

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 regarding the preservation of Victoria Park/Barrambin

Respectfully sent from
Nigel Keith McLennan

This submission urges the State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee to reject proposals for stadium development within Victoria Park/Barrambin and preserve this irreplaceable land as public green space.

As Brisbane's largest inner-city park, Barrambin represents a critical community asset with significant Indigenous cultural heritage, environmental value, and recreational importance that must be protected for current and future generations.

Introduction

Victoria Park/Barrambin is a vital community resource for Brisbane residents. This submission details why stadium development would be detrimental and why preservation of Barrambin is essential, based on Indigenous cultural heritage, environmental values, existing master plan investments, and practical construction considerations.

Key Arguments for Preservation

Indigenous Cultural Significance.

- Victoria Park/Barrambin holds profound cultural importance for Indigenous Peoples.
- York's Hollow and the broader Barrambin area are sacred sites of cultural significance for Brisbane's Indigenous communities and beyond.
- Indigenous elders have spoken about their deep ancestral connections to this land.
- The site contains irreplaceable cultural heritage that would be permanently damaged by stadium development.
- Preserving this significant cultural landscape aligns with Queensland's reconciliation commitments and demonstrates respect for Nations heritage.

Environmental Value as Urban Sanctuary

- Victoria Park/Barrambin functions as a critical ecological haven within our urban environment.
- York Hollow and Ibis Island serve as crucial wildlife refuges amid increasing urban development.
- York Hollow hosts more than 10 documented bird species that depend on this habitat, including treated native species.
- The park provides essential habitat connectivity in an area with rapidly diminishing green corridors.
- Mature tree canopies and established ecosystems support complex biodiversity that cannot be readily replaced.
- The parkland delivers vital ecosystem services including urban cooling, carbon sequestration, air quality improvement and natural flood mitigation.

Existing Master Plan Investment

- Brisbane City Council has already dedicated significant public resources to planning the park's future.
- Over four years, Council has invested substantial finances and expertise in developing a comprehensive master plan for Victoria Park.
- This existing plan balances environmental enhancement with increased public recreational access.
- The plan represents extensive community consultation and reflects collective community vision.
- Abandoning this established plan would waste considerable public investment and undermine community trust.
- The master plan offers a sustainable path forward that honours the site's significance while meeting community needs.

Impractical Consultation Challenges

- The physical characteristics of Barrambin make it exceptionally unsuitable for stadium development.
- The site's varied topography would necessitate extensive and destructive earthworks.
- Brisbane's characteristic "tuff rock" formations throughout the area present significant engineering challenges.
- Required excavation would cause irreversible environmental damage and disruption to surrounding neighbourhoods.
- These challenging site conditions would inevitably lead to substantial cost overruns and construction delays.
- More suitable alternative locations exist that would not require the destruction of established green space.

Critical Community Need for Green Space

- Preservation of Barrambin directly addresses pressing community priorities.
- Brisbane residents consistently express concern about diminishing green space in inner-city areas.
- Converting existing parkland to development contradicts documented community needs and preferences.
- As Brisbane's largest inner-city park, Barrambin provides irreplaceable recreational opportunities.
- The park offers accessible green space for people of all ages, abilities and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Scientific research consistently demonstrates that urban green spaces significantly enhance community mental health and wellbeing

The Bill's Concerning Provisions

- The Bill contains several concerning provisions that warrant rejection

Exemption from Critical Legislation

- The bill proposes to exempt construction of Olympics venues and villages from 15 Queensland planning, environmental and heritage laws.
- This includes exemptions from The Planning Act, Heritage Act and Environmental Protection Act.
- These laws exist to protect Queensland's environment, heritage and community interests.
- Exempting Olympic developments from these laws creates a dangerous precedent of selective application of law.

Removal of Legal Rights

- The Bill would remove any access to the Courts in relation to the construction of Olympics venues or villages.
- Access to courts is a fundamental right of all Queenslanders.
- Removing judicial oversight eliminates an essential check and balance in our democratic system.
- This provision significantly reduces transparency and accountability in the development process.

Override of First Nations Cultural Heritage Protections

- The Bill would override First Nations cultural heritage protections using a new process.
- This process effectively railroads First Nations into a default plan if they don't agree in the timeline specified by the Bill.
- This approach contradicts principles of proper consultation and informed consent.

- It undermines reconciliation efforts and shows disregard for Indigenous cultural heritage.

Privatisation of Public Assets

- The potential use of public parkland for commercial Olympic venues risks inappropriate privatisation.
- Exemptions from planning laws and court review bypass scrutiny and reduce transparency.
- This approach creates concerning opportunities for corruption when dealing with valuable public assets.
- Public parkland should remain in public hands for community benefit.

Proposal Solutions

- This submission respectfully urges the Committee to consider the following actions:
 1. Recommend that Victoria Park/Barrambin be removed from Schedule 1 (Authority Venues).
 2. Recommend that cultural heritage override provisions be withdrawn.
 3. Insist that Olympic developments be subject to existing Queensland laws like all other developments.
 4. Support the continuation and full implementation of Brisbane City Council's existing Victoria Park Master Plan.
 5. Recommend alternative sites for stadium development that do not require sacrificing established green space.
 6. Recognise and protect the Indigenous cultural significance of York's Hollow and the broader Barrambin area.
 7. Enhance protections for the wildlife sanctuaries within the park, particularly York's Hollow and Ibis Island.

Conclusion

Victoria Park/Barrambin represents an irreplaceable community asset with profound Indigenous cultural heritage, ecological value and importance to Brisbane residents of all backgrounds. The proposed stadium development would permanently destroy vital green space, damage culturally significant land, waste years of master planning and face construction challenges due to unsuitable terrain.

This submission implores the Committee to prioritise the preservation of this vital green space over development that could readily be accommodated at more appropriate locations. The decision will affect not only our current community but generations of Brisbane residents to come.

Thank you for your consideration of this submission.

Respectfully,

Nigel McLennan
18 May 2025