

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

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Submission to the State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee

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

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Dear Committee members,

Victoria Park Cultural Value

I have a love of Victoria Park/ Barrambin, and deeply value this green respite from the intensely busy and traffic-polluted surrounding city areas. I have known for 35 years that it is a profoundly important place for the Aboriginal peoples of the Brisbane area, with its historic memory and the archaeological evidence of millennia of hunting and 'camping' grounds. The place is a direct heritage link to pre-European settlement and is vitally important for the connection and continuation of Culture and Identity – not just Aboriginal Identity, but that of wider Brisbane. It is an essential place and part of our story-telling, providing a keystone to our Sense of Place.

Detailed Masterplanning over ten years

I was involved in the Brisbane City Council in the initial phase of stakeholder engagement for Victoria Park's Masterplan back in 2015 as the senior program officer of the Community Engagement Centre of Excellence. The Masterplan been more than 10 years in the making and it is a terrible insult to the residents of Brisbane that this will be thrown away in the pre-Olympic Games urgency to construct stadiums.

Political Risk

The high level of political risk that will be incurred by driving this project forward, overriding environmental and cultural protection measures, is not to be underestimated. For every submission made, there are countless residents who are appalled by this proposal. Submissions are the 'tip of the iceberg' of community sentiment.

I submit the following additional points for consideration:

A stadium in Victoria Park is nonviable:

Building a stadium in Victoria Park / Barrambin is impractical, environmentally damaging, and contrary to community interests. Key reasons include:

1. **Challenging Topography:** The park's hilly terrain and hard Brisbane Tuff rock would require extensive excavation and blasting, increasing costs and potentially disrupting nearby hospitals due to vibrations.
2. **Violation of Olympic Host Requirements:** Constructing a stadium here would breach the Olympic Host Contract, which mandates avoiding permanent structures in protected areas and prioritizing previously developed sites.
3. **Existing Traffic Congestion:** The area already experiences significant traffic from nearby hospitals, schools, and universities. A stadium would exacerbate congestion, affecting emergency services and daily commutes.
4. **Inadequate Public Transport:** Unlike other stadiums, Victoria Park lacks sufficient public transport access. The nearest station is a considerable walk away, posing challenges for attendees, especially those with mobility issues.
5. **Loss of Essential Green Space:** As Brisbane's largest inner-city park, Victoria Park provides vital green space in a city already lacking in such areas. A stadium would significantly reduce this public amenity. There are mature native trees in this park which pre-date European settlement and date to pre-1750.
6. **Proximity to Major Hospital:** The park is adjacent to the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital. Stadium events could disrupt hospital operations, affecting patient care and staff.
7. **Lack of Surrounding Amenities:** The area lacks the bars, restaurants, and entertainment venues that typically support stadium events, leading to potential overdevelopment within the park itself.
8. **Environmental Impact:** The park serves as a natural cooling area, mitigating urban heat. Development would increase heat retention and reduce air quality.
9. **Cultural Significance:** Victoria Park holds deep cultural importance for First Nations communities. Development risks disturbing sacred sites and erasing historical significance.
10. **Every inch of Victoria Park is heritage listed at the local or state level.** This land is part of the story of Brisbane and has a rich WWII and depression era history.
11. **Community Opposition:** There is strong public resistance to the stadium proposal, with concerns about environmental degradation, cultural disrespect, and loss of public space.

What the Bill Would Do

The Bill proposes to list a Stadium in Victoria Park as an 'authority venue' for the 2032 Olympics. The Bill would exempt construction of such Olympics venues and villages from 15 Queensland planning, environmental and heritage laws. The Bill would also remove any access to the Courts in relation to the construction of Olympics venues or villages. It would also override First Nations cultural heritage protections using a new process which railroads First Nations into a default plan if they don't agree in the timeline specified by the Bill.

Why This Concerns Queenslanders

The Bill removes public safeguards by effectively exempting Olympic venues and villages from laws that apply to ordinary Queenslanders. This includes the Planning Act, Heritage Act, and Environmental Protection Act.

Access to the Courts is a basic right of all Queenslanders. The Bill proposes to remove this right with sweeping provisions in relation to Olympics venues and villages.

The Bill introduces a fast-tracked cultural heritage scheme that limits consultation and allows default plans without the agreement of Traditional Owners and Traditional Custodians.

The potential use of public parkland for commercial Olympic 'villages' risks corruption. These exemptions from planning laws and court review bypass scrutiny and reduce transparency when privatising very valuable public assets.

My request of the Committee

I respectfully ask that your report to Parliament recommend that:

1. Victoria Park / Barrambin be removed from Schedule 1 (Authority Venues);
2. The cultural heritage override provisions be withdrawn;
3. Olympic developments be subject to existing Queensland laws like all other developments;
4. The Victoria Park Master Plan be upheld as a reflection of the community's vision for the park.

Respectfully,

Rachel Apelt