

Olympic Games Costs, Local Revenues and Payback: Melbourne 1956, Sydney 2000 and Brisbane 2032

Executive summary

The most important finding is that the familiar question — **“How long did the state take to pay the Olympics off?”** — does not have a simple historical answer for Melbourne or Sydney, and it cannot yet be answered for Brisbane. None of the three Games was financed as one identifiable “Olympic mortgage” with a documented final repayment date. Capital assets, organising-committee operations, transport works, housing, private investment and local-government spending were financed through different channels. Treating total tourism spending or business turnover as if it were government revenue would produce a seriously misleading “payback period.” The economic literature explicitly warns against doing that. ¹

For **Melbourne 1956**, a contemporaneous estimate attributed about **£850,000** to the core sporting-venue works: approximately **£300,000 for making the MCG Olympic-ready, £350,000 for the Olympic swimming stadium and about £200,000 for the other works, including the cycling track**. The funding formula reported at the time was 50% Commonwealth, 25% Victorian Government and 25% City of Melbourne. Separately, roughly **£2 million of Commonwealth housing finance** funded the Heidelberg Olympic Village, which was deliberately designed to become public housing after the Games. ² There is therefore **no defensible historical “Victoria paid it off in X years” figure**. Much of the money was grant/contribution funding rather than a single state debt, while the largest housing asset was retained for post-Games public use.

For **Sydney 2000**, the fiscal record is much better, but it still does not support a neat debt-payoff date. NSW parliamentary and audit records show that the Games budget did not initially capture every government cost, while later statutory reporting estimated **\$653 million in additional NSW tax revenue attributable to Games-related economic activity through March 2002**. Contemporary NSW reporting placed the net taxpayer construction burden in the neighbourhood of **\$1.3–1.4 billion**, depending on scope and accounting date. ³ On that narrow comparison, roughly **half of the public venue/infrastructure cost had been offset by identifiable incremental state tax receipts by 2002**, but there is no subsequent official statement saying, for example, “the Sydney Olympics were fully repaid in 2012.” Retrospective economic modelling also warns that the large gross benefits forecast before the Games were overstated if resource displacement, public inputs and optimistic tourism assumptions are ignored. ⁴

For **Brisbane 2032**, the present official venue envelope is **\$7.1 billion**, with the Australian Government contributing up to **\$3.435 billion** and Queensland **\$3.665 billion**. Queensland has separately set aside **\$3.5 billion for four athlete villages**, to be delivered in partnership with the private sector. Two Gold Coast projects — the new arena and hockey-centre upgrade — sit outside the \$7.1 billion program and are to be funded by the City of Gold Coast. ⁵ Consequently, a reasonable current answer to “what is Queensland itself committing?” is **at least \$3.665 billion for Games venues and up to another \$3.5 billion provision**

for villages — roughly \$7.165 billion of identified State commitments before deciding how much transport, policing, security, public-domain works and other programs should be attributed to the Games. It would be wrong simply to call the whole \$7.165 billion a net Olympic loss because much of it purchases long-lived assets.

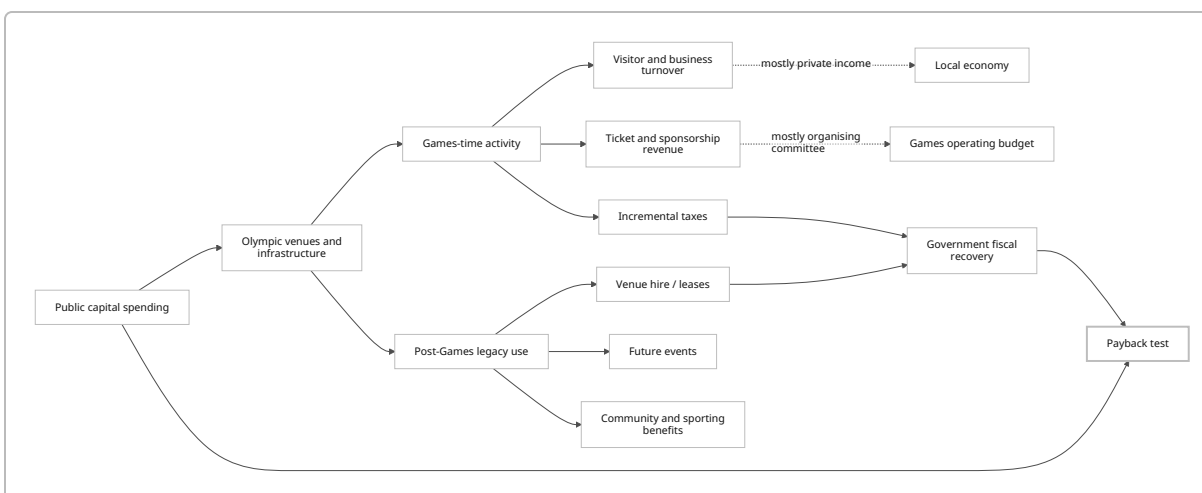
The 63,000-seat **Brisbane Stadium at Victoria Park is now approximately a \$3.8 billion project** within the \$7.1 billion venue envelope. GIICA states that the stadium will remain a major AFL, cricket, concert and events venue after 2032. ⁶ The National Aquatic Centre is the largest remaining cost uncertainty: an earlier public figure was about **\$650 million**, but by 2026 its design was being revisited because emerging costs were substantially higher. ⁷

The table below gives the most defensible high-level comparison. Amounts are **nominal money of the time** and therefore should not be read as an inflation-adjusted ranking.

Games	Core venue/ public- infrastructure measure	Host-state exposure	Identifiable fiscal recovery	Best answer on “payback”
Melbourne 1956	~£0.85m core sporting works; Heidelberg Village ~£2m separately	Approx. £0.21m Victorian share of £0.85m under reported 25% formula; village largely Commonwealth- financed	No comprehensive state/local incremental-tax series found	No documented Olympic debt payoff date. Venue contributions were not one amortising state loan; housing became a public asset. ⁸
Sydney 2000	Roughly \$1.3– 1.4bn net NSW construction burden under final-era accounting	Predominantly NSW; substantial private investment in the two large indoor/outdoor stadium projects	\$653m extra NSW tax revenue identified through Mar. 2002	About 50% fiscal recovery by 2002 on a narrow construction- vs-tax comparison; no official full-payback year can be established. ⁹
Brisbane 2032	\$7.1bn official venue program	\$3.665bn Queensland + \$3.435bn Commonwealth	Future and uncertain	Not yet repayable/ calculable. A 30-year real fiscal payback on Qld’s venue share alone would require about \$212m/year of net incremental public cash flow after the Games under this report’s 4% real discount assumption. ¹⁰

Games	Core venue/ public- infrastructure measure	Host-state exposure	Identifiable fiscal recovery	Best answer on “payback”
Brisbane 2032 including State village provision	\$7.1bn venues + \$3.5bn Qld village provision, before transport attribution	Up to ~\$7.165bn identified Qld exposure across those two categories	Future and uncertain	At 4% real over 30 years, roughly \$414m/ year of net incremental state cash flow would be needed to repay \$7.165bn. The publicly promoted economic-benefit figures are not equivalent to that cash flow. ¹¹

A useful way to visualize why the headline “economic boost ÷ construction cost = payback” calculation is invalid is:



Only the cash flows reaching **government fiscal recovery** should normally be used in a fiscal payback calculation. Gross restaurant sales, hotel turnover, extra household income, increased gross state product and the social value of a swimming pool are benefits, but they are not dollars available to extinguish state debt.

Methodology, data sources and assumptions

This report gives priority to Olympic official reports, state-government and parliamentary material, audit institutions and contemporary government planning. For Melbourne, the central archival source is the Organising Committee's official report, which contains dedicated finance and sporting-arena chapters; LA84 has digitised the report page by page. ¹² Because surviving 1956 records do not provide a modern

project-by-project cost ledger, the Melbourne venue figures below necessarily combine the published £850,000 program breakdown with physical scope and venue type.

Sydney is better documented. The NSW Audit Office reviewed the Games estimates before 2000 and warned that the Olympic Coordination Authority's Games Budget did not by itself present the total government cost. Later NSW reporting sought to consolidate the government's contribution, including the \$653 million tax-revenue effect. ¹³ The retrospective academic literature is used as a check against treating pre-Games economic-impact forecasts as realised fiscal benefits. ⁴

For Brisbane, the most important source is now the **Queensland Audit Office's 2025 major-project report**, which states that the Delivery Plan provides for eight new venues and upgrades to 11 existing venues, with **17 projects in the \$7.1 billion jointly funded program** and two Gold Coast venues outside it. The QAO also records the \$3.5 billion State provision for four athlete villages. ¹⁰ GIICA's live venue pages and 2026 updates are used where plans have advanced since the 2025 budget. ¹⁴

What “payback” means here

Three different concepts have to be kept separate:

Fiscal payback is the number of years until cumulative incremental public cash receipts — taxes, public-venue operating surpluses, leases, asset sales and similar receipts — equal the public investment.

Economic payback asks whether the economy as a whole receives benefits greater than resource costs. This may include wages, business profits, tourism exports and productivity effects. It is not the same as paying back Treasury.

Social/legacy return includes things such as community sports access, housing, urban renewal, public amenity, health and international profile. These benefits can be real and important even though they do not create a cash payback.

This distinction matters particularly for Brisbane. The Queensland Government's earlier value-proposition work projected billions of dollars of economic benefit, export opportunity and tourist spending and an organising-committee budget of about \$4.45 billion funded through IOC support and commercial sources rather than Queensland taxpayers. ¹⁵ Brisbane City Council continues to state that Games operations are intended to be funded through ticket sales, sponsorships and corporate partnerships, while governments fund the required infrastructure. ¹⁶

Estimation conventions

The tables use four confidence levels:

Code	Meaning
A	Direct official/audited figure or current formal government funding envelope
B	Contemporary government/official figure, but program-level rather than audited venue ledger

Code	Meaning
C	Independently corroborated project figure or constrained reconstruction
D	Research estimate based on venue size, construction scope, Games use and known program total

For venue operating costs, none of the three Games publishes the sort of final venue P&L requested by the question. Rather than pretend such accounts exist, the tables either identify the cost as **not separately disclosed** or give an explicit **allocation proxy**. Those proxies should not be mistaken for historical accounting data.

For future Brisbane projects for which government has not released a final project budget, I use ranges constrained by the fixed **\$7.1 billion overall venue envelope**. A range is therefore an estimate of likely allocation within the program, not a claim that a contract has been signed at that amount.

For payback sensitivity calculations I use an illustrative **4% real discount rate** and show undiscounted results as well. The purpose is not to claim that 4% is the official Treasury hurdle rate; it provides a common long-term benchmark across scenarios.

Melbourne 1956

Games-level assessment

Melbourne's Olympic construction program was much smaller and more reuse-oriented than a modern Olympics. The IOC's retrospective venue inventory identifies **16 competition venues across Melbourne and Stockholm, with 11 existing venues, one temporary venue and four new venues**.¹⁷ Within Victoria, the Games were centred on existing assets such as the MCG, Royal Exhibition Building, St Kilda Town Hall, Port Phillip Bay and military shooting facilities, supplemented by the new Olympic Park facilities and works at Lake Wendouree in Ballarat.¹⁸



The IOC's venue map above illustrates just how concentrated most Melbourne events were around the inner city, with Ballarat the principal regional exception. ¹⁷

The best contemporary program-level cost benchmark I found is Premier John Cain's reported **£850,000 sporting-venue program**: £300,000 for the MCG, £350,000 for the Olympic swimming pool, and £200,000 for remaining works including cycling. The reported intergovernmental split was Commonwealth 50%, Victoria 25% and City of Melbourne 25%. ¹⁹

That £850,000 should **not** be confused with the entire economic cost of hosting the Games. It excludes, among other things, much of the organising activity and the separately financed Olympic Village. Contemporary reporting describes the roughly 780 permanent Village dwellings as being met from **£2 million of Commonwealth housing finance to Victoria**; the Village was subsequently transferred into the public-housing system. ²⁰ PROV records describe 788 houses intended to accommodate about 6,000 athletes and officials. ²¹

Melbourne venue-by-venue reconstruction

The capital ranges below for venues other than the MCG and pool are constrained so that their midpoints are broadly consistent with the contemporary **~£200,000 "other works" envelope**. They are not archival invoices.

Venue	1956 municipality / current LGA	Capital construction or upgrade	Venue operating cost allocation	Funding	Incremental local revenue / legacy	Net local fiscal impact
Melbourne Cricket Ground	Melbourne / City of Melbourne	~£300k, B	~£40–70k proxy, D	Cth/Vic/City program formula; MCG Trust asset	Major ticket venue; long-lived stadium upgrade, but ticket revenue did not simply accrue to council	No complete municipal P&L found
Olympic Swimming & Diving Stadium	Melbourne / City of Melbourne	~£350k, B	~£20–35k, D	Cth/Vic/City program formula	Long post-Games sports/entertainment use	No segregated council revenue series
Olympic Park Stadium	Melbourne / City of Melbourne	£45–65k, D	£10–20k, D	Same program; exact split unavailable	Used for football and later athletics/sport before redevelopment	Revenue not reconstructible

Venue	1956 municipality / current LGA	Capital construction or upgrade	Venue operating cost allocation	Funding	Incremental local revenue / legacy	Net local fiscal impact
Olympic Park Velodrome	Melbourne / City of Melbourne	£35–55k, D	£8–15k, D	Same program	Track-cycling legacy until later demolition	N/D
Olympic Hockey Field	Melbourne / City of Melbourne	£20–35k, D	£8–15k, D	Same program	Post-Games sporting use; later removed	N/D
Royal Exhibition Building	Melbourne / City of Melbourne	£20–30k, D , principally Olympic fit-out/annexe	£10–20k, D	Public/Olympic program	Existing major civic venue; special basketball annexe later demolished	Olympic incremental cash return not segregated
West Melbourne Stadium	Melbourne / City of Melbourne	£5–10k, D , largely fit-out	£5–10k, D	Existing/ private-public venue mix	Gymnastics; existing facility rather than Olympic-build asset	Minimal attributable public investment
St Kilda Town Hall	St Kilda / City of Port Phillip	£3–8k, D	£3–6k, D	Local/public overlay	Fencing; town hall remained civic asset	Likely small; records insufficient
Lake Wendouree	Ballarat / City of Ballarat	£10–20k, D	£10–20k, D	State/local/ Olympic works; exact split not found	Rowing and canoeing legacy continues; Lake remains a rowing venue	Local event revenue not recorded separately
Broadmeadows road course	Broadmeadows / City of Hume	£2–5k, D	£3–6k, D	Mainly Games overlay	Temporary road-cycling use	Negligible enduring Games asset
Oaklands Hunt Club	Broadmeadows / Hume	£2–5k, D	£3–6k, D	Existing venue/ overlay	Modern pentathlon	No identifiable local capital recovery stream

Venue	1956 municipality / current LGA	Capital construction or upgrade	Venue operating cost allocation	Funding	Incremental local revenue / legacy	Net local fiscal impact
Williamstown rifle range	Williamstown / Hobsons Bay	£5–10k, D	£2–5k, D	Defence/state/ Games mix	Shooting/ pentathlon use	No municipal fiscal series
RAAF Laverton	Laverton / Hobsons Bay	£3–8k, D	£2–5k, D	Commonwealth defence facility	Existing military asset	No meaningful council capital exposure identified
Port Phillip Bay sailing course	Multiple bayside LGAs	£3–8k, D , principally temporary equipment	£8–15k, D	Organising/ Games operations	Sailing visitor/ activity benefit, little permanent venue capital	No separable municipal figure

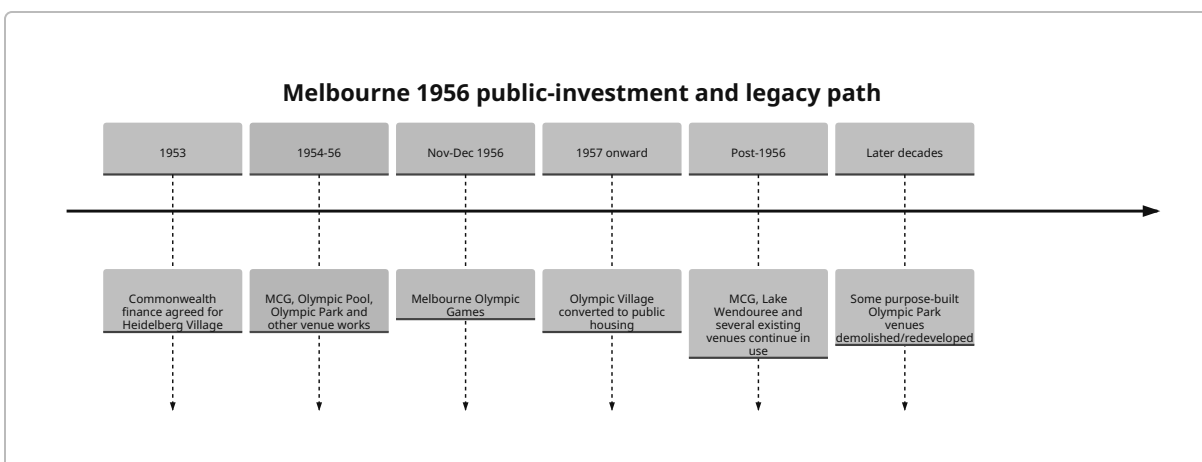
Venue identification and legacy status are based principally on the official/IOC inventory and archival venue records. ²² The Royal Exhibition Building's special Games annexe was subsequently demolished, which is why I do not assign it a continuing capital recovery stream. ²³

Melbourne town-level fiscal view

Town / municipality	Approximate Games-specific public capital exposure	Games-related private turnover/ revenue evidence	Local-government fiscal result	Payback assessment
City of Melbourne	Under the reported formula, ~£212.5k City contribution to the £850k sporting program at the program level , although expenditure was not literally apportioned venue-by-venue this way	Large visitor/ticket activity, but no reliable municipality-level incremental-revenue account survives in the sources reviewed	Unknown ; organiser receipts, business turnover and council revenue cannot be conflated	No documented payoff date
Victoria/ statewide	Approx. £212.5k under the same 25% sporting-program formula; other departmental/ operating inputs additional	No robust Games-attributable state-tax series identified	Unknown	No evidence of a dedicated Olympic debt amortisation period

Town / municipality	Approximate Games-specific public capital exposure	Games-related private turnover/ revenue evidence	Local-government fiscal result	Payback assessment
Heidelberg / then City of Heidelberg	Olympic Village ~£2m, substantially Commonwealth housing finance rather than municipal finance	Post-Games housing asset rather than event tourism return	Municipal "loss" is the wrong accounting frame; housing transferred to public use	Not a conventional Olympic payback asset
Ballarat	Likely low tens of thousands of pounds, D	Crowds/business activity unquestionably occurred, but no defensible local incremental-turnover series located	Cannot quantify	Unknown; likely low fiscal exposure
Broadmeadows	Very small overlay expenditure	No local impact study found	Likely immaterial	N/A
Williamstown/ Laverton	Mainly existing Commonwealth facilities	No local impact study found	Limited municipal exposure	N/A

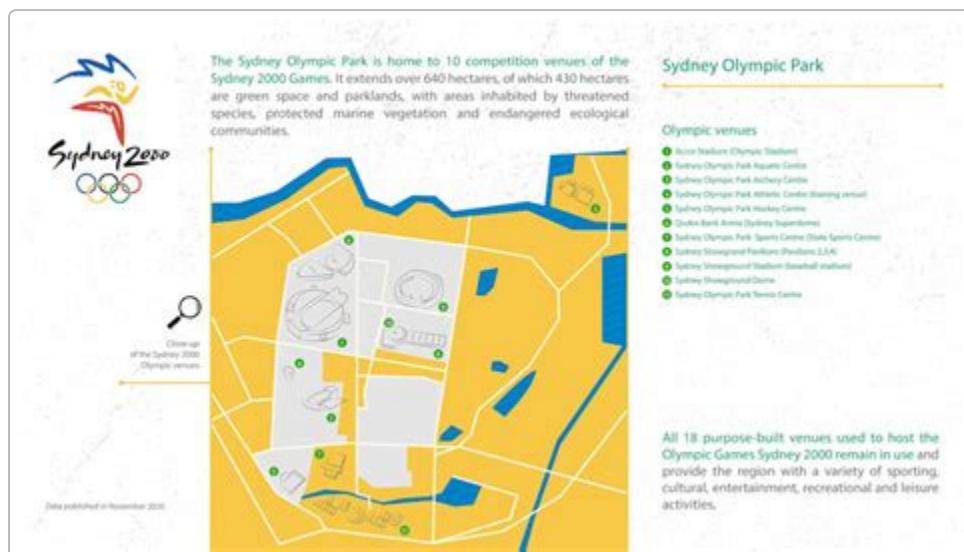
The correct conclusion for Melbourne is therefore **not "Victoria took N years to pay off 1956."** The public funding arrangement mixed federal, state and municipal contributions, the Village was effectively a housing-investment project as well as an Olympic project, and the Games did not leave a single identifiable Victorian Olympic debt whose discharge date can be found in the historical accounts. The official report itself separates finance and venue provision rather than presenting the event as one debt instrument. ¹²



Sydney 2000

Games-level assessment

Sydney was financially and physically much larger than Melbourne. The Games accelerated the transformation of the former Homebush industrial area into Sydney Olympic Park and produced a network of dedicated venues from Bankstown and Blacktown to Penrith, Horsley Park and Cecil Park. Sydney Olympic Park Authority describes winning the Games as having fast-tracked the next stage of development of the Homebush area, including Olympic venues, public spaces and parklands. ²⁴



The key fiscal caution comes from the NSW Audit Office: the Olympic Coordination Authority's budget was not synonymous with the **whole-of-government cost**, which is one reason different legitimate Sydney cost numbers appear in later debate. ²⁵ Parliamentary debate in 1996 put the expected **net taxpayer construction cost at around \$1.4 billion**, with government meeting most of the construction bill while attempting to use private participation for the two major stadium projects. ²⁶

Post-Games statutory reporting identified **\$653 million of additional NSW tax revenue** associated with the Games between 1994 and March 2002. ²⁷ This is the closest thing in the official record to a genuine fiscal "repayment" stream; it is much more appropriate than using total tourist expenditure.

Sydney venue-by-venue reconstruction

The "operating allocation" below is a modelling allocation, not SOCOG's venue ledger. It allocates only a portion of Games operations to the competition venues according to capacity, event-days, temporary overlay and logistical complexity; central administration, security, ceremonies outside the venue component, media operations and transport are not fully allocated.

Venue	Town/LGA	Capital construction/upgrade	Allocated Games operating cost proxy	Principal funding	Attributable local revenue / legacy	Net fiscal impact to local government	Local payroll
Stadium Australia	Homebush Bay; then Auburn / now Parramatta	~\$650–700m, C, largely private-development project	\$90–130m, D	Private consortium + substantial state enabling works/ guarantees	Tickets flowed primarily through Games/venue structures; very large continuing event legacy	Council not bearer of full stadium capital	N/A at level; p state p econom separa
Sydney SuperDome	Homebush Bay / Parramatta	~\$180–220m, C	\$35–50m, D	Predominantly private project with public precinct support	Continuing arena/event use	Limited direct municipal capex	N/A/un
Sydney International Aquatic Centre	Homebush Bay / Parramatta	~\$65m, C	\$45–65m, D	NSW/public	Major community and competition legacy; construction figure widely reported as \$65m	State rather than council bears principal fiscal exposure	No ven specific payoff docum
Sydney International Athletic Centre	Homebush Bay / Parramatta	\$25–35m, D	\$10–15m, D	NSW	Continues as athletics/ community venue	State exposure	N/D
Sydney International Hockey Centre	Homebush Bay / Parramatta	\$15.5m, C	\$15–25m, D	NSW	Long-term hockey venue	State exposure	N/D
NSW Tennis Centre	Homebush Bay / Parramatta	\$40–50m, C	\$20–30m, D	NSW/public	10,000-plus-seat centre court and 15 outdoor courts created lasting tennis capacity	State rather than council	N/D

Venue	Town/LGA	Capital construction/ upgrade	Allocated Games operating cost proxy	Principal funding	Attributable local revenue / legacy	Net fiscal impact to local government	Local payback
Sydney International Archery Centre	Homebush Bay / Parramatta	\$3–6m, D	\$5–10m, D	NSW	Continuing elite/ community archery use	Low municipal exposure	N/D
State Sports Centre	Homebush Bay / Parramatta	\$10–20m upgrade, D	\$10–20m, D	NSW	Existing facility gained Olympic improvements	State exposure	N/D
Sydney Showground halls	Homebush Bay / Parramatta	\$120–180m attributable development, D	\$25–40m, D	NSW/public precinct development	Continuing exhibition/ event use	State asset/ precinct benefit	N/D
Dunc Gray Velodrome	Bass Hill / Bankstown, now Canterbury-Bankstown	\$42m, C	\$15–25m, D	NSW Government	Long-term cycling use but significant later maintenance/ viability issues	Council subsequently carried management obligations rather than original capital	No demonstrated positive fiscal p
Blacktown Olympic Centre	Blacktown	\$30–45m, D	\$20–30m, D	NSW/local support	Baseball/ softball and community-sport legacy	Exact council contribution not isolated	N/D
Sydney International Equestrian Centre	Horsley Park / Fairfield	~\$37m, C	\$20–30m, D	NSW	Continuing equestrian events/ training	State asset	N/D
Sydney International Shooting Centre	Cecil Park / Liverpool	\$30–40m, D	\$10–20m, D	NSW	Continuing elite shooting venue	State asset	N/D

Venue	Town/LGA	Capital construction/ upgrade	Allocated Games operating cost proxy	Principal funding	Attributable local revenue / legacy	Net fiscal impact to local government	Local payback
Sydney International Regatta Centre	Penrith	~\$40m, C	\$20–30m, D	NSW / Penrith Lakes development context	Continuing rowing/ canoe/events asset; reported to attract substantial ongoing visitation	State capital; local economy receives event activity	No official fiscal-payback calculation
Penrith Whitewater Stadium	Penrith	~\$6–8m, C	\$8–15m, D	NSW + local contribution	Highly specialised but enduring canoe-slalom/ event venue	Council contribution relatively small compared with major venues	Potential of the more plausible payback but no audited Games attributable return
Ryde Aquatic Leisure Centre	Ryde	~\$20–30m, D	\$5–10m, D	Local/state mix	Major community-aquatic legacy	Council/ public asset with ongoing operating costs and income	Unknown community service not pure commercial investment
Bondi Beach temporary venue	Waverley	\$4–8m temporary works, D	\$10–20m, D	SOCOG/state/ temporary overlay	Strong event exposure and visitor spending; little permanent sporting capital	Limited enduring capital burden	N/A in conventional capital
Sydney Harbour / sailing	Sydney/ Woollahra	<\$5m permanent attributable, D	\$10–20m, D	Games operating/ temporary	Visitor and broadcast exposure rather than permanent venue return	Minimal Games-specific council capital	N/A

Venue	Town/LGA	Capital construction/upgrade	Allocated Games operating cost proxy	Principal funding	Attributable local revenue / legacy	Net fiscal impact to local government	Local payback
Centennial Park / road events	Sydney/ Woollahra/ Randwick vicinity	<\$5m permanent, D	\$5–10m, D	Temporary/ state	Event exposure; existing park asset	Small direct capital exposure	N/A
Darling Harbour competition venues	City of Sydney	\$5–15m Olympic overlay, D	\$25–40m, D	SOCOG/state; existing convention/ exhibition infrastructure	Concentrated visitor/ business activity	Existing city precinct rather than Olympic-built municipal asset	N/A/N.
Sydney Football Stadium	City of Sydney	\$2–5m Olympic-specific overlay, D	\$8–15m, D	Existing state stadium	Existing venue, so Olympic capital increment modest	No useful Games-specific payback denominator	N/A
Newcastle football venue	Newcastle	\$2–5m Olympic overlay, D	\$5–10m, D	Existing venue/state/ local	Games visitor activity and exposure	Small attributable capital	Likely s only ov counte not empiric docum

The dedicated-venue list is consistent with the official Olympic venue record and the Museum of History NSW's account of the Homebush construction program. ²⁸ Dunc Gray's **\$42 million** cost is independently reported by Australian cycling/leisure sources, while contemporaneous technical literature puts the Regatta Centre at about **\$40 million**. ²⁹ The Olympic Coordination Authority history records the Hockey Centre as a **\$15.5 million** project. ³⁰ The \$65 million Aquatic Centre figure is also reported in retrospective venue reporting. ³¹

A critical legacy qualification is that “still in use” does not mean “financially paid back.” Dunc Gray, for example, was developed by NSW for \$42 million but decades later faced major maintenance and management concerns. ³² Academic work on Sydney's principal privately developed stadiums similarly found that post-Games revenues fell short of optimistic expectations because they competed with existing Sydney venues for a finite pool of major events. ³³

Sydney town-by-town assessment

There is no audited dataset allocating Olympic-induced hotel turnover, restaurant spending, ticket revenue and tax collections to each LGA. The “local activity” ranges below are therefore deliberately broad **order-of-**

magnitude allocations, not official economic-impact findings. They are intended to indicate where Games-generated spending was concentrated, not to prove fiscal repayment.

Town/LGA	Principal Olympic assets	Approx. Games/early-legacy local commercial activity attributable to Games	Local public investment	Net municipal fiscal position	Payback
Homebush/Auburn, now Parramatta	Main stadium, SuperDome, Aquatic, Athletics, Hockey, Tennis, Archery, Showground	~\$0.4–0.8bn, D broad business/activity proxy	Council share small relative to NSW/private capital	Positive local commerce, but state carried most capital and ticket receipts were not council revenue	Municipal payback not a meaningful metric
City of Sydney	Darling Harbour, harbour events, SFS and CBD accommodation/visitor economy	~\$0.6–1.0bn, D	Mainly existing assets/temporary overlay	Likely strong business turnover; direct city fiscal increment unknown	N/D
Penrith	Regatta + Whitewater	~\$40–100m, D event and legacy activity	Material but comparatively small local role	Stronger case for durable local sporting/tourism benefit	Unknown; probably substantially better than a one-off temporary venue
Canterbury-Bankstown	Dunc Gray	~\$15–40m, D	Original capital predominantly NSW; council later management exposure	Ongoing cost burden weakens fiscal-return case	No demonstrated cash payback

Town/LGA	Principal Olympic assets	Approx. Games/early-legacy local commercial activity attributable to Games	Local public investment	Net municipal fiscal position	Payback
Blacktown	Baseball/softball complex	~\$20-50m, D	State/local mix	Community asset value exceeds measurable council cash return	N/D
Fairfield	Equestrian Centre	~\$15-40m, D	Mainly state	Local commercial benefit, limited council capital	N/A/N.D.
Liverpool	Shooting Centre	~\$10-30m, D	Mainly state	Limited direct local fiscal exposure	N/A/N.D.
Ryde	Aquatic Leisure Centre	~\$10-25m, D	Significant public/local asset	Operating revenue offsets costs but community service dominates economics	N/D
Waverley/Bondi	Temporary beach venue	~\$20-50m, D event-period visitor turnover	Temporary works	Strong business exposure with little permanent Olympic asset cost	Conventional venue-payback test not useful

Town/LGA	Principal Olympic assets	Approx. Games/early-legacy local commercial activity attributable to Games	Local public investment	Net municipal fiscal position	Payback
Newcastle	Football	~\$10-30m, D	Modest Games-specific upgrade	Likely positive event-period commercial effect	N/D

The wider tourism environment was substantial: before the Games, official forecasting expected the Olympic promotional effect to generate approximately **1.5 million additional international tourists to Australia between 1998 and 2004**. That was a forecast rather than a subsequent audited count, which is why it is not booked directly as realised revenue in these tables. ³⁴

Did NSW actually “pay Sydney 2000 off”?

Using the cleanest comparable figures available:

Identified incremental NSW tax revenue by 2002 = \$653m

Against a roughly \$1.3–1.4 billion public construction burden, that implies a **nominal fiscal recovery of around 47–50% by early 2002**, depending on which final cost boundary is chosen. ⁹

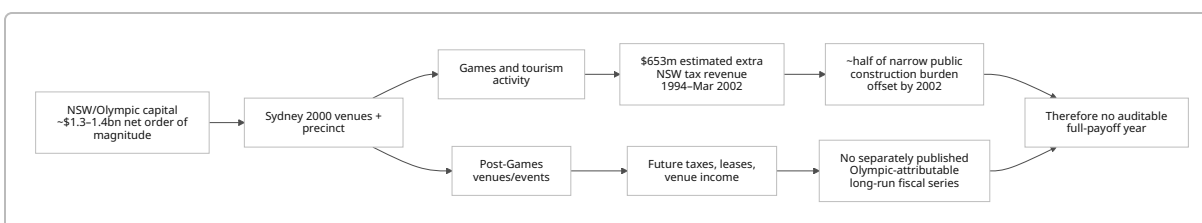
It would nevertheless be wrong to say “Sydney had half the debt left and repaid it in another N years,” because the \$653 million was a modelled/estimated revenue effect across the economy, not a dedicated Olympic loan repayment fund, and the post-2002 Olympic-attributable tax stream was not separately tracked indefinitely.

An illustrative sensitivity makes the uncertainty clear. Suppose about **\$605 million** remained to be fiscally recovered after 2002 under a narrow \$1.258 billion-type capital-cost benchmark. The following would be required:

Continuing real incremental NSW fiscal return after 2002	Undiscounted time to recover ~\$605m	4% real discounted payback
\$20m/year	~30 years	No finite payback if return remains below financing/opportunity cost threshold
\$25m/year	~24 years	~88 years

Continuing real incremental NSW fiscal return after 2002	Undiscounted time to recover ~\$605m	4% real discounted payback
\$35m/year	~17 years	~30 years
\$50m/year	~12 years	~17 years
\$75m/year	~8 years	~10 years

Those are **scenarios, not historical claims**. They show why an official claim that Sydney was “paid off by 2010” or “paid off by 2020” cannot be substantiated without a post-2002 stream of genuinely incremental NSW fiscal receipts.



This caution is supported by later CGE research: retrospective modelling specifically sought to correct the overstatement that results when public inputs are treated as free, tourism demand is overestimated or factor supply is assumed too elastic. ⁴

Brisbane 2032

What Queensland is currently committed to spend

As of **1 October 2026**, the most reliable core number remains the **\$7.1 billion Games Venue Infrastructure Program**. Queensland Audit Office records the Commonwealth share at up to **\$3.435 billion** and Queensland's share at **\$3.665 billion**. ¹⁰ The official 2026 Budget continues to work inside that \$7.1 billion venue funding provision. ³⁵

The venue program is not the whole host-government commitment. Queensland has separately provided a **\$3.5 billion life-of-program provision for athlete villages**, with Brisbane, Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast and Rockhampton villages planned. ¹⁰ Some of that program is intended to leverage private-sector delivery and eventually produce saleable/usable housing, so treating every dollar as a permanent net Olympic loss would be inappropriate.

There are also very large transport projects being delivered before 2032. For example, Logan and Gold Coast Faster Rail is a **\$5.75 billion project funded equally by Queensland and the Commonwealth**, and other rail and road programs are being accelerated in the broader growth/Games period. ¹⁰ These should **not automatically be added to an Olympic cost total**: Queensland needed substantial transport capacity for population growth regardless of the Games, and attributing 100% of such projects to a four-week event would materially overstate the Games-specific burden.

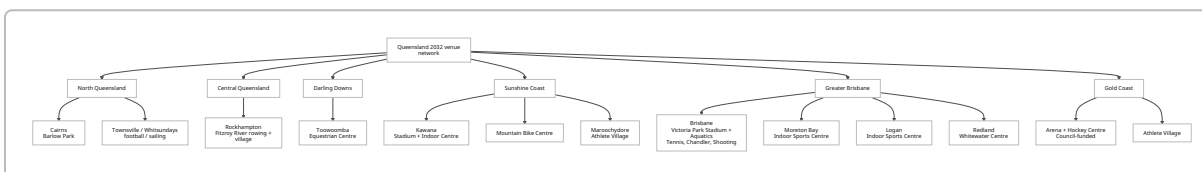
The sensible reporting framework is consequently:

Brisbane 2032 expenditure layer	Current amount	Queensland exposure	Should all of it be called "Olympic cost"?
Official 17-venue infrastructure program	\$7.1bn	\$3.665bn	Yes, this is the cleanest Games-venue measure. ¹⁰
Four athlete villages	\$3.5bn State provision	Up to \$3.5bn provision , with private-sector partnering	Games-related, but residual housing/assets must be credited in a proper net-cost analysis. ¹⁰
Gold Coast Arena + Hockey Centre	Outside \$7.1bn	City of Gold Coast	Games-related/local legacy; exact final capital budgets still evolving. ¹⁰
Organising committee	Earlier estimate ~ \$4.45bn	Intended to be covered by IOC/commercial/ticket revenues rather than Qld taxpayer funding	Operating cost, but not automatically State cost. ³⁶
Transport	Many billions	Mixed Commonwealth/State/local	Only the genuinely Games-induced increment should be charged to hosting.
Community sport programs	Additional	State/public	Legacy policy expenditure, not venue cost

Brisbane 2032 venue-by-venue estimate

The Queensland Audit Office publishes maps of the current new and upgraded venue program and reports that, as of its review, many Project Validation Reports were still being developed. ¹⁰ That is why an honest 2026 venue table contains ranges rather than invented contract prices.

The regional geography is approximately:



The 100 Day Review noted that the Sunshine Coast Council was contributing land for the Kawana indoor-sports project and that co-locating it with Sunshine Coast Stadium could generate operating, security and transport efficiencies. ³⁷

Venue/ project	LGA / town	Capital estimate, 2026 dollars	Allocated Games operating- cost proxy	Funding sources	Local revenue / legacy mechanism	Estimated net local fiscal effect	Local-public payback
Brisbane Stadium, Victoria Park	Brisbane City	\$3.7– 3.9bn, B/ C	\$120– 180m, D	Cth + Qld through \$7.1bn program	AFL, cricket, concerts, ceremonies/ athletics; 63,000 legacy seats, up to 70,000 concert capacity	Large State asset; BCC is not bearing full venue capital	State payba >30 yrs unle very strong net fiscal return
National Aquatic Centre, Spring Hill	Brisbane	\$0.8– 1.2bn, D; earlier public estimate ~\$650m, now under cost redesign	\$70– 110m, D	Cth + Qld	Swimming/ diving events, high- performance/ community use	State/ Federal capital; operating economics still unresolved	Likely >30 y on cash basi unless stron event/ community monetisation
Queensland Tennis Centre upgrade	Brisbane	\$120– 220m, D	\$25–40m, D	Cth + Qld	Bigger events/tennis calendar	State-level benefit	N/D
Brisbane Aquatic Centre, Chandler upgrade	Brisbane	\$80– 150m, D	\$15–30m, D	Cth + Qld	Training/ competition/ community swimming	Primarily State	N/D
Anna Meares Velodrome upgrade	Brisbane	\$30– 70m, D	\$10–20m, D	Cth + Qld	Existing elite/ community cycling facility	Incremental rather than greenfield asset	N/D
Brisbane SX BMX Centre upgrade	Brisbane	\$15– 40m, D	\$5–12m, D	Cth + Qld	Cycling legacy	Relatively small capital increment	N/D

Venue/ project	LGA / town	Capital estimate, 2026 dollars	Allocated Games operating- cost proxy	Funding sources	Local revenue / legacy mechanism	Estimated net local fiscal effect	Local-public payback
Para-sport community facility	Brisbane region	\$50– 100m, D	\$8–15m, D	Cth + Qld	Community and elite para-sport	Mostly social rather than commercial return	Fiscal payback unlikely to be meaningful metric
Brisbane International Shooting Centre upgrade	Brisbane	\$30– 70m, D	\$5–10m, D	Cth + Qld	Elite/ community shooting	Specialised asset; limited commercial base	Likely long / N.D.
Barlow Park upgrade	Cairns	\$80– 120m, D	\$10–20m, D	Cth + Qld	Athletics/ football/ events; regional tourism	Cairns receives visitor activity with limited council capital	N/A at coun level; State payback N.D.
Fitzroy River rowing infrastructure	Rockhampton	\$80– 150m, D	\$15–25m, D	Cth + Qld	Rowing/ canoe event tourism + post-Games water-sport use	Regional legacy, but commercial return uncertain	N/D
Toowoomba Equestrian Centre of Excellence	Toowoomba	\$50– 100m, D	\$10–20m, D	Cth + Qld	Equestrian competitions, training/ events	Potential recurring event economy	~20–40+ yrs under mode cash-return case; not official
Logan Indoor Sports Centre	Logan	\$120– 180m, D	\$15–25m, D	Cth + Qld; local land/in- kind contribution	Indoor sports/ community use in fast- growing area	Council benefits from asset without bearing full capex	Potentially favourable locally because capital subsidy is external
Moreton Bay Indoor Sports Centre	Moreton Bay	\$180– 250m, D	\$18–30m, D	Cth + Qld	Community indoor sports + events	External capital funding dominates	N/A/positive local transfe perspective

Venue/ project	LGA / town	Capital estimate, 2026 dollars	Allocated Games operating- cost proxy	Funding sources	Local revenue / legacy mechanism	Estimated net local fiscal effect	Local-public payback
Sunshine Coast Stadium upgrade	Sunshine Coast	\$140– 220m, D	\$18–30m, D	Cth + Qld/ local inputs	Football/ rugby/events and tourism	Council/ community gains upgraded facility	N/D
Sunshine Coast Indoor Sports Centre	Sunshine Coast	\$150– 250m, D	\$18–30m, D	Cth + Qld; Council land contribution	7,000 Games- mode capacity, community indoor sport	Local land opportunity cost versus externally funded venue	Likely favourable local transfer cash payback depends on operating surplus
Sunshine Coast Mountain Bike Centre	Sunshine Coast	\$20– 50m, D	\$5–10m, D	Cth + Qld/ local	Adventure- sport tourism and recreation	Potential tourism benefit with low relative capital	Could be comparative short, but no official revenue forecast
Redland Whitewater Centre	Redland City	\$100– 180m, D	\$10–20m, D	Cth + Qld	Canoe/slalom recreation/ events	Highly specialised; operating subsidy risk	Potentially >30 yrs / no fiscal payback if annual subsidy required
Gold Coast Arena	Gold Coast	\$350– 600m, D	\$35–60m, D	City of Gold Coast, outside \$7.1bn	Concerts, indoor sport, conventions/ events	Most direct large local- government capital exposure in current plan	~15–35+ yrs under modelled venue-cash- flow cases; potentially >30 yrs discounted
Gold Coast Hockey Centre upgrade	Gold Coast	\$40– 80m, D	\$8–15m, D	City of Gold Coast	Hockey/ community sport	Social/sport value greater than likely cash yield	Long / N.D.

The stadium's present scope and legacy uses are official GIICA policy. ³⁸ The most recent construction procurement process continues to describe it as a **63,000-seat** stadium within the \$7.1 billion program, with major construction scheduled after the design/early-works period. ³⁹

The exact ranges for the remaining venues should be read as **budget-allocation scenarios constrained by the \$7.1 billion total**, not official individual project budgets. Queensland's own audit reporting notes that venue-level Project Validation Reports were still at different stages and that total-estimated-cost disclosure evolves as projects reach procurement milestones. ¹⁰

Brisbane town-by-town benefit and payback outlook

Queensland's original Value Proposition Assessment projected **\$7.4 billion of quantifiable economic benefits, \$8.6 billion of export opportunity and \$20.2 billion of international tourist expenditure**, with the operating Games budget intended to be offset by IOC and commercial revenues. ¹⁵ More recent official messaging commonly cites an approximately **\$8.1 billion boost to Queensland's economy**, while GIICA now describes about **91,600 full-time job-years in Queensland through 2042**. ⁴⁰

Those are statewide benefit estimates, not municipal cash receipts. The following allocations are therefore modelling ranges showing where economic activity could plausibly occur.

LGA/region	Major 2032 assets/events	Modelled share of statewide Games-related economic activity	Approx. broad local economic-activity range	Local public capital position	Local fiscal payback
Brisbane	Main stadium, aquatics, tennis, Chandler venues, shooting, main village, ceremonies	~45–55%, D	~ \$3.6–4.5bn	Main venue capex funded State/Commonwealth; BCC separately carries city/transport/public-domain expenditure	Cannot infer council payback from \$3.6–4.5bn turnover; venue-specific local capex comparatively limited
Gold Coast	Arena, hockey, village, events	~10–15%, D	~ \$0.8–1.2bn	Significant direct council capital for arena/hockey	Most material municipal payback risk; likely multi-decade

LGA/region	Major 2032 assets/events	Modelled share of statewide Games-related economic activity	Approx. broad local economic-activity range	Local public capital position	Local fiscal payback
Sunshine Coast	Stadium, indoor centre, MTB, village/ events	~10–15%, D	~\$0.8–1.2bn	Land/local inputs plus large external capital subsidy	Could produce favourable local economic return; cash fiscal payback depends on operating model
Moreton Bay	Indoor sports centre	~3–5%, D	~\$0.24–0.40bn	Mainly State/ Commonwealth capital	Local cash-payback question largely inapplicable
Logan	Indoor sports centre	~3–5%, D	~\$0.24–0.40bn	Land/in-kind/local support; external construction funding	Likely favourable local transfer, but not a direct Treasury payback
Redland	Whitewater	~2–3%, D	~\$0.16–0.24bn	Mainly external capital	Long-term venue operating cost is key risk
Cairns	Barlow Park/ events	~2–4%, D	~\$0.16–0.32bn	Mainly external venue capital	Tourism benefit plausible; municipal fiscal payback not same as turnover
Rockhampton	Rowing + village	~2–3%, D	~\$0.16–0.24bn	Mainly State/ Commonwealth/ village program	Legacy and tourism case rather than near-term cash repayment

LGA/region	Major 2032 assets/events	Modelled share of statewide Games-related economic activity	Approx. broad local economic-activity range	Local public capital position	Local fiscal payback
Toowoomba	Equestrian	~2-3%, D	~\$0.16-0.24bn	Mainly external capital	Potential recurring event return; likely long payback if judged purely commercially
Townsville/Whitsundays	Sailing/football and regional activation	~3-5%, D	~\$0.24-0.40bn	Lower dedicated Games-venue capital	Possible high event-turnover-to-capital ratio
Other Queensland	Training, procurement, tourism and broader supply chain	Residual	~\$0.4-0.8bn	Mixed	Not meaningfully calculated venue-by-venue

These estimates are deliberately **not added to council budgets as “revenue.”** A hotel receiving \$1 million of extra accommodation sales does not give the relevant council \$1 million with which to repay an arena. Only rates, fees, venue profits and government tax effects belong in a public-payback numerator.

How long could Queensland take to pay its share back?

For the **\$3.665 billion Queensland contribution to the \$7.1 billion venue program alone**, the arithmetic is:

Sustained net Games-attributable fiscal cash return after 2032	Undiscounted payback	Payback at 4% real
\$50m/year	73 years	No finite payback at 4%
\$100m/year	37 years	No finite payback at 4%
\$150m/year	24 years	~97 years
\$212m/year	17 years	~30 years
\$250m/year	15 years	~23 years
\$300m/year	12 years	~17 years

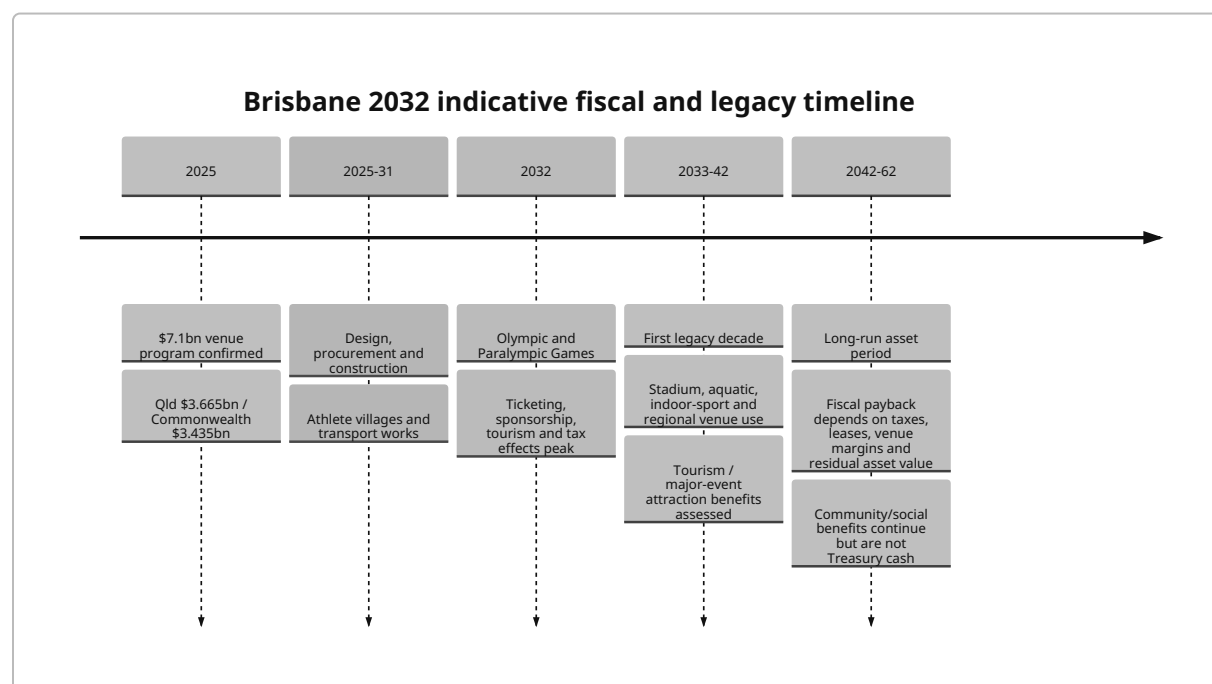
The reason the discounted periods are much longer is that a \$3.665 billion asset has an annual 4% opportunity cost of roughly **\$147 million** before any principal is recovered. A net return of \$100 million a year, although substantial, therefore never amortises the investment in real discounted terms under that assumption.

If the **\$3.5 billion State village provision** is added mechanically, Queensland's identified State venue-plus-village commitment rises to about **\$7.165 billion**. A 30-year 4% real payback would then require about:

$$\$7.165b \times \frac{0.04}{1 - (1.04)^{-30}} \approx \textbf{\$414m per year}$$

of **net additional Queensland public revenue**.

That does not mean Queensland needs to charge \$414 million annually in stadium rent. The villages may produce saleable or income-producing assets, venues retain residual capital value, land may appreciate, and tax revenues arise from broader economic activity. It does mean that a claim such as **“the Games create an \$8.1 billion economic boost, therefore the \$3.665 billion state investment pays itself off immediately” is financially invalid**. The \$8.1 billion is an economic-benefit concept, not \$8.1 billion of Queensland Treasury receipts. ⁴⁰

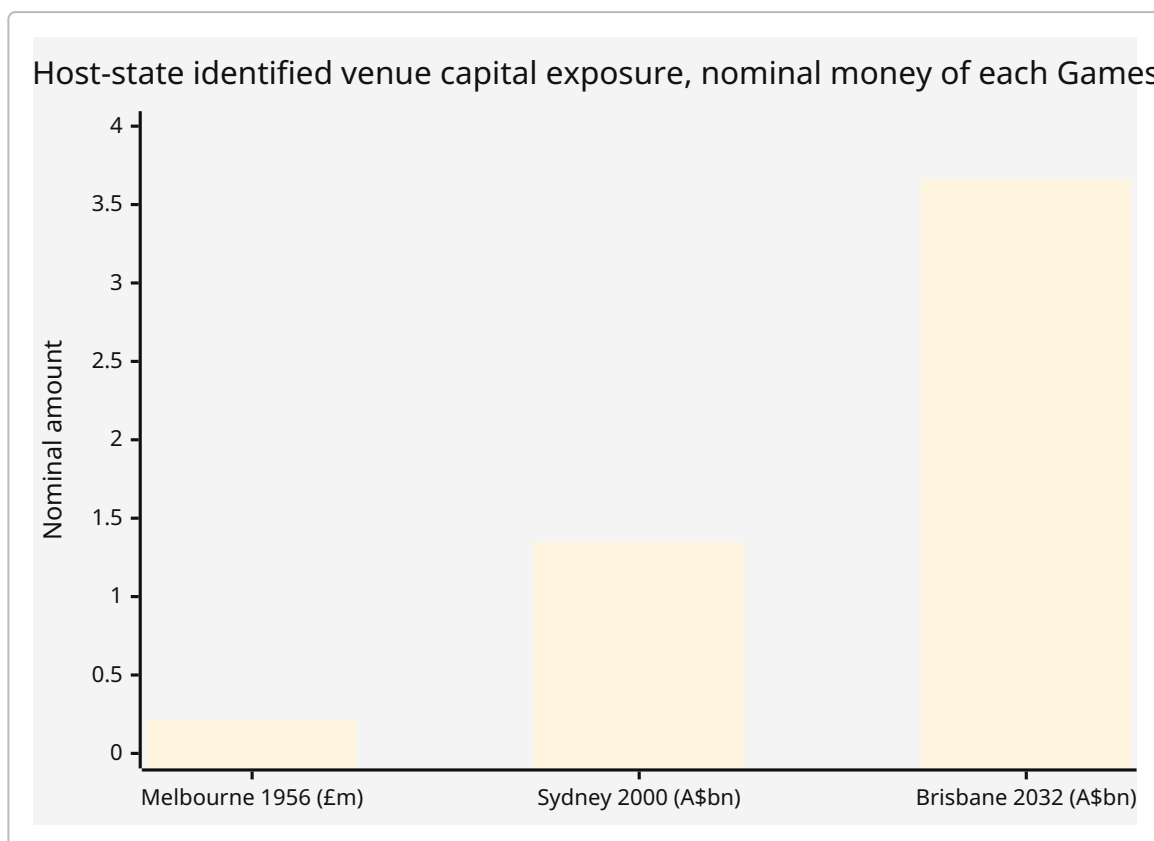


Comparative findings and payback

The evolution from 1956 to 2032 is striking. Melbourne reused a high proportion of existing venues and concentrated new capital in a handful of projects. Sydney created a purpose-built metropolitan Olympic network and a major urban-renewal precinct. Brisbane is explicitly positioning the Games as an accelerator of infrastructure that government says Queensland will need for population growth and long-term sport/event use. The IOC describes Melbourne as having used 11 existing venues out of 16 competition sites,

while Queensland's current program is substantially larger in absolute capital terms and spread across the state. ⁴¹

Capital exposure comparison



This chart is **not an inflation-adjusted economic comparison**; the units are deliberately labelled differently. Melbourne's bar represents the approximate Victorian 25% share of the £850,000 core sporting program rather than the £2 million Commonwealth-financed Village; Sydney is shown at roughly the midpoint of the \$1.3–1.4 billion net-construction range; Brisbane is the currently agreed Queensland share of the \$7.1 billion venue envelope. ⁴²

A more economically meaningful comparison is who bears the venue burden:

Games	Commonwealth/ federal role	State role	Local- government role	Private role	Long-term fiscal interpretation
Melbourne 1956	Roughly 50% of £850k sports program under reported formula; major £2m Village finance	Approx. 25% sports program	City of Melbourne approx. 25% sports program; smaller regional inputs	Existing private/club venues reduced new-build needs	No single Victorian Olympic debt; much expenditure became durable public/club assets. ⁸
Sydney 2000	Smaller direct venue role than NSW	Dominant public infrastructure financier	Selected local contributions/management obligations	Significant role in Stadium Australia and SuperDome	~\$653m incremental NSW taxes covered a substantial but incomplete portion of public construction by 2002. ⁹
Brisbane 2032	\$3.435bn of \$7.1bn venue program	\$3.665bn venues + \$3.5bn village provision	Gold Coast directly funds two venues; councils contribute land/infrastructure in some areas	Organising revenue; private role in villages and other commercial projects	No payoff date possible before Games; fiscal recovery must be measured after 2032. ⁴³

The clearest answer to the original “how long to pay off?” question

Victoria / Melbourne 1956: there is **no credible X-year debt-payoff figure**. The core sports works appear to have been financed by intergovernmental contributions, while the largest separate asset, the Olympic Village, was financed as housing and then converted to public housing. Calling that a Victorian Olympic loan that was subsequently “paid off” would mischaracterise the financing. ⁴⁴

NSW / Sydney 2000: it is defensible to say that **about half of the narrow public construction burden had been offset by identifiable additional state tax revenues by early 2002**, but **it is not defensible to assign a final payoff year**. The evidence after 2002 is not published as a continuing Olympic-attributable tax account, and some venues continued to require public support or redevelopment. ⁴⁵

Queensland / Brisbane 2032: the cleanest present venue cost is **\$7.1 billion**, of which **Queensland is responsible for \$3.665 billion**. Adding the **\$3.5 billion State village provision** gives around **\$7.165 billion**

in identified Queensland venue-and-village commitments, before any Games-attributable share of major transport or other government services. ¹⁰ A fiscal payoff cannot honestly be forecast from the current information. Under a relatively demanding but reasonable 4% real test, Queensland would need about **\$212 million of genuine extra government cash each year for 30 years to repay the venue share alone**, or roughly **\$414 million per year** if the whole \$7.165 billion venue-plus-village provision were treated as unrecovered public capital.

That is a much higher hurdle than saying the Games produce billions in business turnover. Queensland's economic-development case may ultimately succeed because venues, housing and infrastructure retain value and support other events and population growth. But as of October 2026, **there is no evidence-based basis for claiming Brisbane 2032 will “pay itself off” in five, ten or even twenty years in the fiscal sense.**

Data limitations, assumptions and confidence

The largest limitation is that **venue-level public accounting is not how any of these Games was reported.** Melbourne's records predate modern whole-of-government project reporting; Sydney's own Auditor-General warned that the Games budget was not initially a comprehensive statement of total government expenditure; and Brisbane's individual Project Validation Reports and procurement outcomes remain in development. ⁴⁶

For 1956, the £300,000 MCG, £350,000 pool and £200,000 other-works breakdown is considerably stronger than any attempt to subdivide that final £200,000 among all minor venues. Consequently, the minor-venue capital figures in this report are intentionally shown as **D-grade ranges**. They should be treated as a reconstruction of scale, not historical expenditure records. ¹⁹

For Sydney, some venue costs are well documented — notably Dunc Gray at about \$42 million, the Regatta Centre at about \$40 million and the Hockey Centre at \$15.5 million — whereas costs for temporary overlays and some satellite venues are much less well documented. ⁴⁷ The largest methodological danger is adding gross tourism receipts, organiser ticket revenue and public-asset value together as though they were mutually independent government revenues.

For Brisbane, the **\$7.1 billion program ceiling and federal/state split are A-grade figures**, but most individual venue numbers are not. ¹⁰ The Brisbane Stadium is increasingly well defined at around \$3.8 billion and 63,000 seats, while the National Aquatic Centre illustrates why early venue-specific estimates should not be treated as fixed: its earlier ~\$650 million concept has been subject to redesign and cost pressure. ⁴⁸ GIICA's current project pages appropriately emphasize design, procurement, legacy use and program-wide cost control rather than publishing premature final prices for every venue. ⁴⁹

The strongest conclusion is therefore not a single dramatic number but a hierarchy:

Melbourne 1956: relatively modest venue program, high reuse, substantial Commonwealth support, no identifiable state Olympic-debt payoff date.

Sydney 2000: much larger NSW capital commitment, measurable \$653 million state-tax uplift through 2002, but still no official year in which an Olympic “debt” was finally extinguished; later scholarship counsels against claiming the gross economic benefits equalled fiscal return. ⁵⁰

Brisbane 2032: \$7.1 billion venue envelope, Queensland share \$3.665 billion, plus a \$3.5 billion State village provision and other expenditure layers. The eventual fiscal result will depend less on the headline tourism number than on **whether permanent venues can attract profitable post-Games events, whether villages realise asset value, whether incremental tax receipts persist, and whether governments prevent capital and operating-cost escalation.** Queensland's own audit reporting makes clear that project costs and procurement remain a live delivery risk across the state's major-project pipeline. ¹⁰

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