

Ian Chesterman AM

President, Australian Olympic Committee

From Sydney to Paris to Brisbane and Beyond

Knowing his hectic schedule that has seen him spend 239 days travelling away from his home in Tasmania in the past year, we were honoured that Ian Chesterman was able to make time to inform us about the Australian and international Olympic scene, less than 5 months before the Paris Olympics.

He reflected on the great atmosphere of Sydney 2000 and the special initiatives that helped make it so successful, including wide use of volunteers that has been a feature at games since.



As Chef de Mission for our team in Tokyo, he paid tribute to the Japanese government and people for holding the games, which had to be postponed at huge cost, with Covid requiring mostly empty stands, depriving locals, international visitors and athletes of much of the wonderful colourful multinational atmosphere enjoyed normally at Olympic events and in the host city.

Earlier he had been Chef de Mission for Australia at 6 Winter Olympics and other roles, giving him considerable experience in the complex organisation and issues involved with the Olympic movement, to ready him for his role as President of the AOC. He is driven by the Olympics being a celebration of the

cream of young (and not so young) athletes from around the world pursuing their dream to be the best that they can be. The Olympic movement provides a structure to give opportunities for the young to pursue excellence, to make a better country, and make a better world, helping break down the barriers that divide countries and peoples. Athletes from 206 nations will compete in Paris, a truly global event, providing an example of how different cultures can live and compete side by side. So the IOC will permit athletes from Russia to compete in white tee-shirts under the IOC flag, but not the Russian flag, following that nation's sanction after drug sample cheating in Sochi.

Athletes, coaches, fans, and administrators are keenly looking forward to Paris, which will surely be a great venue. He anticipates our swimmers will perform very well, but also looks to success in a wide range of sports, helping springboard for when Brisbane is host in 2032.

New sports are added at the option of the host city. The IOC is trying to increase relevance to younger audience (eg surfing, skateboard, rock climbing in Tokyo), but reduce the overall number and hence the cost of running the games, so pressure is on some traditional sports to be dropped. Los Angeles 2028 has added Lacrosse, squash, flag football, cricket.

Brisbane 2032 rapidly approaches, with a new model of a “regional games”, with 3 separate villages, Brisbane, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast. This model is now encouraged by the IOC as a means of reducing the cost to a host. Brisbane has contracted for 10,500 athletes, less than will be at Los Angeles, so some sports incl team sports will be cut.

Special issues also apply to the Winter Olympics, with sustainability and global warming exacerbating the pressures and costs. It seems possible that future hosts may be only a few rotating venues with reliable snow, rather than striving for new hosts, noting the world does not really need new ultra-costly facilities for ski jump and bobsleigh.

The AOC is independent of taxpayer grants, thanks to the nest egg arising from hosting the 2000 games. However, Ian spends a lot of time urging governments to invest in facilities that will encourage training and performance, and consequential success in future Olympics.

In his vote of thanks on behalf of members, Neil Martin especially gave credit for Ian’s achievement since his appointment in having the Olympics off the sensationalist front pages and instead on the sporting back pages, as well as his great contribution to having Brisbane selected for 2032.

Peter James