

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

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I am writing to formally oppose the Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. While the bill proposes stronger social impact scrutiny for renewable energy projects, it simultaneously reduces oversight for state-sanctioned infrastructure. This inconsistency sends a troubling message: that environmental laws will be applied selectively rather than consistently, undermining public confidence in the integrity of our planning system. Particularly concerning is the proposal to exempt projects linked to the 2032 Brisbane Olympics from key environmental and planning protections. At a time when environmental responsibility is more critical than ever, this step backward risks profound and irreversible damage to Queensland's natural heritage — especially for one of our most iconic and endangered species: the koala. Koalas, recognised globally as a symbol of Australia's unique wildlife, are listed as endangered under both the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) and Queensland's Nature Conservation Act 1992. The changes put forward in this bill contradict these protections and would push koalas even closer to extinction. Although the State has identified koala habitat and priority conservation areas, Olympic infrastructure and other state-led developments are set to significantly impact these regions. According to the Statewide Landcover and Trees Study (SLATS) for 2021-22, 323,676 hectares of woody vegetation were cleared, with 83% completely removed. Further weakening of environmental regulations will harm koalas in multiple ways: Loss of habitat and preferred trees will disrupt the established home ranges of koalas and other species. Clearing and construction will fragment and sever wildlife travel routes and corridors. Koalas will be forced to travel greater distances, increasing their food needs in already challenging conditions, and heightening their risk of death from vehicle strikes, dog attacks, disease, and territorial conflict. Isolated populations will become even more genetically vulnerable. This will raise the risk of local extinctions, threatening the broader survival of koalas across Queensland. Over the past two decades, koala populations in Queensland have plummeted due to habitat loss. In many parts of South-East Queensland, remaining habitats have already been reduced to isolated patches, struggling to support viable populations. Weakening planning and environmental protections will only accelerate this decline. Core conservation safeguards must not be cast aside for political convenience. It is vital that this bill is rejected and that environmental laws remain robust, with full scrutiny applied to all projects — including Olympic and state-prioritised developments. In addition, stronger measures must be adopted under the SEQ Koala Conservation Strategy to: Substantially reduce full and partial clearance of koala habitats and priority areas. Significantly boost funding for habitat restoration, wildlife corridors, and safe movement infrastructure for wildlife. The Queensland Government holds not only a legal duty but also a moral obligation to protect our koalas for future generations. Passing this bill would prioritise short-term interests over the long-term health of our ecosystems and would mark a grave failure to safeguard one of our most treasured species. If this bill proceeds, it will send a signal that the Queensland Government is willing to trade the future of the koala for temporary infrastructure gains. Once these habitats are destroyed, they are gone forever. Once koalas are extinct in the wild, no Olympic medal, no infrastructure project, and no political legacy will be able to restore them. Their extinction would be a national tragedy and an irreversible loss for future generations. Short-term economic and political objectives must not come at the expense of long-term ecological responsibility and biodiversity conservation. I urge the Queensland Parliament to act in the interest of future generations, biodiversity, and the very identity of our state. Protect our koalas — do not pass this bill. Thank you.