

Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

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I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to make a submission to this public inquiry. In my submission, I will address three issues as outlined in the public inquiry notice.

- Identifying Games venues and villages and their Games-related and legacy use in the Act
- making changes to the functions and powers of the Games Independent Infrastructure and Coordination Authority (GIICA) to align with its role to deliver, or monitor the delivery of, Games venues and the introduction of requirements for the GIICA to share information with the chief executive of the department
- identifying Games-related transport infrastructure 1

Public safety and security must be at the forefront of all Olympic Games planning. Government efforts in organising and building infrastructure at various venues for the Brisbane 2032 Olympics should be strategically directed to ensure the safety of both competitors and spectators, with these improvements designed to deliver legacy and lasting benefits well beyond the Games themselves.

I would like to comment on the selection of Airlie Beach and Townsville as venues to host Olympic Games events. Both Airlie Beach and Townsville will host sailing events, and Townsville will also host football matches. 2

It appears that these two locations were selected after the 100 Day Review was completed, and significant safety concerns associated with these locations were not addressed as part of that process.

I have been unable to find information outlining the specific actions that the Director General or the Games Independent Infrastructure and Coordination Authority (GIICA) intend to take to address the longstanding safety issues at these two locations, despite these problems persisting unresolved for many years. While Townsville and Airlie Beach have previously hosted sporting events, ongoing social and safety challenges have persisted, and no enduring positive legacy has been established.

If these issues remain unresolved, there is a significant risk of serious incidents occurring during the Olympic events, potentially jeopardising the safety of competitors and spectators, as well as damaging Queensland's reputation. 3

Without substantial changes, including new legislation, updated local government policies, and major infrastructure upgrades, then these locations will not be equipped to provide the level of safety and security required for hosting Olympic events. The resources required to address these fundamental and significant safety issues could be more effectively allocated to other areas where they would be better spent.

Unless there is certainty and clear evidence that these significant safety concerns will be effectively addressed, alternatives to Townsville and Airlie Beach should be considered for Games venues.

I will address specific issues relating to Townsville and Airlie Beach as potential Olympic Games venues; although these considerations may be relevant to other venue locations across the state.

Very high crime rates in Townsville and Airlie Beach.

Townsville City has one of the highest crime rates in Australia, presenting a significant safety challenge for Olympic competitors and spectators. In 2024, Townsville City recorded 983.36 crimes per 1,000 residents, including 112.05 violent crimes per 1,000, which is a rate higher than 98% of Australian suburbs. [4](#)

The likelihood of becoming a victim of violent crime in Townsville City is 1 in 9, compared to 1 in 123 in Queensland and 1 in 110 nationally. [6](#)

The Townsville City area is ranked 100 out of 100 for crime severity and frequency relative to population, marking it as a very unsafe area, while the most prevalent offences include disorderly and offensive conduct, theft, drug dealing and trafficking.

Despite a 6.52% decrease in overall crime across the broader Townsville area from 2023 to 2024, Townsville City itself saw a 10% increase in reported crimes over the same period.

Airlie Beach is widely regarded as one of the least safe suburbs in Queensland, with crime rates significantly above both state and national averages. In 2024, the Airlie Beach area recorded 596 crimes per 1,000 residents, making it a "very unsafe area" compared to other Australian suburbs. [4](#)

Only 44.8% of residents report feeling safe after dark, placing Airlie Beach in the bottom 12% for night-time safety in Queensland. Violent crime is a particular concern when the chance of becoming a victim of a violent crime in Airlie Beach is 1 in 22, far higher than the Queensland average of 1 in 123 and the Australian average of 1 in 110. [5](#)

Given these statistics, unless there are substantial reductions in crime rates and significant improvements to public safety, both Townsville and Airlie Beach would not be suitable to host Olympic competitors and spectators, and the choice of these towns would also undermine Queensland's and Australia's reputation on the global stage.

I am unable to recommend any effective solutions to address the serious crime issues at both Townsville and Airlie Beach beyond imposing curfews or deploying a major police presence. However, both measures would significantly disrupt the experience of Olympic

competitors and spectators, and negatively impact on Queensland's reputation. Furthermore, these measures would not provide long lasting legacy solutions once Olympic Games events have concluded.

Traffic congestion at foreshore areas and lack of safe public mobility infrastructure.

Airlie Beach and Townsville have been chosen to host sailing events for the Olympic games, while foreshore areas at Airlie Beach and Townsville are often congested with traffic.

During a recent Whitsunday Regional Council meeting on 23 April 2025, a councillor raised concerns about parking regulation and traffic conditions in Airlie Beach during a long weekend holiday, while traffic congestion and parking issues at Airlie Beach are highly likely to be exacerbated during Olympic Games events. 7

Townsville's foreshore areas are already subject to traffic delays and congestion during public events, maintenance works, and busy periods. 8

Traffic congestion and limited parking availability at both Airlie Beach and Townsville would significantly disrupt Olympic event operations and pose major logistical challenges for competitors, officials, and spectators, potentially jeopardising the smooth running of Olympic activities.

If cars and buses are not viable transport options in Townsville and Airlie Beach due to traffic congestion and limited parking, it becomes essential to provide safe and accessible pedestrian routes for competitors and spectators. At present, both Townsville and Airlie Beach lack adequate pedestrian infrastructure to meet these needs.

Most footpaths in these locations are too narrow to safely accommodate high volumes of pedestrian traffic. Many of the current footpaths are only 1.0 metre in width, while the recommended minimum width for a non-shared (pedestrian-only) footpath in Queensland is 1.8 metres at the narrowest point. 9

Many existing footpaths also serve as shared paths for e-mobility devices and bicycles, yet they do not meet the minimum standards established by the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads. According to the Road Planning and Design Manual, Volume 3, Part 6A (2023), the minimum standard width for new shared paths should be 2.5 metres, with 3 metres recommended in most circumstances, and up to 4 metres for high-volume areas.

Photographs in the supplementary file illustrate some of the problems with current footpaths.

It will be essential to upgrade pathways in Airlie Beach, Townsville and other venue locations throughout Queensland to meet or exceed recommended government standards

and ensure safe and efficient movement for all users during the Olympic Games events and the community after the Games have concluded. However, this will require significant upfront infrastructure costs, with sufficient resources made available to build the pathways on time, and then local councils will need to fund increased maintenance costs for these pathways in future years.

High rate of e-mobility device accidents

In recent years, Queensland has seen a sharp increase in accidents involving e-scooters and other e-mobility devices, with injuries to riders, passengers, and pedestrians rising by 112% from 2021 to 2024, with 8 fatalities last year alone in Queensland. 10

Townsville has experienced a dramatic surge in e-scooter-related incidents. Presentations to Townsville University Hospital for e-scooter injuries have soared by over 240% in recent years, with a 60% spike in hospital admissions reported last year alone. Townsville Hospital is now among the top five hospitals in Queensland for e-scooter injury-related emergency department presentations. 11

This escalating trend has placed significant pressure on local hospitals and emergency services, highlighting the urgent need for improved safety measures and regulation of e-mobility devices in the region before Olympic events can be held.

The surge in accidents involving e-mobility devices such as e-scooters and e-bikes has led the Queensland State Government to launch a public inquiry into their safety and use. This inquiry is scheduled to deliver its final report by Monday, 30 March 2026. 12

I would recommend a shorter inquiry period to allow recommendations to be considered and acted upon well in advance of the Games.

A shorter inquiry period would enable authorities to address safety concerns, upgrade infrastructure, and ensure a safer, more efficient transport network for competitors, spectators and residents.

A lack of law enforcement below the high tide line.

Sailing events at Airlie Beach and Townsville are scheduled to take place on the water, with many competitors and spectators expected to gather on beaches and foreshore areas below the high tide line, which is classified as state crown land and not council land. 13

I have received correspondence from the Townsville City Council confirming that the council does not enforce local laws on crown land below the high tide line, and this includes local laws relating to dog control. For example, if there is an off-leash dog that is not under effective control below the high tide line, then the council will not act.

Queensland currently has the highest rate of dog attack in Australia and records an average of 19 dog attacks per day, while many dog owners do not have effective control of their dog/s. 14

A University of Queensland survey of Moreton Bay beaches found that 84% of dogs were off-leash and not under the effective control of their owners on these beaches. 15.

I am not aware of similar surveys undertaken in other coastal areas of Queensland, although based on my own observations over several months at Airlie Beach and Townsville, I noted that 100% of dog owners on the local beaches were not complying with regulations and did not have their dog/s under effective control. About 70% of dog owners also lacked effective control of their dog/s or were not using a regulation length leash in picnic grounds, playgrounds, parks, and sporting areas.

This lack of compliance with regulations poses a significant risk to public safety, with uncontrolled dogs making many beaches and public facilities unsafe or inaccessible to community members.

The lack of council enforcement of dog control has resulted in highly concerning situations, as illustrated in photographs contained in the supplementary file.

Such situations cannot be allowed to occur during the Olympic Games, as it would expose both spectators and competitors to an unacceptable risk of dog attack and tarnish Queensland's reputation.

Robust enforcement and effective dog management measures must be in place to ensure the safety of all participants and visitors during Olympic events and afterwards.

I recommend that the government conduct regular, independent surveys of the beaches and foreshore areas at Airlie Beach, Townsville and other coastal areas if necessary. The findings should be published to ensure transparency. These surveys should specifically assess general safety and dog control compliance, and operate independently of local council activities to provide an objective overview of conditions in these public spaces.

I also recommend establishing a dedicated system of Beach Wardens to monitor and safeguard crown land areas below the mean high tide line.

These Beach Wardens would be employed by the state government and have full state legal authority to enforce regulations on crown land.

These Beach Wardens could have a number of duties including:

- Ensure compliance with dog leash laws and restricted beaches for dogs.
- Monitor beaches and coastal areas for pollution, erosion, and wildlife conditions.
- Promote public safety and environmental conservation.

While hosting the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, international attention will be on Queensland, while a serious dog attack during this global event would tarnish the state's reputation. Proactive measures such as Beach Wardens would demonstrate Queensland's commitment to public safety and environmental stewardship.

Many dogs are being taken into national parks and World Heritage areas.

With increasing numbers of non-compliant dogs on beaches in Townsville and Airlie Beach, dogs are frequently being taken onto nearby islands, most of which are national parks and a part of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

These dogs are usually off-leash and allowed to freely roam the islands, creating risks for both wildlife and people in the area.

Magnetic Island near Townsville is 50% national park or conservation park, and all dogs are required to be on-leash on all parts of the island. 16

Despite this, 100% of dogs are off-leash on every beach on Magnetic Island, and often off-leash in the picnic areas and public swimming enclosures. These off-leash dogs are a significant risk to wildlife such as native shore birds, as well as making it too dangerous for members of the public to walk along a beach, make use of picnic and barbecue facilities, or swim in the enclosures.

Such off-leash and uncontrolled dogs will undermine Queensland's reputation as a safe area for tourists to visit.

Recently on a weekend, five dogs were taken onto just three national park islands a few kilometres from Airlie Beach, and all dogs were off-leash and freely allowed to wander the national park islands. One dog owner obtained a Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services (QPWS) permit to camp on Armit Island, and then took two dogs with them. Another dog owner had two dogs off-leash on nearby Olden Island that is an important bird nesting site, and also lit a large bonfire on the beach, which could have burnt out the island and was strictly prohibited.

Such incidents are now highly typical of the ongoing breaches of regulations in these protected and environmentally sensitive areas. 17

Photographs in the supplementary file illustrate some of the problems with current dog control on public land and national parks.

Most of these island national parks are also a part of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, and the continued presence of off-leash and uncontrolled dogs would undermine Queensland's reputation for environmental stewardship, potentially impacting the World Heritage status of the Great Barrier Reef.

Effective enforcement is necessary to uphold Queensland's commitment to conservation and support the ongoing protection of its World Heritage values.

Clear signage that also contains the phone number of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services, stricter adherence to regulations, and immediate on-the-spot fines for non-compliance would ensure that these protected areas remain safe havens for native wildlife and maintain their ecological integrity and World Heritage values.

References

- (1) <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Work-of-Committees/Committees/Committee-Details?cid=272&id=4521>
- (2) <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/102254>
- (3) <https://giica.au/about/about-the-authority>
- (4) <https://redsuburbs.com.au/suburbs/airlie-beach/>
- (5) <https://opensuburb.com.au/suburb/airlie-beach-qld-4802/crime-safety>
- (6) <https://redsuburbs.com.au/suburbs/townsville-city/>
- (7) <https://www.whitsundayrc.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/1726/23-april-2025-unconfirmed-ordinary-council-meeting-minutes>
- (8) <https://www.townsville.qld.gov.au/building-planning-and-projects/works-and-road-closures/list-view>
- (9) <https://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/Travel-and-transport/Pedestrians-and-walking/Guidance-and-Resources/Pedestrian-and-Walking-Guidance-and-Resources/Paths-for-walking>
- (10) <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/102485>
- (11) <https://www.rbwhfoundation.com.au/blog/rbwh-foundation-research-shows-e-scooter-users-still-not-taking-safety-seriously>
- (12) <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Work-of-Committees/Committees/Committee-Details?id=4522>
- (13) https://www.resources.qld.gov.au/?a=109113%3Apolicy_registry%2Fallocating-state-land-coastal-areas.pdf&ver=2.02
- (14) <https://www.townsville.qld.gov.au/about-council/news-and-publications/media-releases/2024/november/dog-owner-responsibility-urged-following-news-reports>
- (15) <https://www.uq.edu.au/news/article/2016/04/protecting-migratory-birds-when-our-beaches-have-gone-dogs-0>
- (16) <https://parks.desi.qld.gov.au/parks/magnetic-island/visiting-safely>
- (17) <https://parks.desi.qld.gov.au/before-you-visit/dogs-and-pets>

Supplementary file

This key footpath along Shute Harbour Road in Airlie Beach is only about 1 metre wide and barely sufficient for a person with a two-wheeled shopping trolley, as illustrated in the accompanying photo.

The footpath runs to an important community hub and shopping centre that contains doctors, physiotherapy, pathology, dentists, chemists, a supermarket, banks, and several retail shops.

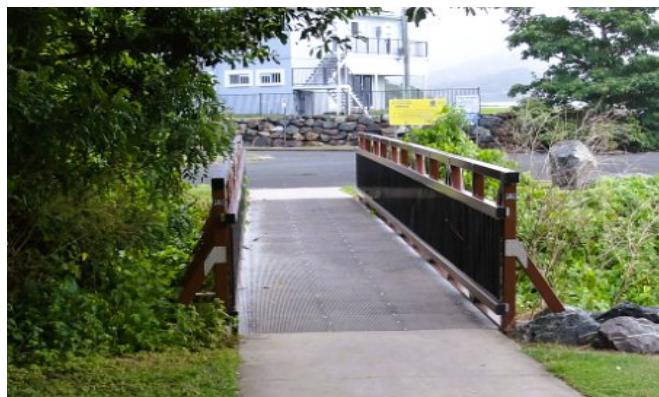
Despite its importance, this footpath serves as a shared path for pedestrians, e-scooters, and bicycles, yet it falls well short of the Queensland minimum standard width of 2.5 metres for a shared path.

To be considered suitable as an Olympic Games venue, such footpaths must be upgraded to at least the minimum standard width to ensure safety and functionality for all users.



This pathway bridge at Airlie Beach is only 1 year old. It is a heavily used shared pathway for pedestrians, e-scooters, and bicycles, although it doesn't meet the minimum standard width of 2.5 metres for a shared path.

Despite being recently built, this bridge and associated pathways will have to be rebuilt to at least minimum standard width before Airlie Beach could be accepted as an Olympic Games venue.



Rarely is any dog on a leash on any beach in the Airlie Beach area, creating many unsafe situations and an example is shown in the photograph.

These two dogs had formed a pack and were running up and down the beach chasing native shore birds and anything that moved. Such situation make it too dangerous for the public to be on the beaches, particularly children.

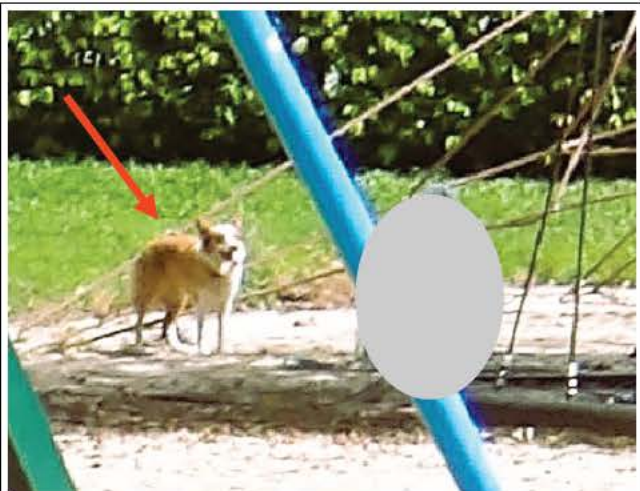
All dogs must be under effective control of their owner, and the beaches made safe before Airlie Beach could be accepted as an Olympic Games venue for foreshore events such as sailing.



Dogs that are off-leash and not under effective control are frequently found on the foreshore areas of Airlie Beach.

A dog in the left photograph was off-leash in a public picnic and barbecue area, while a dog on the right was off-leash inside a children's playground. Such dogs are very common, creating unsafe and unhygienic conditions.

All dogs must be under effective control of their owner and public areas made safe and hygienic before Airlie Beach could be accepted as an Olympic Games venue.



At Grimston Point, just north of Airlie Beach, dog owners were recently observed allowing their dog off-leash directly in front of a Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) sign stating that dogs are prohibited in the area.

Such signs have become meaningless. Rarely is a dog on a leash on a mainland beach, and now many dog owners routinely run their dogs off-leash in nearby national park areas where dogs are explicitly prohibited.

The ongoing issue of dogs in national parks and prohibited area undermines Queensland's reputation for environmental stewardship. If this situation continues to worsen, it could also put the World Heritage status of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park at risk.

This highlights the need for improved enforcement on the mainland beaches and in the national parks to protect sensitive environments and ensure compliance with regulations.

