

## Billion-dollar blitz to win Commonwealth Games

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August 23rd, 2008

THE Gold Coast will undergo a billion-dollar transformation in an attempt to secure the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

Premier Anna Bligh yesterday declared she would lead the push to bring the Games to her home town and has thrown down the gauntlet to rival city Perth.

Ms Bligh told the Weekend Bulletin a final decision on whether the bid would proceed to a formal tender stage is expected to be made before the end of the year.

The ambitious bid took shape earlier this month after Ms Bligh wrote a letter to Australian Commonwealth Games Association president, Sam Coffa, nominating the Gold Coast as a potential bid city.

Ms Bligh followed up the letter with a personal phone call to Mr Coffa, who was in Beijing cheering on the Australian team.

The Weekend Bulletin can exclusively reveal Mr Coffa wholeheartedly supported the idea to host the Commonwealth Games in Australia's sixth biggest city.

"On behalf of the ACGA, I formally acknowledge your letter and advise that the ACGA Board of Management will, in the next few months, determine whether Australia will bid for the 2018 Commonwealth Games or future Commonwealth Games," said Mr Coffa.

"If it is decided that Australia should prepare a bid, the ACGA will establish a process for determining which city will be endorsed as the Australian candidature."

Mr Coffa has ordered ACGA CEO Perry Crosswhite to liaise with Department of Premier and Cabinet deputy director-general Pat Vidgen and Queensland Events Corporation CEO Michael Denton to discuss the next step in the bid process.

Currently, Perth is the only other major city to show interest in the 2018 event but it is believed Adelaide, Hobart and Canberra could make late bids.

Ms Bligh said the Gold Coast bid would be overseen by a steering committee including former Olympian and Mayor Ron Clarke, Southport MP Peter Lawlor and Commonwealth Games and Olympics gold medallist Glynis Nunn-Cearns.

The committee will be chaired by Bulletin editor-in-chief Bob Gordon.

"There would need to be investment into significant new sporting facilities here in areas like swimming and athletics," said Ms Bligh.

"That's why we've got a 10-year timeframe. It isn't something we can bid for overnight and that's why we need to get out of the blocks now.

"I want the Gold Coast to have the most competitive bid. Having a 10-year planning framework gives us the chance to look at sporting infrastructure in a different way."

Ms Bligh told West Australian Premier Alan Carpenter to 'bring it on' after he engaged a feasibility study earlier this month to investigate whether Perth facilities could be re-developed to host the 2018 Games.

"We've got the best spot in Australia to hold the Games. We like competition here on the Gold Coast. I'm very pleased that one of our greatest athletes, Glynis Nunn-Cearns, has agreed to be part of the steering committee and we've approached a number of business people to assist," she said.

"Ten years gives us the time to deliver not just the sporting infrastructure but also the transport infrastructure and other necessary requirements for such a big international event."

Ms Bligh said the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne generated millions of dollars for the economy. "More than 125,000 visitors came to the Games, more than 13,000 jobs were created," she said.

The next Games will be held in Delhi and Glasgow will host the 2014 Games.