents of a bid. Thomas Playford, unlike most state premiers of recent times, appears to have believed that there were more important state activities than the relentless chase of a sporting spectacle. The article also indicates that the recent protestations that the Commonwealth bidding system is transparent and untainted, and not bedevilled by the problems that face the contemporary Olympics, was not true of at least one past bid.

### Notes:

- 1 Vyv Simson and Andrew Jennings, *The Lords of the Rings*, Simon and Schuster, London, 1992.
- 2 Douglas Booth and Colin Tatz, "'Swimming with the Big Boys?': The Politics of Sydney's 2000 Olympic Bid", pp. 1-3-23; Bruce Kidd and Max Howell, 'Comments on "Swimming with the Big Boys?"', pp. 25-35; Ian Jobling, 'Olympic Proposals and Bids by Australian Cities', pp. 37-56. See also Angela Burroughs, 'Winning the Bid', in Richard Cashman and Anthony Hughes, eds, *Staging the Olympics: The Event and its Impact*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 1999, ch. 2 (forthcoming July).

- 3 Rod McGeoch and Glenda Korporaal. *The Bid: How Australia won the 2000 Games*, William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1994.
- 4 See, however, Kevin M Dunn and Pauline M McGuirk, 'Hallmark Events', in *Cashman and Hughes, Staging the Olympics*, ch. 2.
- 5 Helen Lenskyj, 'When Winners are Losers: Toronto and Sydney Bids for the Summer Olympics', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 24, Nov. 1996. pp 392-418; and Lenskyj, 'The Case against Toronto's Bid for the 2008 Olympics', *Policy Options*, May 1997, pp 16-18.
- 6 Bids were made for the Olympic Games by Brisbane (1992), Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney (1996), Sydney (2000). and for the Commonwealth Games by Adelaide (1998). Adelaide, Perth, Darwin, Brisbane and Melbourne (2006).
- 7 South Australian Olympic Council *Minute Book 2, 1951-8*. Interview, Ron Aitken, 17 Mar. 1995.
- 8 *Adelaide Advertiser*, 22 July 1954. Preliminary application to the ABECGF.
- 9 Robert Bartlett, 'The South Australian Olympic Council 1920-1995'. unpub. thesis, Flinders University, 1995.
- 10 Letter, 6 Aug. 1954. Adelaide City Archives: Town Clerks Department (C.15) Special Files (S.4) No. F368A.
- 11 Adelaide City Council, Parks and Gardens Committee, 7 Sept. 1954. Rough Minutes F368A
- 12 Interview with the Premier, *Report*, 4 Jan. 1956, F368A.
- 13 Letter, 7 Sept. 1955, F368A. Rowing was not and is not a sport in the Empire or Commonwealth Games.
- 14 Woodville: News, 24 Oct. 1956 and *Letter*, Premier to City of Woodville, 27 Nov. 1956, State Records, Chief Secretary's Office, 826/54. Elizabeth: *Advertiser*, 25 Oct. 1956. St Peters, Payneham and West Beach: *Advertiser*, 5 Oct. 1956.
- 15 *News*, 1 Nov. 1956.
- 16 *Advertiser*, 14 and 26 Aug. 1956.
- 17 Letter, James Eve, Secretary, Australian British Empire and Commonwealth Games Association (ABECGA) to City of Adelaide, 12 Sept. 1956, F368A. The vote was incorrectly reported in the *Mail* 1 Sept. 1956, as 12-6.
- 18 Letter, ABECGA to City of Adelaide, 12 Sept. 1956, F368A.
- 19 *Perth Times*, 2 Sept. 1956.
- 20 *News*, 1 Nov. 1956.
- 21 *Deputation Report prepared for Premier*, 9 Jan. 1958, F368B.
- 22 *Town Clerk's Report to ACC*, 10 Jan. 1958, F368B.
- 23 *Town Clerk's Report to ACC*, 10 Jan. 1958.
- 24 *Re-invitation to Adelaide, Investigation and Invitation Committee*, 27 May 1958. authors or F368B.
- 25 Letter, Prime Minister to SA Premier, 16 Apr. 1958. CSO 826/54.
- 26 Letter, Playford to ABECGA, 27 May 1958, attached to Adelaide Invitation.
- 27 *Re-Invitation to Adelaide*, 27 May 1958. authors or F368B.
- 28 *Letter*, ABECGA to Town Clerk, 14 Apr. 1958, F368B.
- 29 *Re-Invitation to Adelaide*, 27 May 1958.
- 30 Draft speech on Adelaide's 'case', 21 May 1958, authors.
- 31 *City of Perth Final Consolidation of Claim*, 29 May 1958. F368Bi.
- 32 *Advertiser*, 7 June 1958.
- 33 Ronald Aitken. 'Comparison of Bids', *Journal of Industry* May 1957, pp. 23-4. *West Australian*, 16 Sept. 1960. ACC Town Clerk 'Resume of Claims' 8 April 1958, F368Bi. One major problem regarding the Perth bid was, that at no point had it even suggested when it would stage the Games, 'a point specifically demanded by the Federation'. *Advertiser*, 7 June 1958. Katharine Moore wrote that 'almost £4 million was spent on preparations' for the Perth Games, in W. Vamplew *et al*, *Oxford*

- Companion to Australian Sport*, OUP, Melbourne, 1994, p. 78.
- 34 *West Australian*, 17 Apr. 1958.
- 35 Anonymous Letter to Adelaide Lord Mayor, J P Hargreaves. 5 June 1958, F368E.
- 36 *Investigation and Invitation Committee*, 17 Apr. 1958, F368B.
- 37 Letter, Prime Minister to SA Premier, 16 Apr. and 13 May 1958, CSO 826/54, or Commonwealth number 57/658.
- 38 Playford's last letter to Menzies on this issue was 1 May 1958. CSO 826/54. Meanwhile Veale (phone call and letter, 21 Mar. 1958) and Aitken (letter, 6 Mar. 1956) had been pushing Playford for his answer, which he delayed waiting for Menzies, F368B.
- 39 Letter, Playford to City of Woodville, 27 Nov. 1956, CSO 826/54.
- 40 Letter, V R Hill, Secretary of the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce to the Adelaide Chamber of Commerce, 22 Apr. 1958, F388H.
- 41 Letter, Victorian Cricket Association to SA Cricket Association, 29 Apr. 1957.
- 42 Advertiser, 4 July 1957 reports that while there were some concerns, 'The SA Cricket Association were "not averse" to the idea, [of the Games being held at Adelaide Oval] and its conditions of use of the oval were not considered insurmountable' by the Games committee.
- 43 The lack of social reform during the Playford era was a major factor in the Dunstan reform agenda of the 1970s. *Playford's South Australia: 1938-1965*, Association of Professional Historians SA, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1996.
- 44 Letter, BECGA (SA) to Premier, 3 Feb. 1958, CSO 295/58.
- 45 *West Australian*, 5 June 1958.
- <sup>46</sup> 46 *Advertiser*, 7 June 1958.
- 47 Interview, Ron Aitken, 17 Mar. 1995.
- 48 *Advertiser*, 7 June 1956.
- 49 *Advertiser*, 6 June 1958 and Interview, Ron Aitken, 17 Mar. 1995.
- 50 Interview, Tom Wigley, 9 Mar. 1995 and *Advertiser*, 7 June 1958.
- 51 Interview, Ron Aitken, 17 Mar. 1995.
- 52 *Advertiser*, 7 June 1958
- 53 News, 7 June 1958 and Interview Tom Wigley, 9 Mar. 1995. Reg Blythman, South Australia's speaker at the conference was a sports writer for the Adelaide News.
- 54 Letter, ABECGA to Town Clerk, 10 June 1958, F368Bi. News, 4 June 1958.
- 55 Philps died on 25 Nov. 1957.
- 56 Interview, Ron O'Donnell 4 June 1995.
- 57 *Advertiser*, 7 June 1958.
- 58 Letter, Hargreaves to Aitken, 10 Apr. 1958, F368B.
- 59 Adelaide City Council, *Finance Committee rough notes*, 4 June 1958, F368F.
- 60 *Advertiser*, 3 June 1958. Letter Hargreaves to Sir Harry Alderson, 3 June 1958, F368Bi.
- 61 Telegram, Alderson to Hargreaves, 6 June 1958, F368Bi.
- 62 *Advertiser*, 7 June 1958
- 63 *Advertiser*, 5 Dec. 1956.
- 64 Interview. Ron Aitken, 17 Mar. 1995.
- 65 *Advertiser*, 9 June 1958.
- 66 *Advertiser*, 9 June 1958.
- 67 *Advertiser*, 9 June 1958.
- 68 *Advertiser*, 7 June 1958.
- 69 Adelaide Oval built a banked concrete track in 1898.
- 70 Dr Jim Forbes, 'Perspectives on Playford Seminar', State Library of SA and SA Centre for Australian Studies, 23 Aug. 1996.
- 71 Minutes, South Australian Olympic Council, 5 Oct. 1958. Interview, Ron Aitken, 17 Mar. 1995.

- 72 Letter, H Howard to Adelaide City Council, 19 Aug. 1960. F366H. He also wrote to Playford, 28 Aug. 1961, CSO 826/54.
- 73 CSO 826/54.
- 74 *Advertiser*, 7 June 1958. Duff died in May 1959.
- 75 *Advertiser*, 11 June 1958.
- 76 Interview, Ron Aitken, 17 Mar. 1995.
- 77 Bartlett, 'South Australian Olympic Council'.