

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

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I am writing to oppose the Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. This bill introduces stricter rules for renewable energy projects but reduces oversight for state infrastructure. This sends a message that environmental laws will be enforced selectively, which undermines public trust in planning. One major concern is that projects for the 2032 Brisbane Olympics would be exempt from key environmental and planning laws. This is a step back from environmental responsibility at a time when we need it most. If passed, this bill could have serious and irreversible effects on Queensland's environment, especially for the koala, one of our most iconic and endangered species. Koalas are a symbol of Australian wildlife and are recognized 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 changes proposed in this bill go against these protections and could push koalas closer to extinction. The state has mapped koala habitats, but Olympic infrastructure and other state projects are planned to significantly impact these areas. The Statewide Landcover and Trees Study (SLATS) for 2021-22 reported that 323,676 hectares of woody vegetation were affected by clearing, with 83% being fully cleared. Relaxing environmental standards will negatively impact koalas in several ways: Loss of habitat and preferred trees will disrupt koalas' home ranges. Habitat removal and construction will change or cut off travel routes for wildlife. Increased travel distances will raise their nutrient needs and mortality risks from car strikes, dog attacks, disease, and territorial fights. Isolated populations will lose genetic diversity, increasing the risk of local extinctions and affecting koalas across the state. Koala populations in Queensland have drastically declined over the last two decades due to habitat loss. Many areas in South-East Queensland have fragmented habitats that can no longer support viable populations. This will worsen with relaxed planning and environmental safeguards. Conservation safeguards must not be bypassed for political convenience. It is crucial that this bill is not passed and that environmental laws are upheld, including full scrutiny for Olympic-related and state-prioritized projects. Additional safeguards should be part of the SEQ Koala Conservation Strategy to: Reduce the clearance of koala habitats and priority areas. Increase funding for habitat restoration, wildlife corridors, and movement infrastructure. The Queensland Government has a legal and moral responsibility to protect koalas for future generations. It is not in the public interest to approve a bill that sacrifices long-term environmental health for short-term gains. Allowing this bill to pass would show the government's unwillingness to protect our most vulnerable species. Once koala habitats are lost, they cannot be replaced. Once koalas are extinct in the wild, no Olympic medal or infrastructure project can bring them back. Their extinction would be a national disgrace and a loss for future generations. Short-term economic and political interests should not be prioritised over long-term ecological stewardship and biodiversity conservation. I urge the Queensland Parliament to act in the interest of future generations, biodiversity, moral decency, and the identity of our state. Protect our koalas—do not pass this bill. Thank you.