

# Locals must wake up to joys of Brisbane

**B**RISBANE locals don't know how good they've got it and with the 2032 Olympics now highly likely, all three tiers of government must thrash out a funding model quickly to deliver on road and rail solutions over the next decade for south-east Queensland.

That's the verdict from the man overseeing Star Entertainment's massive multibillion-dollar investment in Brisbane and the Gold Coast, Kiwi-born Geoff Hogg.

In a stinging wake-up call to city powerbrokers, Mr Hogg challenged Brisbane locals to be more passionate about the future of the state capital.

"The biggest and best advocates for Brisbane are people who have migrated here from overseas or interstate," he told a Tattersall's Club lunch.

"That really frustrates me. It takes people who have lived in other parts of the world to recognise just how brilliant this place is. From a tourism marketing perspective, we are being outdone by Sydney and Melbourne and that is not sustainable, especially if we win the Olympics. We have to market the south-east as a true holiday destination and the key to that is getting governments of all levels on-board to build the necessary road and rail projects before 2032."

Mr Hogg is right. The chance to host an Olympic Games is not about the two weeks of competition. It's about expediting and unlocking much-needed infrastructure such as a heavy rail line between the Gold and Sunshine coasts.

It's about a second MI, which is already stretched as the urban sprawl between the Gold Coast and Brisbane closes every year. Mr Hogg stressed the need for urgency in any discussions between local, state and federal agencies on infrastructure funding.

"It has to be done as soon as we get the (Olympics) green light," he said. "We can't wait four years. This is about making decisions that will change the face of the south-east for a generation. I can't stress how important it is for politicians and bu-



Star Entertainment's Geoff Hogg (right) and the Queen's Wharf project he is overseeing on the banks of the Brisbane River.

reaucrats to get on with the job straight away."

A decision on the Olympics could be as early as July. Star Entertainment has plenty of skin in the game. It is spending \$3bn on the Queen's Wharf project, which will transform the eastern side of the CBD and is on track for completion in December, 2022. It is also building more hotel rooms on the Gold Coast to accompany its Star Casino and The Darling Hotel.

Cross River Rail boss Graeme Newton spoke at the same lunch, saying the \$5.5bn transport project was 30 per cent completed, with major underground works set to be done by the end of the year.

He said Brisbane Live, which would include a 19,000-seat stadium near Roma St, was now a vital component of the project mix. "I see Cross River Rail as one of the components of the mix to take Brisbane

from an adolescent to an adult," he said.

Other major projects included in that portfolio suite include Queen's Wharf, the new Brisbane port and second airport runway, which would open up direct international flights with major cities once the borders are re-opened.

Mr Newton said Cross River rail would adopt the European control system, meaning it could handle fast rail into the future.

The stars are aligning for Brisbane. It is fast emerging as one of the most liveable, modern cities in the world. If we get the Olympics, we must not squander that opportunity. Politicians and bureaucrats who don't buy into that narrative should be swiftly sent packing.