

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

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Submitted by:	Jennifer Elkow
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Submission to the Queensland Parliament

Re: Planning, Social Impact and Community Benefit and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

From: Jennifer Elkow, Kelvin Grove QLD

Email: [REDACTED] | **Phone:** [REDACTED]

Dear Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission regarding the *Planning, Social Impact and Community Benefit and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025*. I write to strongly oppose the proposed amendments that would allow the Olympic planning authority to override 15 existing planning, environmental, and cultural protection laws. These changes significantly threaten democratic governance, the separation of powers, and our environment. I am also deeply opposed to building stadiums at Victoria Park.

I have deep personal connection to Victoria Park, having used it daily during my treatment and recovery from Stage 3 cervical cancer at the RBWH. Vic Park provides me with space to move, heal, and reconnect with nature during one of the hardest times in my life. I still use it regularly for walks and community connection. It is one of the few accessible green spaces near my home and I've enjoyed watching as more people like me discover and enjoy the park each weekend. It has become a rare and precious green space within close proximity to the city centre, and I am devastated by the prospect of losing it. For many it is not just a park but a vital part of our physical and mental wellbeing. Stadium developments there would be a huge loss to our city's future.

The Queensland Government's own Victoria Park / Barrambin Master Plan was developed through extensive consultation, including with First Nations groups, and widely supported by the public envisioning a green legacy for Brisbane honouring its cultural, ecological, and recreational value that is free to enjoy all day, every day. Turning this into stadium sites is a downgrade for the city's livability, environmental, and public life and the proposed laws undermines the trust people have placed in the Government to protect green space and improve everyone's livability.

This amendment removes essential democratic safeguards. The environmental laws in question exist to ensure development that respects natural and cultural heritage. Overriding these laws sets a dangerous precedent and threatens Queensland's international reputation already making the news in France with more likely to follow. The IOC encourages host cities to preserve green spaces and avoid building on heritage or ecologically sensitive land. Sydney's Olympic legacy, involved the remediation of industrial land and the legacy from Expo88 reinvigorated a largely derelict industrial site creating more green park space rather than paving over it. Brisbane has the opportunity for smarter planning without sacrificing hard-won protections to develop concreted space for expensive events.

From a planning perspective, this proposal is fraught with issues. Victoria Park is bounded by Queensland's largest hospital, major university campuses, and the Inner City Bypass, with limited road access via a narrow two-lane road. Infrastructure costs have not been clearly disclosed, and it's unclear how traffic, emergency access, and ongoing community use would be managed. The burden on councils could be immense, with limited recourse.

There is a concerning lack of transparency around these proposals. Changes were announced just days before the federal election, a time when public attention was elsewhere. Even now, many local residents are unaware of the scale or implications of what is being proposed however, just as I have, others become increasingly concerned and opposed the more they hear about the plans. Stakeholders have not been properly consulted, and the committee's own minutes suggest an intention to reduce transparency and limit the rights of the public to challenge or appeal decisions. The Olympic authority would shrink from 24 to 15 members, with the executive reduced from five to just three and be exempt from judicial review.

This undermines public oversight, and the separation of powers, fundamental to democracy. The judiciary ensures the government acts within the law and removing this safeguard is alarming. The same government advocating for greater consultation for renewable energy projects of state significance is now stripping away consultation for Olympic developments, even that will impact communities for decades.

RMIT's Centre for Urban Research shows Brisbane ranks low among Australian capital cities for access to large green spaces. Only 46% of households in Brisbane LGA have access to a park over 5 hectares and the LGA includes Moreton Island and large national parks, meaning the real figure for inner Brisbane is far lower. Vic Park is one of the few large green spaces available in the inner city, including people undergoing treatment at RBWH and students and staff at nearby universities.

Concerning a facility to hold the Olympic Opening Ceremony, there are better, less destructive solutions. Innovative event production, as seen in large international concerts like the LA Fire concert, allows for brilliant events held between multiple venues and could be adapted for us utilising the Gabba and Suncorp resulting in more people being able to attend live and bigger opportunities for stage production. Instead of rushing to override laws and bulldoze through a deeply flawed stadium proposal, we should embrace our heritage and environmental laws as a challenge to create a beloved sustainable Olympic legacy.

I support the Olympics. I was excited when Brisbane won the bid. However, I am disheartened by the current planning direction. This approach does not reflect the values we should uphold as a host city and is not the legacy I believe we should have. If this amendment is necessary for olympic venues, it is not a legacy we should be proud of.

I urge the Committee to reject these law changes, preserve our environmental protections, uphold democratic process, and stop the stadium proposal for Victoria Park.

Victoria Park is already a legacy – one we should be enhancing, not paving over.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Elkow

Kelvin Grove QLD

Email:

Phone: