

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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I was deeply disappointed to learn of the Queensland Government's plans to turn Victoria Park into an Olympic venue. This is ignoring the recent and wide community consultation that went into the development of the Victoria Park Master Plan which sought to recognise, protect and celebrate the natural values and cultural significance of this site.

This is a very poor decision for the people of Brisbane and Queensland, and will have negative ramifications for the community for generations to come if it goes ahead.

Why?

I will not speak here about the First Nations significance of the site, or the significance of the site regarding the early history of European colonisation of Brisbane. These are important considerations, but these are not my area of expertise.

What I want to talk about here are two things: the importance of this site for the mental health and wellbeing of the people of Brisbane, and the importance of this site for the conservation of our native wildlife.

Human wellbeing and mental health

Detailed, sound and extensive research in Australia and elsewhere has shown that green space and natural areas are vital for human wellbeing and mental health. Our shared personal experience of COVID lockdowns demonstrated to many people how important it was to be able to visit a local park or other natural area when times were tough. Many of us have experienced first-hand how spending time in green space improves our mental and emotional health and the science backs this up.

A government that had true vision, and the welfare of its citizens as its first priority,

would protect and enhance 'green space' areas in already developed places like the Brisbane CBD. Not build over a place like Victoria Park just so we can have a one-off sporting event that will be of dubious benefit to the community. As Brisbane's largest inner-city park, Victoria Park provides vital green space in a city already lacking in such areas. Turning it into an Olympic venue would significantly reduce this public amenity.

But it's not just 'amenity' we're talking about here. We're talking about the mental health of the citizens of Brisbane and Queensland. And we know that mental health problems, especially among young people, are at alarmingly high levels. This is a crisis that needs urgent action. Destroying our precious urban green space is not the answer – it will make the mental health crisis worse.

Biodiversity conservation, climate change, urban heating & air quality

Queensland has already destroyed and degraded vast areas of native vegetation, wetlands, and is in the process of losing over a thousand native plant and animal species that are currently threatened with extinction. Even where native forests are left (e.g. nearby Mt Coot-tha) often these areas have already been logged, and few large old trees remain. Yet large old trees play a significant role in providing habitat for animals and sequestering carbon, which mitigates climate change. Furthermore, we know that we need to plant more trees in and around cities to reduce urban heating and mitigate air pollution. This is for the benefit of wildlife but also simply to stop people dying from overheating and poor air quality. Yet the plans to build an Olympic venue at Victoria Park will no doubt lead to the removal of many trees, and many of them large and old, with negative flow-on effects for biodiversity, climate change, urban heating and air quality. This cost to the welfare of future generations is just too much for the small gains that creating an Olympic venue would bring.

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.
5. Areas of green space in urban areas be protected and expanded.

Regards,
Dr Paula Peeters

Dr Paula Peeters



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I acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal owners of Country throughout Australia and pay my respects to them, their culture and their Elders past, present and future.

Jingeri wallal wahlu - 'good day' in the Yugambeh language spoken where I live in the Gold Coast Hinterland. You can learn more about the traditional owners in Queensland using the [Indigenous Languages Map of Queensland](#).

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