

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

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No Development Should Get a Free PassThe Queensland Government has introduced the Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 to Parliament and is accepting submissions until Tuesday May 20. In summary, this Bill: Exempts Olympic developments from 15 planning and environment laws; and Requires large scale wind and solar projects to have signed a Community Benefit agreement with the local council before submitting their development application. This Bill is absolute avenue for corruption and flaunting of already weak environmental protections. I am deeply concerned that the Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) Bill sets a dangerous precedent by allowing Olympic developments to override environment and planning law. When the world turns its attention to Queensland for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic games, I want our great state to be celebrated for our natural environment and rich cultural heritage. To ensure international visitors can appreciate our precious natural wonders, like the Great Barrier Reef and iconic local koala populations, we need to take strong climate action while ensuring that all development is properly assessed and well-sited. I am particularly concerned about the implications of this Bill on the Aboriginal cultural heritage at Barrambin (Victoria Park) and the potential environmental impacts at Redlands Whitewater Centre. These sensitive sites must be assessed thoroughly, not exempt from planning and environment laws.

As a Redlander, I know how much the proposed Whitewater Centre facility is unwanted by the community, as a former regional Queenslander, who loves the Far North. I am asking why Cairns is not the natural area for the Whitewater Centre. They have lots of it, certainly could do with a training centre considering the flooding etc up North and also the boost to the area's economy. I support making sure that renewable energy developers fully articulate the impacts of projects and that benefits flow to the local community. However, I am concerned that these rules may not deliver these benefits and could instead be used to delay or reject renewable projects. I urge the State Government to accelerate the Renewable Energy Zone framework to guide local development, provide further support through Local Energy Hubs so that communities can negotiate effectively with developers, and fund local councils to develop, with communities, investment priorities for community benefit funds. I also urge the Government to apply the same requirements on community benefit agreements to resource projects, and maintain community objection rights for resource projects. I am concerned that there is a loophole allowing a coal mine that extracts less than 2 million tonnes per annum to avoid full environmental impact assessment, whereas a 2 hectares solar farm would be impact assessable and have to deliver a community benefit agreement and social impact assessment report. All developments should be rigorously assessed for the environmental and community impact – Olympic venues and the resources sector should not get a free pass. Regards Deborah Wenham