

## **THE ORIGINS OF EXPO 88**

PETER CARROLL

World Expo 88 (in short, Expo 88) or, to give the organisation its formal title, the Brisbane Exposition and South Bank Redevelopment Authority (BESBRA), was established by the Queensland government in 1984 to mount an exposition in Brisbane (Expo '88 Act. 1984). It was a unique organisation in the Australian context, not so much for its statutory authority form as for its purpose and limited life-span.

Expo 88 represented a complex and expensive policy outcome whose impact is yet to be fully realised. With this in mind, the concern of this article is to trace and analyse the factors which brought about this outcome — in essence, to describe the policy process. The complexity of the process is evident, involving as it did all three levels of Australian government, a variety of international relationships and organisations, and important sections of the business community, particularly in Queensland. Within the governmental sphere it involved several departments, and the cabinets of several states, notably those of Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. It involved a range of statutory authorities, most notably Expo 88 itself, the Australian Bicentennial Authority (ABA) and its Queensland Council, and the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation (QTTC).

The extent of involvement of these groups varied over time, with those most continuously involved being the Commonwealth government, notably a specialised unit, the Australian Exhibit Organisation (AEO), which spent time within a number of departments, including the Department of Administrative Services; and the Queensland government, particularly the Premier's and Coordinator-General's Departments, and the Treasury. The ABA was heavily involved in the 1979 to 1981 period, and the QTTC in the 1982 period.

Not only was the process characterised by the number and extent of key actors that entered, remained upon, left and re-entered it at a variety of times, but its direction and continuity were also highly variable, though remarkably persistent. There were no less than four attempts to mount an exposition in Queensland, all of which had the support of the Queensland government in varying extents, but only the last of which was successful. In addition, there was an attempt to mount a universal exposition in either Sydney or Melbourne, which was terminated by joint decision of the Wran and Fraser Governments on 4 February 1981.

The article is divided into a number of parts. In the first, a background to the world of international expositions and the place of Australia within it is provided. In the remainder, which constitute the main body of the work, a history of the policy process is provided, divided into periods: the pre-1976 initiative: the first Queensland proposal, 1976-78: the proposal for a universal exposition in Sydney or Melbourne, 1978-80; the second Queensland proposal, 1981; the third and fourth Queensland proposals, 1982.

### **Australia, international expositions and World Expo 88**

Expo 88 was not a trade fair, though some may be excused for having considered it as such since the national exhibitions prominently displayed the various wares of the countries concerned, in a trend that now characterises most such expositions. Rather, the formal purpose of expositions such as Expo 88 is to enable man to display his achievements in fields of human endeavour. Its purpose is to compare, to show with pride, to emulate the achievement of others. The world gathers to show what has been done, to view a world balance sheet of the evolution of its people at a given moment in time (World Expo 88 1984).

However, the distinction is somewhat blurred, even in the official publications of Expo 88. For example: "In the process, of course, exhibitors do 'sell', in subtle ways, their 'product', be it a

country, corporate image or actual goods" (World Expo 88 1984). The degree of subtlety in salesmanship varied from the hardly noticeable to the strikingly obvious.

The International Bureau of Expositions (BIE) describes Expo 88 rather differently: as a specialised exposition, in contrast to its other category of exposition, the universal. The latter display several branches of human endeavour, are far larger, and are far more expensive to stage. The former display only a single branch of human endeavour, though the two categories tend to fade into each other rather than be exclusive, with the BIE providing no other guidelines to distinguish them.

Australia signed the Convention relating to International Exhibitions in 1935, the original Convention having been agreed in Paris on 22 November 1928. The Convention was designed to control and regulate the staging of international expositions that had risen rapidly in frequency since the London Exposition of 1851 had established the trend to such events. Their cost was such that competing expositions could experience severely decreased revenues as visitations were split between them, not to mention the embarrassment experienced by nations asked to provide exhibits at competing expositions. In addition, there existed no effective mechanism by which the complaints of international participants in the various expositions could be dealt with satisfactorily (Defrene 1988). International sensitivities were at stake, and the Convention was the mechanism chosen to deal with them. There was to be no free market in expositions. However, Australia withdrew its membership in 1945 along with the United Kingdom and Canada. Prime Minister Robert Menzies, in response to a question from Gough Whitlam, explained:

*Since then our trade authorities have maintained the view that Australia's special requirements in the matter of export promotion are better served by avoiding the limitations, as to the nature and scope of promotion activities, which ratification of the Convention could impose (Com. Parl. Debs, vol. HofR45, p.38).*

No details were given as to the precise limitations Australia would experience through membership of the Convention, and the government continued to be faced with growing interest in expositions, indicated by an unsuccessful Victorian proposal for an exposition scheduled for 1976-77, led by Sir Maurice Nathan, then Lord Mayor of Melbourne. Menzies also admitted that he had "noted" suggestions for an exposition to be held in Australia during the 1970s. After consistent pressure from the ALP Opposition, and internal advice from the AEO, this policy was reversed in 1972 (Com. Parl. Debs, vol. HofR 70, p.1850; vol.HofR73, p.1397).

The 1928 Convention established a small secretariat, based in Paris, and a General Assembly which all members could attend. The latter meets twice yearly, normally in June and December, to hear and decide upon various applications. It is important to note that all formal dealings with the BIE have to take place through the offices of the Commonwealth government. Initially, the coordination of Australia's involvement was undertaken by a small unit of public servants within the AEO. The head of AEO was normally the Australian delegate to BIE. It is not permissible, under the Convention, for the Australian states to deal with BIE in their own right, which ensures that the cooperation of the Commonwealth is necessary for any application to be successful (BIE 1928, ch.III). In addition, where a national government does not itself organise an exposition, it must officially recognise the organisers for this purpose and guarantee the fulfilment of the obligations of the organisers. The Commonwealth, under the BIE rules, has to appoint a Commissioner-General for any Australian exposition. The Commissioner-General is formally responsible for ensuring that an exposition is held in accordance with BIE rules, and that the host country meets its obligations (BIE 1928, ch.IV).

### **The pre-1976 situation**

The initial stimulus for an exposition in Australia in 1988 seems to have come from Patrick Reid, the Canadian delegate to BIE, in 1974. Reid was a most influential member of that close-knit group of public servants associated with BIE and international expositions, and was to have a continuing influence upon Australian efforts to mount Expo 88. He encouraged William Worth, then Australian delegate to BIE, to interest the Australian government in notifying BIE of its intention to register for a universal exposition for 1988, as part of a potential celebration of the bicentennial of white settlement in Australia. Reid pointed out that the French might well be interested in holding an exposition in 1989 to celebrate the bicentennial of the French Revolution, so that an early Australian registration, or at least notification of intention to register, might forestall a French bid (Wigley & Worth 1988). Under BIE rules,

universal exhibitions could not take place within ten years of each other (BIE 1928, ch. II). One can only speculate on Reid's motives, though a commitment to the value of such expositions might have been involved. It might also have been made with the possibility of a Vancouver exposition in mind, so as to minimise potential French competition in the same period.

Given their responsibilities for expositions as successive AEO heads, it is not surprising that first Worth and then Eric Wigley took up the issue and were instrumental in persuading the Whitlam Government to notify BIE of its intention to register for an exposition, with the support of Peter (later Sir Peter) Lawler, then permanent head of the Department of Administrative Services. Worth and Wigley had a universal exhibition in mind at this time, both larger and more expensive than the specialised exposition that eventuated (Wigley & Worth 1988). Formal registration of plans to hold a universal exposition could not be made or formally approved so many years in advance of the exposition. However, Australian intent was made clear, a move that might have had some influence in forestalling potential competitors, who would have been faced with the diplomatically embarrassing task of acting against the expressed interest of the Australian government.

It was by no means certain at this stage that there would be a major celebration of the bicentenary of white settlement. Worth and Wigley suggest, for example, that there was considerable support, at least among those public servants interested in the question, for an exposition to be reserved for the centenary of the founding of the Commonwealth. A little later there was additional competition in the shape of those who were keen to secure an Olympic Games as the centre-piece of any such celebration. There was also substantial opposition, rather than competition, from the Commonwealth Treasury, which was well aware of the substantial costs of holding expositions, and by no means confident of their benefits (Wigley & Worth 1988). However, the change in policy regarding BIE membership and expositions that had come about in 1972, combined with Gough Whitlam's evident interest, were sufficient to move the Whitlam Government to notify BIE formally of its interest in holding a universal exposition at the May 1975 meeting of BIE.

### **1976 to 1978: the first Queensland proposal**

Within a year of the submission to BIE the first Queensland proposal emerged, initiated by Frank Maccormick, who was successful in gaining the support of the Queensland branch of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, followed by the Brisbane Chamber of Commerce under its then president, Tom Burrell. Maccormick, then architect for the University of Queensland, approached Worth in January 1976 for advice about the possibilities of mounting an exposition in Brisbane (Maccormick 1976). Maccormick had played an important part in the design of Australian exhibition pavilions for earlier expositions, most recently for the 1974 Exposition in Spokane. He was enthused by the success of the Spokane Expo in sparking the redevelopment of a decaying riverside site, and saw similar opportunities for the near city-centre Kangaroo Point site in Brisbane (Maccormick 1988a).

This was hardly a welcome complication for the AEO, despite its general sympathy for expositions. Under the then BIE rules an interval of at least five years must elapse between the holding of a special and a universal exhibition in the same country, and similarly for specialised exhibitions (BIE 1928, ch. II). As seriously, two proposals, even if for expositions several years apart, would tend to divide the political support necessary to gain endorsement for even one exposition. It might have led to an increase in the level and intensity of competition between the Australian states interested in holding an exposition, competition that would be certain to develop even were only one exposition in prospect. Nor was the competition to be faced solely that of the Maccormick proposal, for a variety of other proposals were being mooted, and seriously supported, as the centre-piece for the bicentenary, notably for an Olympic Games. In addition, the question of whether the increased costs associated with two expositions could be afforded would lend weight to those who opposed such events (Wigley & Worth 1988).

Despite two years of intensive lobbying, however, this first proposal was unsuccessful. Every Queensland member of the Commonwealth Parliament had been approached, either by letter or personal contact, or both, as had members of the Queensland cabinet and the Liberal and National Party organisations in Queensland. Both Burrell and Maccormick, especially the latter, had made representations to AEO and to several members of the Fraser cabinets of these years (Maccormick 1988b). But the proposal faced several problems, particularly the competing proposal for a universal exposition supported by AEO. It was apparent that Brisbane did not have the population or financial

base to support the very large, universal exposition, with Sydney or Melbourne the only real contenders. Moreover, whilst the Maccormick proposal was successful in gaining the support of the Chamber of Commerce, it was only by a slender majority (Robertson 1988). In part this was the consequence of a relative ignorance as to what an exposition entailed on the part of the members of the Chamber. More importantly, it was a consequence of the soon-to-be-successful bid for the 1982 Commonwealth Games, then being submitted by Queensland. This bid had been on the political agenda for some time before Maccormick's exposition proposal emerged. It was the first bid to mount such a project that had ever been attempted by the Queensland government, and there were fears in Queensland that an exposition proposal might detract from its chances of success (Robertson 1988). Perhaps most importantly, it took until 1978 before the support of the Queensland government could be gained for the proposal, reducing the effectiveness with which the Commonwealth government could be influenced.

At a meeting of state and Commonwealth representatives to consider proposals for the Bicentennial on 2 November 1978, Queensland's was not well received (Wigley 1978). The state's capacity to hold an exposition was questioned, as well as the fact that a detailed financial feasibility study had not been undertaken. The West Australian government's representative suggested that Sydney would be the more appropriate venue (Wigley 1978). In the absence of a detailed financial feasibility study, and given the Chamber's unwillingness to raise contributions to match a Queensland state government promise of a 50-50 matching grant for this purpose, the Queensland proposal was lost.

This seemed to be confirmed in late 1978, when a submission went to the Commonwealth cabinet from the Department of Administrative Services, suggesting a universal exposition, with either Sydney or Melbourne as the venue. Joint working parties linking the Victorian, New South Wales and Commonwealth governments were established, with Worth and Wigley being members of both. The result of their considerations was to be a recommendation for a universal exposition at the Darling Harbour site, as opposed to the Sydney Homebush site or the Fisherman's Bend site in Melbourne.

### **The universal exposition proposal of 1978-80**

As the joint working parties commenced their work a new player entered upon the scene, in the shape of the Australian Bicentennial Authority (ABA), under the chairmanship of John Reid of James Hardie Industries. The ABA was given the role of processing the suggestions for the Bicentennial, and drawing up a suggested program for the year. Reid was convinced of the need for a universal exposition as the centrepiece of the Bicentennial year, and worked energetically to that end in close cooperation with Eric Wigley of AEO. Worth, now retired from the public service, was recruited as a consultant to the Authority. It seems that in these early stages Reid foresaw a major role for ABA in managing an exposition (Maher 1988).

In April 1980 the joint task force feasibility study "A Possible Exposition Australia 1988 Sydney" recommended a universal exposition for Darling Harbour in Sydney. The study was submitted to the Commonwealth and state governments, where it received the detailed and generally negative attentions of the New South Wales Treasury and the Commonwealth Department of Finance. Their views had an important impact upon Premier Wran, who seems to have gradually lost enthusiasm for the idea of an exposition as the year progressed. However, discussions during the year continued, with the Commonwealth suggesting that it would be prepared to offer a matching 50-50 grant of some \$200 million towards the costs of the exposition (Wigley & Worth 1988). Reid and the officers of AEO were both dismayed and surprised when they realised in December 1980 that the proposal was likely to be rejected. Reid suggested a cost-saving plan that would reduce New South Wales' commitment, but his efforts were to no avail (Maher 1988; Wigley & Worth 1988). On 4 January 1981, "in a joint announcement, the Fraser and Wran Governments reluctantly decided that, with a capital outlay as high as \$1 billion, it was impracticable for them to agree to make the necessary funds available, being conscious of their heavy commitments for basic infrastructure in support of industry and services such as hospitals and schools (Commonwealth Record 1981, p.93).

### **The ABA and the Queensland proposal of 1981**

Despite the rejection of the Darling Harbour proposal, John Reid decided to continue his efforts to gain an exposition as the centre-piece of the Bicentenary. Aware of Queensland's earlier interest, he

contacted the Queensland government and managed to gain its support for mounting a proposal for a smaller, less-costly, specialised exposition in Brisbane. This was no small achievement on Reid's part, with Queensland's attention focused on the coming Commonwealth Games. Reid's motives are fairly clear.<sup>1</sup> The recently rejected Olympic Games and Darling Harbour exposition proposals had been at the centre of ABA's plans for the Bicentennial in 1988, and had been supported ardently by Reid and his staff since at least the middle of 1979, shortly after his appointment to ABA. With so much effort having been devoted to the task, the concept of a specialised exposition, in Queensland or elsewhere, would have been attractive, especially as it involved reduced costs. In addition, as recently as 5 January 1981, Premier Bjelke-Petersen had reiterated his support for an exposition. Also, senior public servants within AEO (notably Wigley) still had very considerable enthusiasm for an exposition, together with well-established links with the Queensland actors and the BIE. Despite such support, Reid's endeavour was a risky one, given that the Commonwealth cabinet had so recently decided against an exposition in Sydney. However, he did have the support of his minister, Bob Ellicot (Armstrong 1981a).

The ABA did have some advantages, for example the support of Ian Russell, a leading Queensland businessman, recently retired from the position of President of the Queensland Confederation of Industry, and Chairman of the Queensland Council of ABA. Russell's business and political contacts, plus his knowledge of the earlier Chamber of Commerce proposal, were considerable assets. They were rapidly put to use, with Russell being briefed as to Reid's plan, and later persuaded to put forward, to the ABA board (in May), on behalf of the Queensland Council, a proposal that there should be a special exposition in Brisbane. This had the advantage of demonstrating, at least on the surface, that the new initiative was coming from Queensland, rather than from ABA in Sydney (Wigley & Worth 1988).

There were also moves to gauge the interest of the Victorian and New South Wales governments. However, these were not pursued with any vigour, though Reid noted that he thought it unsound to have Queensland as the only possible candidate (Reid 1981a). However, as the interest and commitment of the Queensland government became firmer, so the need to canvass other states declined. With evidence of interest from at least one state government behind him, Reid was able to convince his new minister, Ian Wilson, that a formal approach should be made to Prime Minister Fraser (Edwards 1981). The approach was successful and the Commonwealth agreed to ask BIE to keep the 1988 slot open for Australia.

In Queensland, a small coordinating group was established, including Deputy Premier and Treasurer Llew Edwards, State Coordinator-General Sydney Schubert, and Worth, then consultant to ABA. McNair Anderson and Cameron McNamara (consultants) were commissioned to undertake attitude and attendance studies (Worth 1981a).

It is difficult to gauge the exact degree of support Fraser gave to the Queensland proposal in the period to the end of May. He was certainly aware that it might cause complications with other states, and officers of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet specifically asked David Armstrong, ABA General Manager, whether states other than Queensland should be asked if they were prepared to offer a specialised exposition. Armstrong replied that the New South Wales and Victorian Premiers had said in February 1981 that they were not interested in a smaller, specialised exposition. However, as Armstrong noted, time had passed and it might be worth re-checking their positions. Armstrong also noted that the Minister for the Australian Capital Territory had expressed a strong interest in a specialised exposition for Canberra, though he doubted that it had the necessary infrastructure (Armstrong 1981b).

It seems that Prime Minister Fraser's position on this proposal became increasingly negative during June. This was one of the reasons for his lack of swift response to a letter from Deputy Premier Llew Edwards. The letter requested that the Commonwealth agree to fund a major joint feasibility study, on a 2-to-1 Commonwealth-to-state cost-sharing basis at least where consultants were employed. Each government would cover the cost of its own officers' involvement (Edwards 1981). This had been the basis for the earlier Melbourne and Sydney feasibility studies. Deputy Premier Edwards also noted that it was hoped that initial information would be ready by the end of July 1981, and that a firm decision by both governments should be made by early November. In September, Premier Bjelke-Petersen reiterated Edwards' proposal for a joint feasibility study, noted the delay in response, and further proposed a sharing of the capital costs of an exposition on the basis that had been discussed for the Darling Harbour proposal (Bjelke-Petersen 1981a). Again, there was no swift reply.

In the face of this delay details regarding the Queensland proposal began to leak to the press, as can be seen in two articles which appeared in *The Australian* and *The Courier Mail* on 11 August, and which caused considerable annoyance in Canberra. The article in *The Australian* (Andrews 1981) was wildly inaccurate. If the articles represented a move to invoke the support of the media on the part of the ABA and Queensland interest, then they backfired. The *Australian* article was inaccurate in a number of important respects and very much sensationalised the issue, with a series of comments that offended the Commonwealth, Queensland, New South Wales and, possibly, French governments. It referred, incorrectly, to the proposed exposition as a "trade fair", which was not the case. It suggested also that the Queensland government had been holding behind-the-scenes talks with the French organisation that allocated expositions, whereas BIE was an international organisation, based in Paris.

The sensitivity to the media reports on exposition proposals was also illustrated by a visit made by Armstrong to Brisbane on 19 August. The visit was sparked by Ian Russell on 18 August; Russell suggested that there was some evidence of growing criticism of the likely costs of an exposition in the Brisbane media. Armstrong took the matter sufficiently seriously to fly to Brisbane the next day; he held a number of talks with radio stations and with Harry Gordon, Editor-in-Chief of Queensland Newspapers including *The Courier Mail*. The visit was successful in that Armstrong was able to present the ABA's view concerning an exposition's virtues, and managed to gain Gordon's wholehearted support (Armstrong 1981c).

It had become clear by the end of August 1981 that the Commonwealth was most unlikely to share in the joint feasibility study, and probably unlikely to share the capital costs of an exposition. Nevertheless, in the first week of September the Queensland cabinet authorised a major feasibility study without Commonwealth funding. The reasons for the decision were several. One, there was continuing enthusiasm for the economic potential for an exposition, particularly in regard to tourism. Two, given the reluctance of the Commonwealth government, it may have been felt advisable to show evidence of even firmer commitment to an exposition on the part of the state government by funding the study. Three, the lack of a detailed financial feasibility study was a considerable handicap in representations to, and negotiations with, the Commonwealth. Four, there was continued and firm support from Reid and ABA, on the basis of their belief that the Bicentennial needed an exposition as a centre-piece, if it was to be a success.

Matters then moved swiftly on the ABA/Queensland front as the BIE meeting scheduled for December drew nearer, hastened by an apparent French move to secure 1989 for an exposition (Reid 1981b). A series of meetings headed by Coordinator-General Schubert agreed that the target date for completion of the detailed feasibility study was to be 31 October, and that it should aim at confirming that an expo could be mounted at a capital cost acceptable to the two governments, i.e. less than \$200 million; that a suitable site could be obtained and prepared in time; and that there were no evident constraints that might prejudice the success of an expo. It should also seek to discover any other major factors that might influence proposed funding by governments and the basis of cost-sharing, e.g. residual uses and or disposal of land and assets (Worth 1981b).

The Queensland government appointed Cameron McNamara as the prime contractor for the study. Entitled "International Exposition 1988 Feasibility Study, Brisbane Area", it evaluated a number of sites, concluding that the South Brisbane site would be the most appropriate, largely because of its near city-centre location, though it would be the most expensive of those surveyed to develop. The Queensland cabinet approved the study on 5 November, with the qualification that it would proceed further only if the Commonwealth would share capital costs, including on-site acquisition, on-site capital works and off-site infrastructure costs. The study estimated capital costs of \$255 million for the site, with \$11 million for operating costs. An early indication of the Commonwealth's response was requested (Bjelke-Petersen 1981b).

On 9 November the ABA Executive met with several members of the Commonwealth cabinet, after an earlier full cabinet meeting, to discuss the ABA Bicentennial program and the Queensland exposition, a meeting which was far from successful (ABA 1981). The full cabinet had not come to any decision on the ABA recommendations for a centrepiece exposition and cost-sharing for the Bicentenary, but there was a strong feeling that Queensland should not be the location for the centrepiece. Further, cabinet wanted more accurate costings. Prime Minister Fraser indicated that the Commonwealth might consider grants towards a major capital works project in each state and territory, especially if the Commonwealth entered into a cost-sharing agreement over a Queensland exposition (Armstrong 1981a). In addition, the cabinet meeting directed that officers of the Departments of Finance, Home

Affairs and Environment, and ABA meet with Queensland officers, including officers of the Queensland Treasury, to prepare a financial analysis of the proposed exposition, and of possible Commonwealth funding (Armstrong 1981d).

The results of the analysis were not favourable. In gross out-turn 1988 terms, it concluded that there would be a gross cost to the Commonwealth of \$449 million, if the cost-sharing proposal were adopted, with Queensland's share about \$485 million. In 1981 terms, the amount to be cost-shared, of the capital expenditure, would be about \$245.8 million, out of a total 1981 cost of about \$458 million. The analysis reflected "the agreed position reached between Commonwealth and State officials at the Brisbane meeting", and the costs identified were considerably higher than indicated by the Cameron McNamara report. It also noted that Queensland officials acknowledged that the proposal implied special additions to Queensland's semi-government borrowings, and stated that the Government intended that the Exposition would not be financed at the expense, for example, of schools or other public works. It was accepted by the officials that this could involve difficulties in acceptance by other states of increased Queensland borrowings. The Commonwealth would be required to meet the capital and running costs of its pavilion, estimated to cost \$15.4 million (October 1981 prices). There could also be a range of additional Commonwealth outlays (as with the 1982 Brisbane Commonwealth Games), e.g. for a Royal visit, ABC coverage (Department of Finance 1981).

Such an increase over the costs suggested by Queensland, at a time when the Commonwealth was urging the need for restraint in public expenditure, did not provide much support for the Queensland case. The exposition proposal was not accepted. On 6 December Prime Minister Fraser announced:

*The Government does not believe that a specialised international exposition would be appropriate for the Bi-centennial celebrations. An outlay in excess of \$200 m at present prices would be required to stage such an exposition successfully. Such an expenditure for a single, fixed event would be both inappropriate and inconsistent with the need for the Government to support national and international events which would reach people across the nation (Fraser 1981).*

## **The Queensland proposals of 1982**

At the end of 1981 there seemed no prospect of an exposition taking place in Australia during the Bicentennial, let alone in Queensland. Yet, by the end of 1982, it seemed certain that there would be an exposition, and that it would take place in Queensland. There was some uncertainty in the first few months of 1983 as to whether or not the new Hawke Labor Government would continue to provide the support, financially limited though it was, of the outgoing Coalition Government, but this was removed when, on 3 April. Prime Minister Hawke assured Premier Bjelke-Petersen that support would be continued.

How did the change of policy take place, and why?

In the first instance, the answer seems to lie with Frank Moore, Chairman of the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation. Almost as soon as the news regarding the Commonwealth's rejection of the 1981 proposal was known, Moore was in contact with Premier Bjelke-Petersen in an effort to revive the proposal, this time on a private enterprise basis. The reasons for the approach were several. Moore was irritated by the negative feelings of what he described as "southern interests and Canberra bureaucrats" to the idea of the centrepiece of the Bicentennial being in Queensland (Moore 1988). In addition, and more generally within QTTC, it was thought that such an exposition would have considerable potential for the tourist industry. QTTC had been considering how best to promote Queensland as a tourist mecca on the world scene, but the cost of a marketing and advertising campaign of any significance, especially in the USA, was beyond the Corporation. In addition, Moore felt that it was an opportunity to show that private enterprise could undertake such a project, whereas the "socialist" southern states could not (Moore 1988). The Queensland government was at this time heavily promoting the theme that the state was the ideal state for private enterprise, in order to attract new investment.

The Premier was interested in the private enterprise concept, at least sufficiently to contact Worth and Reid at the ABA as to the feasibility of a private enterprise exposition, in early January 1982 (Reid 1982). He was reassured that such expositions were the norm in the USA, though the Commonwealth would still have to give its approval and formally approach BIE. On this basis the Premier decided that

Queensland would go ahead with a third proposal, without any cost-sharing from the Commonwealth (Reid 1982). Moore gathered a group of interested business notables together to investigate the feasibility of the idea further, with the support of Deputy Premier Llew Edwards. The two worked to lobby the necessary support, including that of Doug Anthony, National Party leader and Deputy Prime Minister. David C. Graham Pty Ltd were commissioned to conduct a brief study, and reported that the concept seemed feasible. As a consequence, the Premier wrote to Prime Minister Fraser in February 1982 requesting that the Commonwealth ask BIE to keep a "slot" open for a specialised exposition in Brisbane in 1988. Fraser agreed to the request on 23 March, but made it quite clear that the Commonwealth would not accept any financial commitment (Fraser 1982). The reasons for this agreement are not clear, and it certainly ran the risk of annoying the other states, notably New South Wales. Moreover, if Queensland decided to go ahead with the exposition, the Commonwealth could not help but incur some substantial costs, e.g. that of providing a Commissioner-General and a pavilion. It would also be responsible, under BIE regulations, for guaranteeing that the Exposition would be held once final approvals were granted. It is likely that Doug Anthony, as Deputy Prime Minister, helped persuade Fraser accept this third Queensland proposal, as did Deputy Premier Llew Edwards. However, the extent of Anthony's support and influence was limited.

As discussions progressed in Queensland, it became apparent that not all members of the state cabinet were convinced that the idea was feasible, and it proved difficult to gain specific support from the private sector, notably financial commitment. This was in contrast to the protestations of private sector enthusiasm that Sir Frank Moore had used to help convince the Premier of the wisdom of another attempt to gain exposition for Queensland. In addition, it was apparent that an exposition would necessitate considerable borrowings by the state, at least in the first instance, to provide start-up capital. This might, in turn, require Loan Council approval, and face critical scrutiny at the relevant Council meeting. Also coming to the forefront of concern was the increasing economic recession and increasingly stringent financial controls exercised by the Commonwealth. There was also opposition to the proposal from senior public servants, particularly in the Treasury (Moore 1988; Wigley & Worth 1988).

As a consequence of such concerns Premier Bjelke-Petersen wrote to Prime Minister Fraser 18 April and informed him that Queensland had decided not to go ahead with the proposal for an exposition. As the Premier stated, "We would like to have proceeded with a formal application, but, in the current economic climate and taking into account overall State public projects, a re-assessment of priorities has been necessary" (Bjelke-Petersen 1982a).

However, matters did not rest there. Moore, Edwards and the group the former had recruited to work on the private enterprise proposal continued to exert constant pressure on the Premier and other leading members of the Queensland cabinet to resuscitate the proposal, despite the embarrassment this might cause. At the end of September, with the success of the Commonwealth Games evident, their efforts were beginning to show signs of success. A leading official of QTTC had talks with ABA and the Commonwealth Treasury about resuscitating the proposal, and met with some sympathy. Edwards and Moore managed to persuade the Premier to reopen the issue, and to retain the services of Dan Whitehead, manager of the Commonwealth Games Foundation, and his senior management team, as the base for an Expo Study Secretariat.

As a consequence, on Monday 29 November, a message was sent by Bjelke-Petersen to Doug Anthony, now Acting Prime Minister, asking the Commonwealth to instruct Eric Wigley of AEO to make a renewed bid for a 1988 reservation at the meeting of BIE on 8 December 1982 (Bjelke-Petersen 1982b). The decision had been approved in some haste by the Queensland cabinet on the same day. It had also allocated \$250,000 for a feasibility study to extend the Moore group proposal, and another \$250,000 to retain the services of the Commonwealth Games Foundation team. Officials from the Departments of Prime Minister and Cabinet and Home Affairs were dispatched post-haste to Brisbane to meet with the Queensland team and examine the new proposal, on 2 December 1982.

As described by Worth, David Graham (of David C. Graham Pty Ltd) was the dominant figure at the meeting, which focused on a proposal for a specialised exposition with the theme of "Man, Technology and Leisure", to take place on the South Brisbane site, at which there would be some 20-30 international participants (Worth 1982b). The costs of site acquisition and development were estimated at \$105 million, to be provided by the state government on the basis that \$90 million would be recoverable from resale of the site after the exposition.

In general the meeting went well, though it was pointed out that the study had made no allowances for debt-servicing charges on the Queensland government loan to the proposed Authority, which boosted the total for site acquisition and development to about \$150 million, entailing a deficit of about \$60 million (Worth 1982a). It is interesting that, whilst the report to ABA by its consultant mentions this omission, the report of the Commonwealth officials to Anthony does not seem to do so (Worth 1982b). The private sector was to contribute \$185 million, on the basis of incentives to develop appropriate permanent facilities such as hotels and a convention centre (Worth 1982c). The state government stated it would establish a statutory authority to develop and manage the exposition, freeze land prices in the area and provide for compulsory acquisition of property. The Queensland members were adamant that BIE registration would have to take place at the next BIE meeting, scheduled for 6 December 1982, with any further delays being unacceptable. Indeed, it was stressed that plans would be cancelled if the Commonwealth was not prepared to make the necessary application to BIE during the coming week. This was expected to lead to a BIE assessment team visit in March 1983, and a final BIE decision in mid-1983. At the same time the Queensland government would undertake a detailed feasibility study at a cost of \$0.5 million, before making a final commitment to proceed (Worth 1982d).

Whilst rapid action was necessary if BIE approval was to be gained, it seems that at least a part of the reason for Queensland's urgency was a desire to ensure that the proposal would be submitted and approved before Malcolm Fraser returned to take up his position as Prime Minister (Moore 1988).

Despite the Commonwealth's repeated statements that it would not bear any financial responsibility, Deputy Premier Edwards made it clear that the state government would be requesting:

- transfer to the site at no cost to Queensland of a parcel of Commonwealth land — valued in 1981 at \$6.529 million;
- erection of a Commonwealth pavilion of appropriate stature — cost unknown, but in the vicinity of \$20-30 million at current prices;
- costs of a Commissioner-General for the Expo (which the host nation must provide under BIE rules) — up to \$1 million pa for up to 5 years;
- other costs (guests of government) and incidentals.

Edwards also foreshadowed a request for direct financial assistance (amount unspecified) for the staging of Expo, emphasising the Commonwealth's earlier willingness to provide \$100 million for the staging of major expos in Sydney and Melbourne (Worth 1982c).

The report of the meeting from the Commonwealth officers to Anthony contained several reservations about the proposal, including:

- the potential for later pressures on the Commonwealth for financial participation (up to \$100 million in current prices),
- the lack of detail, notably in regard to private participation;
- the lack of a detailed schedule;
- problems in integrating the exposition with other Bicentennial activities (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 1982).

However, the report's general conclusion was that, despite the risk of further embarrassment, the proposal was imaginative and strongly supported by the Queensland government and by the ABA Chairman, and that it would have incidental benefits for the Commonwealth (employment stimulation, departure tax collections). Thus, in a cautiously worded sentence, it stated: "On balance, we believe that it would be difficult for the Commonwealth not to agree to make a formal application to the BIE at its forthcoming meeting" (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 1982). However, this was provided that there was a clear understanding that the Commonwealth was not committed, financially or otherwise, to the project, and that a detailed feasibility study would be undertaken before the state government made a final decision.

From the telex request of 29 November, to the telexed agreement from Anthony to Bjelke-Petersen on 3 December, only four days had elapsed. Such rapidity of decision-making contrasts markedly with the procrastination of 1981. After this time, and whilst there were certainly difficulties ahead, there was little likelihood that Queensland would not host an exposition in 1988. However, Anthony's reply made it quite clear that the Commonwealth would not enter into any financial commitment, a stance that was maintained despite repeated efforts by the Queensland government to gain loans or grants from the Commonwealth. The Hawke Government gave continuing support and approval was rapidly forthcoming from BIE in 1983.

## **Conclusions**

As indicated, the decision to mount Expo 88 was long, tortuous and uncertain, but ultimately a positive decision was reached. The precise determinants are difficult to identify and impossible to quantify, with luck playing a not inconsiderable part in the process, as Prime Minister Fraser's fortuitous absence from cabinet at the time of the November 1982 proposal demonstrates. However, the importance of luck should not be over-estimated, for the Queensland actors had already gained the sympathy of Doug Anthony, who had attended an important planning meeting in Brisbane at the time of the early 1982 proposal. Similarly, in the person of Eric Wigley and the small but effective agency of the AEO, there existed within Canberra a group firmly committed to the value of international expositions. It was surely not fortuitous that the final Queensland proposal was submitted in considerable haste at the precise moment when Prime Minister Fraser was absent, and his Deputy, Doug Anthony, was acting in his stead.

However, even this fortunate conjunction of circumstances would not have sufficed if the final proposal had not had the support of important notables within the Queensland cabinet and Queensland business (at least that segment contained in the group working with Frank Moore) and, not least, the encouragement of the success of the 1982 Brisbane Commonwealth Games. The latter provided much support for the strategy long advocated by Frank Moore and QTTC. In essence, this argued that the key to developing and maintaining a major domestic and international tourist industry in Queensland was a series of "hallmark" events. Events such as the Commonwealth and Olympic Games, and an international exposition, would focus attention on Queensland to an extent that no amount of advertising could attain, if they could be achieved. In addition, the decaying South Brisbane and Kangaroo Point sites had long been the focus of redevelopment efforts, to this time largely unsuccessful, of the Coordinator-General's office, which had responsibility for major development projects within Queensland. The prospect of an international exposition on the site as a catalyst for major redevelopments in these areas was attractive. With this perspective, it is not surprising that Sydney Schubert, Coordinator-General, played a key role in developing the Expo 88 proposal, and brought to bear the influence of the state's most senior public servant.

On a final note, it is surprising that the proposal went ahead on the basis of such slender evidence as to its financial and economic prospects, especially the latter. At the end of 1982 no detailed financial or economic feasibility studies had been undertaken that compared with the intensive studies for the proposed Darling Harbour exposition, despite the magnitude of expenditure that would be entailed either from the public or private purses. Such studies were undertaken in 1983, and updated in 1984 and successive years. They provided figures which increasingly suggested that an exposition was a very high risk venture, and led to renewed and intensive pressure from the Queensland Government for financial support from the Commonwealth and Brisbane City Council. But that is another story.

NOTE: 1. John Reid was appointed to the BESBRA Board after his resignation as Chairman of ABA.

#### REFERENCES:

- Andrews, M. 1981. "\$100 Million Trade Fair Looks Set for Queensland", *The Australian*, 11 August.
- Armstrong, D. 1981a. Telex from Armstrong to Secretary, Department of Home Affairs and Environment, in ABA files, dated 30 July. (Armstrong was the General Manager of ABA at this time.)
- 1981b. Note for File in ABA files, dated 12 November. Armstrong also reported that Prime Minister Fraser was "dismayed" to learn that Ellicot has encouraged Reid to approach the Queensland government, and denied he'd ever encouraged Reid to approach Premier Bjelke-Petersen on the matter. Whilst Fraser may not have encouraged Reid, the latter did meet with Fraser at the end of February 1981, and seems to have gained at least qualified approval for efforts to gain a specialised exposition (see a File Note by M. Worth in ABA files, dated 19 March 1981).
- 1981c. Note for File in ABA files, dated 20 August.
- 1981d. Note for File by Armstrong, in ABA files, dated 12 November.
- ABA (Australian Bicentennial Authority) 1981. File Note unsigned, dated 9 November, possibly by Armstrong.
- Bjelke-Petersen, J. 1981a. Telex from the Premier to Prime Minister Fraser, dated 6 November, referring to the exposition proposal in the Premier's letter of 28 September 1981, in ABA files.
- 1981b. Telex to Prime Minister Fraser, sent to John Reid of ABA, in ABA files, dated 6 November.
- 1982a. Letter to Prime Minister Fraser, dated 18 April.
- 1982b. Telex to Acting Prime Minister Doug Anthony, dated 29 November.
- BIE (Bureau for International Expositions) 1928. Convention Relating to International Expositions.
- Defrene, M. 1988. Secretary-General of BIE, in an interview with author on 30 October.
- Department of Finance (Commonwealth) 1981. Financial Analysis of Queensland Proposal for a Special Exposition in Brisbane in 1988, ABA files.
- Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 1982. Memo to Acting Prime Minister Anthony, in ABA files, dated 8 December.
- Edwards, L. 1981. Letter from Deputy Premier Edwards to Prime Minister Fraser, 17 June, in which Edwards requested Fraser's support for an exposition in Queensland.
- Fraser, M. 1981. Media Release dated 6 December.
- 1982. Letter to Premier Bjelke-Petersen, dated 13 November.
- Maccormick, F. 1976. Letter to Worth, dated 6 January.
- 1988a. Interview with author in July.
- 1988b. Copies of relevant letters in Maccormick's files.
- Maher, R. 1988. Former Deputy-General Manager of ABA. in an interview with author, 20 July.
- Moore, Sir Francis 1988. Interview with author, July.
- Reid, J. 1981a. Note from Reid to General Manager Armstrong. 7 May, ABA files.
- 1981b. Note to Board Members, indicating likely French competition for an exposition. ABA files, dated 12 October.
- 1982. Note for File of a meeting with Premier Bjelke-Petersen, in ABA files, dated 13 November.
- Robertson, C. 1988. Former Secretary of the Chamber, in an interview with author, 16 September.
- Wigley, E. 1978. File Note in Maccormick's files, summarising developments to November 1978.
- Wigley, E. & Worth, W. 1988. Interview with author, 19 July.
- World Expo 88 1984. "Expo 88 Background Notes", p.1.
- Worth, W. 1981a. File Note in ABA files, dated 24 June.
- 1981b. Memo, Worth to John Reid, ABA files, dated 13 October.
- 1982a. File Notes in ABA files, dated 3 and 8 November.
- 1982b. File Note in ABA files, dated 3 December.
- 1982c. File Note in ABA files, dated 8 December.
- 1982d. File Note in ABA files, in which it is noted that private sector reaction to the proposal had not at that time been tested nor had Brisbane City Council been consulted.