

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

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1. Why Victoria Park Matters

Victoria Park / Barrambin is Brisbane's largest inner-city park. It spans over 64 hectares and is a rare green space for recreation, ecology, and cultural heritage. The site is deeply significant to Aboriginal peoples, and it also holds immense value for Brisbane's broader community.

The Victoria Park Master Plan was developed after almost four years of community consultation so the surprise announcement of Olympic venues in Victoria Park is a shocking betrayal of community trust. In addition, Brisbane City Council public monies of over \$33 million expenditure by February 2024 in Master Plan consultation and planning have been potentially wasted with this U-turn by the state government.

As a resident and regular user of Victoria Park, I'm deeply troubled by the proposed stadium development and its potential impact on both our green space and the nearby hospital. The park is one of the few remaining large green spaces in Brisbane, home to mature trees that pre-date European settlement and vital for cooling our city and maintaining air quality. Losing this park to a stadium would be a blow to both the environment and our community's well-being.

Moreover, the park's challenging terrain would require extensive excavation and blasting, causing noise and vibrations that could disrupt operations at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, compromising patient care and emergency services. The area is already congested with traffic from nearby hospitals, schools, and universities — adding stadium crowds would only worsen it.

Public transport access is inadequate, and the area lacks sufficient amenities to support large events without overdevelopment. Additionally, this project contradicts the Olympic Host Contract's mandate to avoid permanent structures in protected areas (specifically violating our host location requirements with the Olympic International Organising committee, which requires no Olympic construction can occur in statutory nature areas or culturally protected areas), disregards the Australian Academy of Science's sustainable urban strategy, and threatens culturally significant First Nations sites. The government's decision seems out of step with the values of sustainability and community legacy.

I have committed my career to improving outcomes for infants, children and their families. My children were, and continue to be, active sportsmen and women. We have centres for sporting excellence which, with appropriate planning can be redeveloped for the Olympics. We don't have enough green space. Green spaces and parks play a vital role in promoting the health and wellbeing of children. They provide an essential environment for physical activity, social interaction, and cognitive development. Access to natural settings encourages children to engage in outdoor play, which is crucial for physical fitness, coordination, and the development of motor skills.

Moreover, parks and green spaces offer a safe and accessible venue for children to socialise with peers, fostering social skills and emotional intelligence. These environments also provide opportunities for imaginative play, which is critical for cognitive development and creativity.

Research indicates that exposure to nature can significantly reduce stress, anxiety, and symptoms of attention deficit disorders in children. The calming effect of natural settings helps in regulating mood and improving focus and concentration. Additionally, spending time in green spaces has been linked to better sleep patterns and overall mental health.

Furthermore, green spaces act as educational platforms where children can learn about nature, wildlife, and environmental stewardship. Activities such as nature walks, gardening, and wildlife observation stimulate curiosity and promote a sense of responsibility toward the environment.

In urban areas, accessible parks and green spaces are particularly important for children who may lack access to private yards or recreational facilities. These areas serve as vital community hubs where children

can engage in structured and unstructured play, participate in sports, and connect with nature in ways that are often limited in densely populated areas.

Therefore, the integration of green spaces and parks into urban planning is essential to ensure that children have ample opportunities for play, relaxation, and exploration, contributing to their overall physical, social, and emotional wellbeing.

2. Why a Stadium in Victoria Park Doesn't Make Sense

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.
12. **This State Government decision does not align with the Australian Academy of Science Sustainable Cities and Regions: 10 Year strategy to enable urban systems transformation - which is plan for realising developmental opportunities for all Australians.**
13. **This decision is not investing in an environmentally nor economically sound legacy for Australian children.**

3. 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.

4. Why This Should Concern 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.

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.

5. What I Am Asking the Committee to Do

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.