

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. BACKGROUND

Victoria Park was gazetted 150 years ago to be 'the lungs of the city'. It was then 130ha but after many 'good ideas' has now been whittled away to less than half of that. Brisbane currently has the least amount of inner city parkland than any other Australian capital city.

Even after all the slicing and dicing, Victoria Park is still 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.

It is time to protect this space, not destroy it with 2 massive stadiums.

Brisbane City Council's Victoria Park Master Plan, published in June 2023, envisaged it as Brisbane's Central Park. The Master Plan was developed after almost four years of community consultation, involving thousands of people, and costing Brisbane ratepayers over \$30M.

Never, ever, did this consultation talk about the new park having 1 a stadium.

This Master Plan, as well as all the associated time, energy and money, is another thing that will go by the wayside in the name of the Olympics.

The current Premier promised many times, before and after he was elected, that there would be no new stadium built as part of the Olympics and that Victoria Park was safe from a stadium build.

The announcement on 25 March that, not 1, but 2 Olympic Stadiums would be built in Victoria Park was a shocking betrayal of community trust and a gross waste of public funds - both Council and State moneys.

2. PRECIOUS HERITAGE GREEN SPACE - NOT VACANT LAND WAITING TO BE DEVELOPED

It seems that certain powerful groups have promulgated the notion that a park is a useless space; that buildings have more value than trees; that clean air and free open air spaces are not needed by the people of Brisbane. This is against all the research and incredibly short-sighted.

Building a stadium in Victoria Park is impractical, environmentally damaging, and contrary to community interests. Key reasons include:

(a) **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.

(b) **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.

(c) **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.

(d) **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.

(e) **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.

(f) **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.

(g) **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.

(h) **Environmental Impact:** The park serves as a natural cooling area, mitigating urban heat. Development would increase heat retention and reduce air quality.

(i) **Cultural Significance:** Victoria Park holds deep cultural importance for First Nations communities. Development risks disturbing sacred sites and erasing historical significance.

(j) **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.

(k) **Community Opposition:** There is strong public resistance to the stadium proposal, with concerns about environmental degradation, cultural disrespect, and loss of public space.

3. PROPOSED BILL

The Bill proposes to list Stadiums in Victoria Park as 'authority venues' 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. BACK TO THE FUTURE

I lived through the Bjelke-Petersen era when it was development that was prioritised above all else. For instance, there were no Heritage Laws and we lost a lot of historical buildings and spaces. We changed that; we brought in new legislation; we made sure the rights of ordinary Queenslanders were looked after. It's over 30 years later and here we have a government trying to take us back to those times.

The Bill removes public safeguards by effectively exempting Olympic venues and villages from laws that should apply. 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. I still remember the Fitzgerald Inquiry and subsequent Report in 1989 which laid bare deeply embedded corrupt practices in Queensland.

The exemptions from planning laws and court review bypass scrutiny and reduce transparency whilst privatising very valuable public assets. Victoria Park should remain free and open to all, rather than a select few who can afford to pay entry fees.

5. MY REQUESTS TO THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

I respectfully ask that your report to Parliament recommends that:

1. Victoria Park 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.



