

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

<b>Submission No:</b>	638
<b>Submitted by:</b>	Joycelynn Herburg
<b>Publication:</b>	Making the submission and your name public
<b>Attachments:</b>	See attachment
<b>Submitter Comments:</b>	

While I strongly object to the proposed use of a heritage-listed public green space for the Olympics, my objection pales in comparison to my outrage at the Premier's dismissive and authoritarian stance regarding the heritage listing of Victoria Park.

By rewriting laws to suit his agenda, he has not only outdone the infamous nighttime demolition of Cloudland and The Bellevue under a former Premier but has done so in broad daylight—with calculated legal changes and blatant disregard for public submissions, community concerns, and the irreplaceable loss of public green space in our city.

It is one thing to appear sorrowful and concerned for flood-affected communities in North Queensland, but quite another to ignore his own department's research findings and dismiss the IOC's guidance—while delivering what feels like a deliberate and cynical blow to the heritage of Victoria Park.

## 1. Why Victoria Park Matters

Victoria Park / Barrambin is Brisbane's largest inner-city park, spanning more than 64 hectares. It is a rare and precious green space, providing vital ecological, recreational, and cultural benefits in the heart of our city.

The park holds deep cultural and spiritual significance for Aboriginal peoples and serves as a place of healing, connection, and history. For the broader Brisbane community, Victoria Park is a much-loved sanctuary—a place for families, walkers, cyclists, and nature lovers, offering a rare expanse of urban green space that is increasingly scarce.

After nearly four years of extensive community consultation, the Victoria Park Master Plan was developed to reflect a shared vision for the future of this important site. The sudden announcement that Olympic venues will be imposed on Victoria Park is not just an unwelcome surprise—it is a staggering betrayal of community trust.

## 2. Why a Stadium in Victoria Park / Barrambin Doesn't Make Sense

Building a stadium in Victoria Park / Barrambin is impractical, environmentally destructive, and completely out of step with community values and international Olympic guidelines. The proposal is deeply flawed for the following reasons:

### 1. Challenging Topography

Victoria Park's hilly landscape and underlying Brisbane Tuff (a hard volcanic rock) would require major excavation and blasting. This would drive up construction costs and pose serious risks, particularly with vibrations potentially affecting nearby hospitals.

### 2. Violation of Olympic Host Contract

The Olympic Host Contract explicitly discourages the construction of permanent structures in protected or heritage-listed areas. It calls for the use of existing or previously developed sites. Building in Victoria Park would breach these obligations.

3. **Existing Traffic Congestion**  
The area is already a traffic bottleneck due to its proximity to major hospitals, schools, and universities. A stadium would create gridlock, potentially affecting emergency response times and the daily lives of thousands of commuters.
4. **Inadequate Public Transport Access**  
Unlike other sporting venues, Victoria Park lacks direct, high-capacity public transport. The nearest train station is a significant walk away, making access difficult—especially for those with mobility challenges or during high-demand events.
5. **Loss of Irreplaceable Green Space**  
As Brisbane’s largest inner-city park, Victoria Park is a vital green lung for the city. A stadium would take away large sections of public land, including mature native trees that predate European settlement—some dating back to before 1750.
6. **Proximity to Major Hospital**  
The park borders the Royal Brisbane and Women’s Hospital. Stadium noise, crowds, and traffic could disrupt critical hospital operations, impacting patient wellbeing and healthcare staff.
7. **Lack of Supporting Infrastructure**  
The area around Victoria Park does not have the bars, restaurants, or entertainment precincts typically found near stadiums. This could lead to further, unwelcome commercial overdevelopment within the park itself.
8. **Environmental Degradation**  
Victoria Park plays a crucial role in reducing urban heat and improving air quality. Replacing green space with concrete infrastructure would increase heat retention and worsen air quality in an already warming city.
9. **Cultural Significance**  
Victoria Park / Barrambin is of deep spiritual and cultural importance to local Aboriginal peoples. Construction threatens to disturb sacred sites and further erase Indigenous histories.
10. **Heritage Protections**  
Every part of Victoria Park is heritage-listed at the local or state level. This land is woven into Brisbane’s identity—with a rich history from the Depression era to World War II. A stadium would irreversibly damage this legacy.
11. **Overwhelming Community Opposition**  
The proposal has been met with strong and sustained public opposition. Residents, environmental groups, heritage bodies, and Traditional Owners have voiced deep concerns over the destruction of public space, loss of heritage, and disregard for cultural respect.

### 3. What the Bill Would Do

The proposed legislation would have sweeping consequences for Queensland's planning, heritage, and legal systems—particularly in relation to Victoria Park / Barrambin.

Key changes under the Bill include:

- **Declaring Victoria Park an 'Authority Venue'**  
The Bill designates a stadium in Victoria Park as an "authority venue" for the 2032 Olympic Games, paving the way for large-scale construction within this heritage-listed public green space.
- **Exemptions from Existing Laws**  
The Bill overrides 15 Queensland planning, environmental, and heritage protection laws, effectively removing the safeguards that would ordinarily apply to such a significant development.
- **Removal of Legal Recourse**  
The legislation strips the public of access to the Courts to challenge or review decisions relating to Olympic venues or villages. This is an unprecedented erosion of legal rights and public accountability.
- **Override of First Nations Cultural Heritage Protections**  
Perhaps most concerning, the Bill introduces a new process for First Nations consultation that is both coercive and unjust. If Traditional Owners do not agree to a cultural heritage management plan within the timeline imposed by the Bill, the State can proceed with a default plan—effectively railroading communities and bypassing genuine cultural consultation.

### 4. Why This Should Concern All Queenslanders

This Bill is not just about Olympic infrastructure—it's about removing the safeguards that protect our land, our heritage, and our democratic rights. It sets a dangerous precedent that should alarm every Queenslanders, regardless of their views on the Games.

- **Laws That Apply to Everyone Else Would No Longer Apply**  
The Bill exempts Olympic venues and villages from key legislation that governs development for all other Queenslanders. This includes the Planning Act, Heritage Act, and Environmental Protection Act. These laws exist to ensure that development is fair, transparent, and environmentally responsible.
- **Loss of Access to the Courts**  
One of the most concerning aspects is the removal of judicial oversight. The Bill strips away the right of individuals and communities to challenge decisions in court. This is a direct attack on one of the most fundamental rights in a democratic society: access to justice.

- **Weakened First Nations Heritage Protections**

The Bill introduces a fast-tracked cultural heritage process that limits meaningful consultation with Traditional Owners. If Traditional Owners do not agree to a plan within a set timeline, the State can impose a default plan—disempowering First Nations voices and undermining truth-telling and reconciliation.

- **Risk of Corruption and Loss of Public Assets**

By allowing commercial Olympic "villages" on public parkland, the Bill opens the door to private profiteering at public expense. Exemptions from planning laws and court scrutiny reduce transparency and heighten the risk of corruption—especially when high-value public land is involved.

## **5. What I Am Asking the Committee to Do**

I respectfully urge the Committee to protect public interest, cultural heritage, and democratic process by recommending the following in your report to Parliament:

1. **Remove Victoria Park / Barrambin from Schedule 1 (Authority Venues)**

This site is a treasured public green space and a place of deep cultural significance. It should not be designated for Olympic infrastructure development.

2. **Withdraw the Cultural Heritage Override Provisions**

Genuine consultation with First Nations peoples must be upheld, not fast-tracked or replaced with default outcomes. These provisions are inconsistent with principles of self-determination and reconciliation.

3. **Ensure Olympic Developments Are Subject to Existing Queensland Laws**

Olympic-related projects must comply with the Planning Act, Heritage Act, Environmental Protection Act, and other laws that apply to all developments across the state. No project should be above the law.

4. **Uphold the Victoria Park Master Plan**

Developed through years of community consultation, this plan reflects the shared vision of Brisbane residents. It should guide the future of Victoria Park—not be discarded for short-term political or commercial gain.

These recommendations are essential to maintaining public trust, protecting cultural heritage, and ensuring that the 2032 Olympic Games leave a legacy Queenslanders can be proud of.