

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)

May 2025

Introduction

As a local resident living near Victoria Park in the Kelvin Grove Urban Village (KGUV), I oppose the proposed adoption of the POLA Bill as it relates to the Olympic Games Venues. I respectfully ask decision makers to consider making the following recommendation –

- 1) Victoria Park/ Barrambin be removed from Schedule 1 (Authority venues)
- 2) The cultural heritage provisions be withdrawn,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 visions for the park

My reasons for requesting changes to the Bill are as follows –

- 1) The legislation is to fast track the destruction of a park with known heritage and environmental values.
- 2) The legislation conflicts with the public responsibility of holding the park in trust for current and future Brisbane residents.
- 3) It may affect the current democratic rights of local residents to review the development proposals
- 4) It takes away the current rights of the public to contribute to decision making about issues that affect them.

I outline my reasons in detail below for the Committee's consideration

1) Legislation is to facilitate the loss of a cultural and environmentally important park

In 1875, one hundred and fifty years ago this year, Victoria Park was gazetted for the use of the people of Brisbane. It has significant First Nations, early European settlement, cultural and WWII historical values as well as environmental values. The Park makes a significant contribution to the amenity and urban character of Brisbane as the green link between the City's Roma Street Parklands and the Exhibition Grounds at Bowen Hills. Victoria Park should be considered in the same context as parks that are part of the identity of other notable cities such as Boston (Emerald Necklace), London and Paris.

The Park was set aside for the people of Brisbane in a Trust arrangement and subsequent legislation about Victoria Park references this. Since 1875, Brisbane residents and governments have kept this green space intact until now. The adoption of the proposed Bill is intended to override existing legislation which protects these cultural and environmental values. It conflicts with the intent to which the park was dedicated to the people of

Brisbane. The Park is a gazetted public park and is not unused or unallocated. Overriding current legislation sets a concerning precedent.

2) Conflict with public responsibility to maintain the Park for current and future generations.

In setting the park aside in the 19th century, the Government recognised that there was a need for people living in the densely populated areas of Spring Hill to be able to have an area for recreation. This is still true today for those living in high density environments in the locality (Fortitude Valley, Bowen Hills, Spring Hill, Herston and Kelvin Grove). The Kelvin Grove Urban Village (KGUV) accommodates several thousand people. Victoria Park is the nearest mid-size parkland where people can move freely and walk pets. During COVID it was the only nearby place people could get to and it was extremely well used – even when still technically a golf course. There is no other comparable park locally.

The Bill should not take away the rights that local residents have to access and enjoy usable public parkland. This access should be considered as essential today as it was 150 years ago. Parkland is a key part of the relaxed sub-tropical identity of Brisbane. There are other existing, better located and better serviced locations for stadiums, but in inner northside Brisbane there is no other public park with the same attributes.

3) Removal of the existing rights of local residents to review development

Victoria Park is described as 64 ha. It is highly constrained, being split by the inner city bypass and rail line, bounded to the south by the historical suburb of Spring Hill and its key private schools; to the east – by the Brisbane Exhibition grounds and to the north - the Royal Brisbane and STARS Hospitals and housing at Herston. It is then tightly bookended to west by high density residential units in the KGUV, QUT and Kelvin Grove Schools.

This indicates that there is likely to be considerable challenges in developing this relatively small site. The proposals presented to the public are currently a collection of sketches and ideas. The actual location of buildings is not established, there is no way to assess what the impact on local residents will be.

Unlike other major proposals in Brisbane, there has been no detailed consultation with local residents and no release of technical reports or studies. Adjoining residential development in Herston and Kelvin Grove was not undertaken with a 63,000 seat stadium next door. Residential development in KGUV, have open living areas leading to balconies, open corridors and clear glazed windows - unsuitable for being located near a noisy venue.

Construction is likely to last years and there could be impacts on adjoining residents from activities undertaken on the site as well as traffic. Other potential impacts which could affect residents when the stadium is in operation include noise, and increased activity lighting and traffic. If the development was undertaken under current planning arrangements, local residents would be consulted and have the opportunity to review the plans and request changes. Law makers are requested to consider whether the Bill is consistent with the principles of the Human Rights Act.

4) Removing current rights of the public to contribute to decision making.

Public involvement in development proposals should not be limited. Other urban renewal areas where development have been streamlined are usually larger areas without large numbers of people living in high density environments in close proximity. For comparison, Sydney Olympic Park is described as covering a wider area of 640 ha - some ten times the size of Victoria Park.

In addition to the impact on residents, of concern is that there has been no discussion about any impact on the Royal Brisbane and STARS hospitals. For reference, Suncorp stadium which is smaller and considered to be well located still generates large amounts of traffic when in use. The new stadium is proposed to be located some distance from the nearest mass transit points being Roma Street train station (34 mins by foot for an average person) Exhibition train station (20mins by foot) and Fortitude Valley station (25 mins by foot). Given the inconvenient distance, hilly topography and Brisbane's weather, many people will still choose to come by car. Car parking is a currently an issue in the area due to the hospitals, QUT and schools. At this stage, there has been very little information about this and what it means for people accessing medical services.

The Bill should not take away the current rights of the public to comment on and be involved in development decision making. Victoria Park is a constrained, challenging and unsuitable location for a major stadium venue and, therefore there is a need to retain the existing and appropriate regulatory framework.

Given the attributes of Victoria Park and the impact from the proposed development on the locality, it is requested that the proposals be withdrawn and a better serviced and located site for the Olympic proposals be found.