

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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Submission

Dear Sir/Madam

I wish to offer the following submission in objection to the State Government's proposed POLA amendment to the existing Olympic Act. Our family have been Kelvin Grove residents for the past 35 years and frequent users of Victoria Park. We have lived through the development of the Inner City Bypass and the Victoria Park Busway so I am well aware of the magnitude of the impacts these developments have had on the Park and on our local community. As a local resident, I engaged in the extensive public consultation for the Brisbane City Council's (BCC) master planning process for the redevelopment of Victoria Park/Barrambin. Consequently, I have extensive lived-experience and understanding of the implications for the Park and its surrounding community from the proposed development of the Olympic Stadiums and associated infrastructure.

To be clear, I am not against the 2032 Brisbane Olympic Games. I do however have serious concerns with the rigor of the State Government's 100 Day Review's cost-benefit assessment of the shortlisted development sites. A robust options analysis of economic, financial, social and environmental aspects and effective public consultation are fundamental principles of sustainable project development. The 100 Day Review report contained significant weaknesses and discrepancies in the level rigor of the assessment of the various sites and in the ultimate decision to support the development of the stadiums in Victoria Park/Barrambin.

I am stridently against the elected State Government's proposed introduction of the POLA amendments, thereby attempting to remove the usual stakeholder consultation processes that would normally occur for developments of this magnitude. The proposed Olympic stadiums in Victoria Park will have a significant impact on the environment, cultural heritage and the local community. Our family lives on the boundary of the Park and will be directly impacted by the construction and the future operations of the stadium and associated developments. The proposed legislation is a deprivation of personal and community civil rights to timely consultation about developments that directly impact upon them. The proposed legislation will deliberately stifle any form of community consultation with respect to any Olympic infrastructure and the mitigation of the effects of these developments on the local community.

1. Why Victoria Park Matters

Victoria Park/Barrambin is Brisbane's largest inner-city park. It spans over 64 hectares and is a much-needed public green space for recreation, and a habitat for a range of protected flora and fauna species. The Park is also deeply significant to Brisbane's First Nations peoples, and it also holds significant historical and heritage value for Brisbane's broader community. The Park provides an important ecosystem which provides carbon and heat sequestration and is the 'lungs of the city'. With the inner-city population increasing rapidly, there is even greater need to protect the existing green space.

The BCC Victoria Park/Barrambin Master Plan, developed after almost four years of community consultation, reinforced the value to the community of retaining the Park as a public green space. The BCC, GIIA and the current Queensland Government's eleventh-hour surprise announcement of Olympic venues in Victoria Park is a shocking betrayal of community trust, a total waste of residents' time in participating in community consultation and a waste of nearly \$4 million dollars of ratepayers money expended by the BCC on this project thus far. Voters of all political persuasions will remember this betrayal for years to come and this action will not be excused lightly.

2. Why a Stadium in Victoria Park/Barrambin is the Wrong Solution.

There are other brownfield sites available that also offer similar if not better outcomes for the broader Brisbane community. Building a stadium in Victoria Park/Barrambin is impractical on many levels, environmentally damaging, and contrary to broad community interests. Key reasons include:

1. Prioritisation of narrow commercial interests over broader community needs: The development of the main 63,000-person stadium is driven heavily by private corporate interests of already well-funded sporting clubs on land that was set aside for the public and for the 'lungs of the city'. GIIA's own report makes no secret of this noting "*The new location delivers long-term operational and commercial benefits for tenants*" (pg53 100 Day Review Report, 2025).
2. Challenging Topography: The Park's hilly terrain and hard Brisbane Tuff rock would require extensive excavation and blasting, increasing costs and disrupting surrounding residential dwellings, nearby childcare services, educational institutions, hospitals as a result of air and ground-borne noise and vibrations.
3. Violation of Olympic Host Requirements: Constructing a stadium in the Park contravenes the Olympic Host Contract, which mandates avoiding permanent structures in protected areas and prioritizing previously developed sites. Note that there are alternate sites (some not discussed in the recent 100 Day Review) that do not violate these requirements.
4. The development in the heritage-listed Park also violates the commitments of GIIA's own 'Legacy Strategy: Elevate 2042', including protecting the environment and respecting First Nations and connection to country. Additionally, the watering-down of the host city's commitment to a nature-positive Olympics is also notable and highlights the poorly considered decision to locate the Olympic infrastructure in this much needed public green space. The repealing of the Vegetation Management Act and the Environmental Offsetting Act highlight the

lack of regard that the Government/GIICA has for the environment and the legacy for our children and future generations. This will not be missed by the international community and will be an embarrassment for our city, Queensland and for Australia.

5. Existing Traffic Congestion around the Park: The local area already experiences significant traffic during peak periods, including from nearby hospitals, schools, and universities. The construction and operation of the stadiums in the Park will exacerbate the situation, adversely affecting emergency services, hospital workers and patient families at the State's largest hospital, local residents and daily commuters.

6. Inadequate Public Transport: Unlike other stadiums, Victoria Park lacks sufficient public transport access. The nearest station to some of the proposed locations is 800-1,000 metres walk away, posing challenges for attendees, especially those with mobility issues. The costs to upgrade the Woolloongabba Station and the BCC's recent announcement that the Storey Bridge will require extensive upgrading in the next 15 years highlights the need for Council and State-funding to be prioritised on critical infrastructure that benefits the entire city, not just already well-funded sporting groups. The BCC's own report highlights the expected costs, noting *"Current industry-wide market conditions and an upcoming boom in infrastructure delivery across the region ahead of the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, is expected to result in significant cost increases to deliver infrastructure projects in the coming years"*.

7. 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 that need to be preserved.

8. 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.

9. Lack of Surrounding Amenities: The area lacks the bars, restaurants, and entertainment venues that typically support stadium events, thus leading to potential further development within the Park itself.

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

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

12. 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.

13. Community Opposition: There is strong public resistance to the stadium proposal, with concerns about environmental degradation, cultural disrespect, and loss of public space. Local community residents are cognisant of the fact that the recently elected Premier gave an unequivocal undertaking of "No new stadiums" before the recent State election and then subsequently backflipped after the election. Furthermore, the Premier gave an undertaking that the 100 Day Review terms of reference would include the "No New Stadiums" and the preservation of Victoria Park/Barrambin.

The local Victoria Park community and general public have every right to be disenchanted with the democratic process in this instance. The proposed POLA Amendments will override any

further community opinion or participation in the currently proposed Victoria Park Olympic stadium or the mitigation of the effects of the development on the remaining parkland and the local community. All Queenslanders may ask ‘what is the use of having legislation to safeguard our environment, our heritage and our public assets if they can be so easily over-ridden by an elected government against the wishes of the community? This is not democracy as we expect it in our great state and country.

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 the proposed Olympic venues and villages from 15 Queensland planning, environmental and heritage laws; the Bill would remove any public access to the Courts in relation to the construction of Olympic venues or villages, and 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. Why This Should Concern Queenslanders

GIICA's own 100 Day Review report noted that post-review priorities included: “*engaging key stakeholders to progress planning and ensure alignment with broader city and community objectives*” (GIICA, 2025, p55). 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 Queensland and Australian citizens. The Bill proposes to remove this right with sweeping provisions in relation to Olympics venues and villages, which are currently poorly defined and have not benefited from rigorous feasibility studies, environmental and social impact studies, nor have directly affected stakeholders, including local residents, children, youth, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, been consulted.

The Bill introduces a fast-tracked cultural heritage scheme that limits consultation and allows default plans without the agreement of Traditional Owners.

During the Australian Olympic Committee's site visit on the 9 May 2025, AOC representative, Mr Jacob Anson, stated that 5 hectares of the Park on the Herston Road side would be used to build apartments. It is noted that Mr Anson “*led the venues portfolio, government relations and community programs at the Brisbane Lions and for the AFL in Queensland*” (Committee for Brisbane website, 2025). The potential use of public parkland for commercial interests under the guise of ‘Olympic villages’ is a conflict of interest by the property developers who are currently involved with the various Olympic planning and development bodies, thus opening the potential for future commercial exploitation. These exemptions from planning laws and court review, bypass scrutiny and reduce transparency when privatising these valuable public assets.

In short, I view the proposed POLA Amendments Bill as a removal of the public's civil rights. If introduced, the Bill would effectively remove all safeguards (as currently legislated under Queensland State law) which protect Victoria Park from major commercial development and ensure its continuation as a public space as proposed by its original designation. Moreover, POLA Amendment Bill would also remove any further public/community input (which is our right) to any part of the Olympic development and infrastructure. The removal of this

fundamental right does not serve the residents of Queensland, nor protect the existing Park for future generations which is also their right.

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 – this includes adherence to all existing protective laws and regulations which pertain to major developments of this kind. This would also include public consultation with directly affected communities for all development projects proposed for the 2032 Olympics.
4. The BCC Victoria Park/Barrambin Master Plan's recommendations be upheld as a reflection of the community's vision for the Park.
5. Within the Committee's power to do so, that the Committee recommend that an alternate site for the Olympic Stadiums be researched immediately and actioned accordingly.
6. A more detailed options analysis, including environmental, social and cultural heritage impact assessment of shortlisted options (including Doomben Racecourse) be publicly disclosed prior to any final commitment to develop the stadiums in Victoria Park/Barrambin.

Yours faithfully

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Kelvin Grove Victoria Park/Barrambin resident