The Australian Olympic Caravan in Beijing

Richard Cashman
Australia

Since 2001, many Australians have been prominent in Beijing’s Olympic preparations, perhaps more so than that of any other country. Australian companies have helped design many Olympic venues—including the iconic Beijing Aquatic Centre known as the Watercube—and have been to the fore as advisers and consultants. Others have been contracted to provide infrastructure. While many other countries compete for international Olympic business, Australia is clearly one of those countries that has been more successful or more determined to gain a larger market share of Beijing Olympic business. This paper explores the dimensions and significance of what I have described as an Australian Olympic caravan. This is a convenient term to describe the continuing presence of a number of Australian Olympic experts and consultants at various Games—Olympic, Paralympic, Asian, Commonwealth, Pan American and so forth. Such a caravan has traveled to Manchester, Athens, Melbourne, Doha, and a number of other Games cities, but has assumed even greater proportions in Beijing.

There is also no single caravan as, which all these experts and consultants board, because members of the caravan move from one Games city to another independently of each other. Each group and firm, has to negotiate its own niche in the next Games. While members of the caravan operate independently of each other, there is often considerable overlap between various Games-related services and many opportunities for members of the caravan to meet.

The caravan is aptly described as an Olympic one because it is a direct product of the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The success of the Games is the prime reason why Australian Olympic expertise continues to be so highly valued internationally. Although there have been a number of summer and winter Olympic Games since 2000, Australian expertise continues to be more valued than that of other countries.

The Australian Olympic caravan is, by definition, amorphous, secretive, and diffuse. It is amorphous because it is located within any business and national boundaries in that many ‘Australian’ firms are multinational, with an Olympic component based in Australia. The caravan also expands and contracts according to circumstances experienced by each firm. It is also secretive because few companies are willing to divulge confidential contracts. It is diffuse because some individuals and firms are dedicated to Olympic business on a longer-term basis whereas others adopt a more commercial approach.

The Olympic business of some individuals and companies is reasonably important whereas for others it is of more marginal appeal. So there is a great challenge to capture the worth (in economic or status terms) of such business and to locate the Olympic role in such activities. Key questions that can be posed include:

- Why have many Australians been determined to gain Beijing Olympic business?
- What is the worth of this unique Australian export business?
- What is its significance?
- Is Beijing the high point of the Australian Olympic caravan?
• What is its future?
• Does the Olympic business generate any wider business benefits?

The growth of Olympic caravans reflects the increasing emphasis on the transfer of Olympic knowledge. It is also another aspect of Olympic impacts that is worth further scrutiny.

‘Not All Those Who Wander Are Lost’ (J.R.R. Tolkien)

Legacy research has expanded considerably since I presented a paper on ‘Olympic Legacy in an Olympic City: Monuments, Museums and Memory’ at the Fourth International Symposium on Olympic Research in 1998. The IOC legacy conference at Lausanne in November 2002 made it clear that there were many other forms of legacy, such as the legacy of education, information, and symbols and even unsuccessful bid cities.

Impacts and the transfer of knowledge have become increasingly important in Olympic discourse since the IOC introduced the Olympic Games Global Impact program in 2001. Pre-Games legacy conferences have now become commonplace. A symposium, ‘Thinking through the Games: Legacies, Communities and Inclusion,’ was held on 1 November 2006 at the University of British Columbia. A London conference on ‘Legacy Lives’ was held on 30 and 31 January 2007.

My study of the legacy of the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games alerted me to the fact that legacy did not occur on a one-off basis but continued to resonate for years after a Games. Some impacts were planned, others were more indirect and yet others were unforeseen. One unforeseen impact of the Sydney Games was the emergence of an Australian Olympic caravan after the Games, and particularly after Beijing won the bid to host the 2008 Games in July 2001.

This paper introduces a number of new legacy themes. Firstly, an unofficial transfer of knowledge conducted by self-selected members of a caravan of experts has emerged in the past decade. Secondly, the caravan has promoted new forms of Olympic business. Thirdly, the Olympic caravan is another aspect of the globalisation of the Olympic Games in that individual host cities now look to international expertise given that the Games have become such a complex event. The growth of Olympic caravans, fourthly, is also a reflection of the expansion of global event management expertise.

The Kookaburra Pub

The Kookaburra Pub is the brand name developed by the Australian Chamber of Commerce in Beijing. Every Thursday, Brown’s Pub in East Beijing is transformed into the Kookaburra Pub with two large Australian flags hanging from the ceiling and various Australian posters adorning the walls. The Kookaburra Pub is an occasion for the Australian business community in Beijing to meet informally. When I visited the Kookaburra Pub on 17 May 2007, I was confronted by tangible evidence that an Australian Olympic caravan was in operation because more than 100 people had arrived over the past few months from Doha, where the Asian Games had been held in December 2006. Alastair Cameron for instance, who had organised the Olympic youth camp in Sydney, had arranged a similar camp in Doha and was contracted to organise the Beijing youth camp. His one-man consultancy is appropriately known as Global Nomad S.A. because Cameron is, literally, an Olympic nomad. Under his company logo is a pertinent quotation from J.R.R. Tolkien: ‘Not all those who wander are lost.’ Since 2000, many Australians—experts, advisors, consultants, and contract winners involved in large and small projects—have traveled from one Games city to another.

The Kookaburra Pub is visible testimony to the number of Australians doing business in Beijing. Much of the business is related to the 2008 Beijing Olympic and Paralympic Games where Australians appear to have been more prominent than representatives from any other country.
An Olympic Caravan

This paper explores the dimensions and significance of the Australian Olympic caravan, which is one part of an emerging global Olympic caravan. The term is a convenient way to describe the continuing presence of a number of Australian Olympic experts and consultants at various Olympic and other Games. Such a caravan has been evident at Manchester, Athens, Melbourne, Doha, and a number of other Games cities, but has assumed even greater proportions in Beijing.

There is also no single caravan, as such, because members of the caravan move from one Games city to another independently of each other. Each individual, group, and firm, has to negotiate its respective niche in the next Games. Despite this, there is often considerable overlap between various Games-related services and many opportunities for members of the caravan to meet and develop a sense of common purpose.

Simon Cousins, an Australian based in Beijing with some involvement in Olympic business, commented that there is a unique culture of collegiality among Australian firms in Beijing. The same firms that compete aggressively in Australia are prepared to share information and exchange referrals in Beijing, even though they may be in competition for a particular contract. It was the view of Cousins that this collegial culture is a product of the ‘size of the Beijing pie,’ in that the market is so big that there is ample business for every firm. Cousins also believed that, free from the constraints of home, many Australian business personnel adopt a more Australian way of doing things, preferring a more relaxed, easygoing, and collaborative approach. Collegiality may also be the product of the ‘expat’ situation: surrounded by a powerful Chinese culture, it is appealing for Australians to relax in an informal and convivial Australian environment. In this way they are reminded of home in a quintessential Australian institution—an Aussie pub. The Kookaburra Pub attracts large numbers on such Australian red-letter days as Anzac Day and Melbourne Cup Day. The organisers of the Anzac Day event even worked out a way for Australians to play two-up, a simple form of gambling which is associated with Anzac Day, which is illegal in China. They used coupons rather than coins.

The caravan is aptly described as an Olympic one because it is a direct product of the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Holloway considered that many members of the caravan are ‘Olympic junkies.’ The success of the Games is the prime reason why Australian Olympic expertise continues to be so highly valued internationally. The Kookaburra Pub, and many related events, is the brainchild of John Pendergast and Dalwyn Bateson of the Australian Chamber of Commerce (AustCham) in Beijing. Some two hundred firms and a handful of individuals pay an annual fee to be members of AustCham and secure information and benefits. AustCham also liaises closely with Austrade and other relevant groups including the Sydney-Beijing Olympic Secretariat (SBOS).

Issues

The Australian Olympic caravan is, by definition, amorphous, secretive, and diffuse as Eric Winton noted. It is amorphous because many ‘Australian’ firms are multinational. The caravan also expands and contracts according to circumstances experienced by each firm. It is also secretive because few companies are willing to divulge the details of confidential contracts. It is diffuse because Olympic business is central to the operations of some individuals and companies whereas it is more peripheral to others. There is a great challenge to capture the worth of such business and to identify an Olympic component.

There is an interesting question as to what constitutes an ‘Australian company’ since many large firms are multinational in that they are based in many countries and employ staff from many nations. URS, which is one company included under the umbrella of the Australian Olympic caravan, is an
American-based engineering design firm with 30,000 employees and 370 offices in 20 countries. However, the Olympic component of the company is located in Australia. ‘Australian’ companies, for the purposes of this paper, will be defined as ones where Olympic expertise is located in Australia even though there are other elements of the company elsewhere.—Key questions that can be posed include:

- Why have so many Australians and Australian companies sought to gain Beijing Olympic business?
- What is their motivation?
- Does Olympic business generate any wider business benefits?
- What is the worth and significance of this Australian export business?
- Is Beijing the high point of the Australian Olympic caravan? Will it decline afterwards?

Research Plan

This paper will primarily address the first three of the above five questions through a series of case studies. Further research is planned on the fourth and fifth questions. The case studies provide insights into the activities and the motivation of some prominent players and firms. Case studies, which are based on qualitative research, reflect both the strengths and weaknesses of such an approach. They provide insights into how players view their activities and generate narratives about the caravan. Since case studies are primarily based on interviews, they are subjective. Such qualitative data will be balanced, at a later stage, with quantitative data, so far as it is possible.

The Founders

The Australian telecommunications company, Telstra, and the prominent national Olympic bureaucrat, consultant and public figure, Sandy Hollway, have both been long-term members of the Australian Olympic caravan. They both anticipated the benefits that might flow to Australia in the event of a successful Beijing bid. As a result, they contributed significant support to the 2001 Beijing bid for the Olympic Games from an early stage.

Telstra has had a long and successful Olympic association that began when John Hunter, who is still the company’s Olympic Project Director, drafted the text for the communications and technology segment of the Sydney bid document. Telstra was the first partner to sign up with SOCOG in 1995 contributing sponsorship of over $50 million. Whereas communications had been shared by a number of carriers at previous Games—there were five at Atlanta—Telstra became the sole carrier for communications and provided the entirety of the communications infrastructure in 2000.

Company research indicated that Telstra obtained many benefits from this sponsorship including promotional opportunities and naming rights. Hunter believed that this resulted in a positive image for the company and generated good will. Telstra was also able to recover some of its investment after the Games with the reuse of some of the communications infrastructure.

When Telstra established an office in Beijing in 1998, it was not part of the company’s Olympic strategy. Rather, the company looked to China for future business, such as joint ventures and investment in existing companies. However, when it became evident by 1999 that Beijing would make a bid for the 2008 Olympic Games, Telstra shrewdly recognised the potential benefits of offering strategic advice to the Beijing bid organisers. From this time Telstra developed connections with Beijing bid officials.

From 1999 to 2001, Telstra provided substantial pro bono assistance that was of great benefit to the professional presentation of the Beijing Games bid. Fourteen members of the Beijing bid team travelled to Sydney in late 2000 for a fortnight that involved intense work on the bid document. During this time, Hunter helped draft the communications section of the bid document.
A positive relationship between Telstra and the Beijing Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (BOCOG) has continued since 2001 and Telstra signed a contract with BOCOG in 2003, which is renewable annually until 2008. The contract is not a large one in financial terms and includes no naming and advertising rights. The main benefits to the company are contacts at the highest levels, access to important companies and to the Ministry of Information and Industry.

Telstra has long-term ambitions in China and plans to tap into the world’s largest telecom market. Telstra has already invested in a company, Soufun, which is an Internet real estate company. It has changed the name of its international operations from Telstra International to Telstra Asia to demonstrate its interest in China and the Asian Pacific region. Telstra had only small presence at the Athens 2004 Olympic Games because Greece was not a target country for Telstra promotion and expansion.

Sandy Hollway, like Telstra, was aware of the importance of supporting the Beijing bid. He traveled to Beijing on numerous occasions before July 2001 to offer strategic advice to the bid team. He even joined the Beijing bid team when it traveled to Moscow in 2001 for the bid announcement. As a result, Hollway has developed close relations with key personnel in BOCOG. He became an advisor directly to BOCOG in regards to workforce training.

Hollway has had a long and distinguished career in the diplomatic service, and has been a high-ranking public servant who has also been involved in a wide range of private and public sector projects. He was an Australian diplomat for 16 years and Chief of Staff to Prime Minister Bob Hawke in the 1980s. He was CEO to two major Commonwealth Departments concerned with industry, technology, education, and training and was the CEO for SOCOG. Since 2000, he has done much to promote Australian business in China and India. Hollway is both a founder of the Australian Olympic caravan as well as a facilitator of the caravan.

Hollway has been a Director, though he is now a consultant, in the Sydney company, TFG International, which specialises in ‘strategic and tactical planning and implementation’ as well as ‘vision and legacy policies for major events and venues.’ TFG International has had a continuing involvement in past Games (the 2006 Doha Asian Games and the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games) and future Olympic Games (Beijing and London) as well as future Olympic bids (Tokyo, 2016). However, only two of the 12 directors (Hollway and Ken Baxter) have had direct Games involvement. Unlike some other companies such as MI Associates and Maxxam International, Games-related business accounts for only about one per cent of the company’s business. However, Hollway reckons that Games-related business occupies 20–40% of his time.

When asked to identify the reasons for his continuing motivation in the caravan, Hollway identified three factors: the advancement of the national interest, the promotion of Australia as a smart country able to handle complicated projects professionally and efficiently and the advancement of the Olympic movement.

**The Facilitators**

The New South Wales Government set up the Sydney-Beijing Olympic Secretariat (SBOS) in February 2002. David Churches was its director, Sandy Hollway its senior advisor, and the strategy committees included David Richmond and Robert Adby. All four persons were prominent figures in the Sydney Olympic Games. Adby oversaw the creation of SBOS and chaired a steering committee that included Austrade, the Australia China Business Council (ACBC), and other bodies with an interest in business with China. Churches and Hollway became key representatives of SBOS in Beijing.

The potential benefits that might flow from Australian support of the Beijing bid had first been recognised by the ACT Government, which drew cleverly on its sister-city relationship with Beijing and
initiated an intensive period of activity from late 2000 until Beijing won the bid in July 2001. The NSW Government was quick to recognise the value of the ACT’s Olympic initiatives and developed its own program.

Eric Winton was appointed the senior manager of SBOS, several months after its establishment, to run the office on a day-to-day basis. SBOS works closely with Austrade, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Sydney Olympic Park Authority and the Australia China Business Council. SBOS proved the catalyst that enabled NSW business to capitalise on Beijing Olympic business opportunities by providing many specific services that augmented the work of Austrade and the ACBC.

SBOS became a conduit, enabling firms to gain information on the tendering process and forthcoming contract opportunities as well as access to key officials in the Beijing organising committee, government agencies, and principal contractors. SBOS played a facilitating role that enabled around 30 NSW companies, on each occasion in 2004 and 2005, to mount exhibitions and make presentations at the Stadia exhibitions, held in Beijing.

The success of SBOS owes much to the enthusiasm of Eric Winton in that SBOS is largely a one-man band though Winton has had some part-time and occasional assistance. Winton organised a number of functions that address and publicise the work of those involved in a particular Games, such as the 2006 Doha Asian Games. Such events enhance networking within the caravan and provide individuals and firms, covering a diverse range of business, to develop a sense of common purpose.

The NSW Government joined with the Victorian Government to establish the Australian International Sporting Events Secretariat (AISES) in 2006 and SBOS has been morphed into AISES since then. AISES and SBOS published The Golden Pages of Australian Olympic Expertise on 8 August 2007, listing 114 Australian experts and companies that have achieved, as Sandy Hollway noted, “a well-recognised place in the planning, delivery and execution of the Olympic Games and similar international sporting events.” Hollway added that the purpose of this volume, one year out from the Games, was to remind people in BOCOG of the wide range of Australian expertise available.

The Golden Pages list 114 firms covering 29 categories with the largest numbers under venue design (13 entries), venue services (11), ceremonies and production companies (10) and project and infrastructure management (9). The bulk of the companies are based in Sydney (with 69 firms listed) and Melbourne (33). With the success of the Golden Pages—which generated additional business for some firms—AISES produced another volume in 2008, The Winning Edge: Australian Major Events Expertise, which listed 242 firms. The Winning Edge was published both in English and Mandarin.

Private Firms and Consultants
PTW Architects, a Sydney firm, has become a flagship for the Australian Olympic caravan as it helped design the Beijing Olympics National Swimming Centre—known as the Watercube—in conjunction ARUP (Aust.), CSCEC (China State Construction and Engineering Corporation) and CSCEC Shenzhen Design Institute. The Watercube is a symbol of a successful Australian presence in Beijing. It is one of the two iconic structures created for the Games, the other being the main stadium—known as the bird’s nest—which was designed by a Swiss company.

The Watercube is a symbol both of Australian prominence and excellence. The building’s design is based on the natural formation of bubbles to give a random organic appearance. Surveys have shown that this Olympic venue is the one most revered by the Chinese. Sandy Hollway believed that the primary benefit for PTW in gaining the contract, for a ‘sexy’ project like as the Watercube, was not financial but the potential for future attractive contracts. With offices in Beijing, Shanghai, and Hanoi, PTW Architects are well placed to gain future attractive contracts.
The Chinese Government is also pleased that the Watercube has been funded by overseas Chin-
ese from Taiwan, Singapore, and many other countries. The Watercube, thus, symbolises the desired
leadership role of mainland China over the Chinese diaspora.

PTW Architects also gained two other significant Olympic projects. The company designed the
Athletes’ Village and won a contract from BOCOG to work on Olympic overlay.

Like many other firms and consultants, PTW Architects benefited from its involvement in the Syd-
ney Olympic Games. PTW Architects secured projects relating to the Sydney International Aquatic
Centre, Ryde Aquatic Centre, the Sydney Olympic Village masterplan, and apartments for the Sydney
2000 Olympic Games.

The company Great Big Events was set up by Greg Bowman in 1995 after he had been an associ-
ate producer of the opening ceremony at the Vancouver 1994 Commonwealth Games, when he rea-
lised the potential of sports presentation for large events. With a background in music and the theatre,
Bowman was well placed to develop a new area of sports promotion. The Sydney Olympic Games
proved a fillip for his company which was engaged by SOCOG as the executive producer for sports
presentation and developed an international reputation as a world leader in sports presentation as a
result. Bowman’s firm has achieved a large number of global contracts since 2000, involving not only
Olympic, Paralympic, Asian, and Commonwealth Games but also other events such as the 2007
Rugby World Cup (in France) and the 2007 FINA World Championships (in Melbourne).

Bowman has been appointed Executive Producer of Sport Presentation at the Beijing Olympic
Games and is responsible for the sports presentation inside all the venues for the duration of the
Games. From the moment the gates open at each of the stadiums to closing time, Bowman and a 700-
strong team are responsible for every ceremonial aspect that occurs inside the venues. This includes
the co-ordination of the medal presentations, the display of sporting statistics and video broadcasts on
multiple giant television screens to the cueing of music and announcers for each sport in each of the
venues.3

To carry out this role, he has engaged a number of international experts bolstered by hundreds of
Chinese students who will be trained in sports presentation. Bowman reflected on an important ingre-
dient of success in Beijing and China: “In China and other Asian countries once you’re trusted and
people know you’re their friend and that you work well with them and provide a good level of service,
they’re happy to work with you.”4

Maxxam International’s Di Henry, who organised the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic torch
relays, has made a career out of organising subsequent torch relays at many Games. Her company was
appointed to manage the international segment of the Beijing 2008 Olympic torch relay and was com-
missioned to assist with the domestic segment of this relay. Since Sydney, Maxxam organised the
Queen’s Jubilee Baton Relay for the 2002 Manchester and the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth
Games and the torch relay for the 2006 Torino Winter Olympics.

Alastair Cameron, as noted above, operates a one-person consultancy, Global Nomad, which is
also involved in tourism hospitality and entertainment. He has been and is an organiser of two Olymp-
ic youth camps (at Sydney and Beijing) and also managed the youth camp at the Doha Asian Games
in 2006. Cameron has also been involved in non-Olympic youth-based programs. He has also authored the IOC Technical Manual of the Olympic Youth Camp. In 2008, he also had involvement in
the Olympic torch relay on its global odyssey.

Cameron regards his work on the Olympic Youth Camp as the ‘core to my business because it is my recognised specialty or area of expertise.’ He reflected on the appeal of organ-
ising such camps:
A quick answer is because I enjoy seeing the smiles on the faces of the kids who take part in these camps. A longer more thoughtful answer would be that I would love it when four years later a participant writes to me and tells me what a profound experience it was and how it continues to impact on them now . . . Or, maybe they are writing to tell me about a fundraising project they are about to embark upon, climbing Mt Kilimanjaro to raise funds for the 'Right to play' organisation, because of what they learnt and did at OYC.

The Public Sector

A unique feature then of the Australian Olympic caravan is that is not just a private venture but involves a partnership between the public and private interests.

Tafe International won the contract to train the volunteers and employees for the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games, this being the first time that one organisation was selected for both Games. The company became the official services provider for the Athens 2004 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Tafe's prominent role in Sydney and Athens enabled it to secure further contracts, such as the development of a master training plan for the 2006 Doha Asian Games, the creation of a volunteer website, and event leadership training for the 2003 Rugby World Cup (Sydney) and leadership training and event management at the 2003 All Africa Games, Nigeria.

Tafe secured three contracts in relation to workforce training and volunteers for the Beijing Olympic equestrian events that will be held in Hong Kong. It also trained 20 persons, nominated by BOCOG, in volunteer management over a six-month period. A significant feature of Tafe's Asian activities is that it is already looking beyond Beijing and has secured a contract to develop a Training Master Plan for the Shanghai 2010 World Expo.

The Fringes

There are other pathways for Australian companies and individuals involved in the export of Australian sports expertise. Cleanevent, run by Craig Lovett, has developed extensive experience in scouting and planning the cleaning and waste management at major international events from the time of the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games. The company has provided such services for a number of Olympic, Asian, and Commonwealth Games.

Clean event has used its Games base to develop a global service that can be applied to many other international sports events. Clean event services have been employed at a diverse range of events including Wimbledon, Royal Ascot Racecourse, Twickenham, Australian Formula Grand Prix, Indy, the Melbourne Cup, and the 2007 West Indies Cricket World Cup. The company has, thus, been able to identify a niche market in the global sports business.

The pre- and post-Games 'Olympic' career of Andrew Minogue demonstrates another trajectory of the Australian Olympic caravan. Minogue was trained as a diplomat and obtained his first posting at Kuala Lumpur in 1993—the same year that Sydney won the bid to stage the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. He left the diplomatic service in 1998 to join SOCOG where he was posted in NOC (National Olympic Committee) relations, which tapped into his expertise as a diplomat.

Minogue then joined the organising committee of the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games in 2001, becoming director of NOC relations. After the Games, he was recruited to an important post as adviser of Games operations in the XVIIIth South Pacific Games in Samoa in 2007. At the conclusion of the Games, he wrote its post-Games report, the first such report to be disseminated widely in electronic form.

Minogue subsequently moved to Noumea, where the XIVth Pacific Games will be held in 2011 and was appointed the first executive director of the Pacific Games (the new name for these Games).
One of his tasks will be to set up a secretariat to run the Games organisation on a more professional basis. His career as a member of the Australian Olympic caravan will probably end in 2012—after 14 years—as his two children will then be of high school age and he and his wife plan to base themselves in Australia. He is unlikely to return to the diplomatic service; rather his experience within Games has equipped him to find a position in sports administration or even academia.

Minogue moved sideways in 1998 from a career in the diplomatic service to management of Games organisations. He moved from the certainty and security of the diplomatic service to a career that was more risky and unconventional but one that he found more interesting and challenging.

**Assessment and Worth of the Australian Olympic Caravan in Beijing**

Hollway noted that it is difficult to place a figure on the worth of the Australian Olympic caravan in Beijing. He guessed that it might be worth around $150 million. Eric Winton guessed that the total worth of Australian Olympic expertise from Athens to Beijing might be in the vicinity of $300 million. It is almost impossible to assess the size of the Australian Olympic pie in Beijing. First, the above guesstimates seem relatively small given Beijing's large investment in the Games (see below). Winton rightly stressed that Beijing Olympic projects in themselves 'don't bring much money' rather they bring 'prestige and international recognition.' So the indirect benefits, spin-offs, and future projects are more significant than the direct financial return.

Hollway added that while people from other countries, such as the British, Germans, Swiss and to a lesser extent the Greeks, are involved in Beijing Olympic business, Australians have not been aware of any other country 'breathing down their necks' threatening their leading role. It was strange, he added, that Americans are 'virtually absent' in Beijing Olympic business circles and those that have come to Beijing have only secured 'relatively minor contracts.'

Bob Elphinston listed the reasons why Australians have done well in the Beijing market: they are hard workers who get on with the job, they are up-front, proud, 'can-do' people with limited baggage and they are happy for the locals to take the credit. Hollway added his own list of ingredients in Australian Beijing business success. Australians, he believed, avoid posturing and arrogant behaviour, have a sense of humour, are willing to be more than consultants, recognise that it is smart to leaven a commercial push with an offer of fraternal assistance and provide damned good advice that addresses the core issues of concern.

**The Australian Contribution to the Beijing Olympic Games**

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<th>Venue</th>
<th>Designer</th>
<th>Sports</th>
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<tr>
<td>National Swimming Centre (The Watercube)</td>
<td>PTW Architects, ARUP (Aust.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Archer venue</td>
<td>Bligh Voller Nield</td>
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<td>Hockey venue</td>
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<td>Tennis venue</td>
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<td>Shooting centre</td>
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<td>Sailing venue</td>
<td>Cox Richardson/Cox Architects</td>
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<td>Equestrian centre (Honkong)</td>
<td>Timothy Court and Company</td>
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<td>Whitewater stadium</td>
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The Australian involvement in Beijing can be demonstrated in a more tangible way in the matrix below. It is significant that Australian companies have had some involvement in the creation of no less than eight Olympic venues covering 11 individual sports. It is unlikely that any other country can match this involvement. An important feature of Australian involvement in the design of Olympic venues is their capacity to work with Chinese companies.

There are, in addition, other Australian companies involved in lesser roles in some other venues. An engineering company, Northcroft Australia, provided advice on bid assessments for the construction of the Beijing Olympic stadium, which was designed...
by a Swiss company. Another company, Bostik, provided adhesives and sealants for the National Indoor Stadium designed by a German company.

The Future of the Australian Olympic Caravan

The Australian Olympic caravan looks like it is rolling on until at least the 2012 London Olympic Games. Hollway thought, initially, that a demand for Sydney Olympic expertise may have diminished by 2008 but this has not occurred. Neither Atlanta nor Athens made a sustained attempt to break into this Olympic market.

London may well create its own Olympic caravan after 2012 which will lead to a decline in importance of Australian Olympic expertise. However, the pathway followed by Cleanevent suggests that Australian companies and individual consultants may well be able to transfer their Olympic expertise to global events.

Reflections and conclusions

The case studies of the Australian Olympic caravan point to some themes that will be the subject of further research. It seems, first of all, that the lure of the Beijing Olympic market has proven irresistible to a number of Australian firms and consultants. Despite the difficulties of gaining a toehold in China, and the complexity of negotiating contracts, many Australians have persisted and made their mark in Beijing. The large size of the pie may be one factor. Austrade website in 2005 identified the great potential economic benefit to Australia from the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, predicting that Beijing would spend the massive amount of $US30 billion on the Games: $US1.6 billion for the 37 venues; $US14 billion on the Beijing Olympic site, which would include cost of new offices, hotels, the Olympic village, and parkland; and another $US14 billion on a wide range of infrastructure costs.^[5

Yet the findings of this preliminary study suggest that the direct Australian share in this expenditure is relatively small. It appears, however, that an enhanced global reputation, potential spin-offs and future business are the big attraction. It is important to note that China became Australia’s largest trading partner in 2007 so gaining a toehold there is important to many firms. Olympic business represents a convenient bargaining chip to gain entry to an immense and appealing market.

The Australian Olympic caravan might also provide Australian firms and consultants to get ‘in the swim with the big boys,’ as Prime Minister Paul Keating put it when Sydney won the bid to stage the Olympic Games in 1993.^[4] For the representatives of a middle-ranking country, it is appealing to some basis to deal with one of the heavyweights in global business.

Although the case study is based on a relatively small sample, it seems that a sense of national interest is a significant motivating factor to many in the Australian Olympic caravan. For individuals such as Sandy Hollway and David Churches it appears that the Olympics never ended because they continue to work, often on a pro bono basis, to advance the city’s and country’s legacy. Others it seems, as Sandy Hollway noted, are ‘Olympic junkies’ who enjoyed what they did in 2000 to such an extent that they wish to continue.

This study suggests that there is a growing business in the unofficial transfer of knowledge, which addresses specialist and niche market issues. This business is likely to grow in the future with the increasing number and sophistication of mega sporting events.
Endnotes

1 This paper is based primarily on interviews with the following persons: Alastair Cameron, Simon Cousins, Bob Elphinston, Sandy Hollway, James Hunter, Andrew Minogue, David Riordan, Mark Rosenberg and Eric Winton.
5 Cashman, Bitter-Sweet Awakening, 119.