

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

Submission No: 6
Submitted by: Kathryn Richardson
Publication: Making the submission and your name public
Attachments: No attachment

Submitter Comments:

I am writing to you opposing the Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. In particular, I have concerns that environmental laws will only be enforced selectively. The bill proposes that projects associated with the 2032 Brisbane Olympics be exempt from core environmental and planning laws. This lack of uniform environmental responsibility would have profound and irreversible consequences on Queensland's environment, particularly in relation to one of our most iconic and endangered species: the koala. Koalas are a symbol of Australian wildlife, recognised worldwide. They are currently listed as endangered under both the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) and the Nature Conservation Act 1992 (Qld). The amendments proposed in this bill run contrary to those responsibilities and will push them further toward extinction. While the State has mapped koala habitat and priority habitat, Olympic infrastructure and other planned state projects will significantly impact this. The Statewide Landcover and Trees Study (SLATS) for 2021-22 SLATS reported that 323,676 ha of woody vegetation was affected by clearing activity, with 83% being cleared in full. A further relaxation of environmental standards will have the following dire impacts on our local koala population: loss of habitat and individual preferred trees, impacting the established home ranges of koalas and other wildlife the removal of habitat along with new construction will change or sever existing travel routes and movement corridors for wildlife increased koala travel distance to source leaves/ find mates (likely then increasing their required nutrient intake and thereby also increasing their mortality rates from car strikes, domestic dog attacks, disease and territorial challenges) further isolating already fragile populations, eroding genetic diversity increase the risk of local koala extinction, impacting koala numbers more generally across the state. Koala populations in Queensland have already experienced a catastrophic decline over the last two decades due to habitat loss. Many areas across South-East Queensland have already had habitat decimated to fragmented patches which are increasingly at risk of no longer being able to support viable populations. Passing this bill will further exacerbate this by the relaxation of planning and environmental safeguards. Fundamental conservation safeguards must not be bypassed for political expediency. It is vital that this bill is rejected and the integrity of environmental laws are upheld, including full environmental scrutiny for Olympic-related and state-prioritised projects. Furthermore, additional safeguards must be implemented as part of the SEQ Koala Conservation Strategy to: significantly reduce the amount of full and partial clearance of koala habitat and priority areas significantly increase funding for restoration of koala habitat, wildlife corridors and wildlife movement infrastructure. The Queensland Government has both a legal responsibility for the protection of our koalas and a moral responsibility to safeguard them for future generations. It is not within the public interest to approve a bill that enables short-term gain at the cost of permanent environmental degradation and species loss. Allowing this bill to pass would signal the Queensland Government's unwillingness to protect our most vulnerable and to exchange infrastructure for risking the loss of this iconic species. Once these habitats are lost, they cannot be replaced. Short-term economic and political interests must not be prioritised over long-term ecological stewardship and biodiversity conservation. Once koalas are extinct in the wild, nothing will be able to bring them back. Their extinction would be an international disgrace and an irrevocable loss for all future generations. In addition, the long-term future of our ecotourism industry also depends on choosing to value and uphold koala protection. Many international visitors will flock to Brisbane for the 2032 Olympic games and aside from the sporting events, one of the main attractions visitors come to see is our unique and precious wildlife. Don't make the mistake of trading this long-term

asset for a short-term vision of event infrastructure for the 2032 Olympic games. I urge the Queensland Parliament to act in the best interests of future generations, environmental protection and moral decency. We are relying on you to represent Queenslanders wishes for protecting our current biodiversity and the future of ecotourism in our state. Protect our koalas now. Avoid future regret. Do not pass this bill. Thank you for giving this submission the serious consideration that it deserves.