

## **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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### **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.

After this consultation a considerable amount of money from Brisbane rate payers was invested in upgrading the park and in encouraging people to use it. This investment is now being wasted and the community facility trashed. **This makes it hard to trust both Brisbane City Council and State Governments in similar situations in the future.** The money would be far better spent on a range of other things - social housing and hospitals just for a start. If the government had as much political will regarding social housing and invested even part of the money pegged for the Olympic games in that, then the most vulnerable in our society would benefit relatively quickly. Political will and finance invested in the best and brightest and in highly visible stadiums is sadly more attractive than helping the really needy in our society.

Another thing that upsets me is that this decision was taken without any consultation with the local Indigenous leaders. This is a significant indigenous cultural heritage site, and once again this government has ridden rough shod over the wishes and sensibilities of the Indigenous community. This would not happen to other significant ethnic groups in Qld.

### **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.

### **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 overrides 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.

The fact that 15 different laws which were made in the past to stop exactly this kind of development and to protect things which we as a community regard as important is horrifying! It appears that political expediency is more important than them all and that the government as an institution can just disregard them at will, takes my breath away! What is the point of having laws which were passed to protect our community if the very people charged with implementing them can just completely disregard them? It is hard to imagine this decision being made during an election year but the Liberal party has time on their side to hope that it will not be remembered in another 2 and a half years but I personally doubt that - people do have long memories!

### **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.

Barbara Fell

