

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

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State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee  
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**RE: PLANNING (SOCIAL IMPACT AND COMMUNITY BENEFIT) AND OTHER LEGISLATION  
AMENDMENT BILL 2025**

To the State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee,

I am making this submission in response to the *Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 (the Bill)*, specifically in relation to the proposal to construct Olympic stadiums and related infrastructure at Victoria Park.

While I have included the template submission content below—as I agree with the points raised—I also wanted to offer some personal reflections and additional concerns.

**The Value of Green Space in a Growing City**

Brisbane is a wonderful city, and I am proud to call it home. However, it is noticeably lacking in accessible, large-scale green spaces compared to other global cities. Having lived in London and travelled extensively through Europe and beyond, I've observed firsthand how major urban centres around the world manage to preserve and celebrate their green spaces, even as they grow.

In fact, a recent Time Out article ranking of cities with the most green space highlights this point. Brisbane is absent from the list, while cities such as Tokyo, London, Paris, New York, and Sydney—many of which are more densely populated and developed—are featured prominently ([source](#)).

These green spaces are not only vital for urban livability; they are often among the most iconic and visited attractions in these cities. Think Central Park in New York, Gardens by the Bay in Singapore, the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris, Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, Park Güell in Barcelona, Centennial Park in Sydney, and London's Hyde Park and Hampstead Heath. These are legacy spaces that contribute to a city's identity, tourism appeal, and long-term livability.

Victoria Park has the potential to be such a landmark for Brisbane—a cherished green space for residents and a destination in its own right for visitors. Converting it into an Olympic stadium precinct addresses the short-term requirements of a single event but forfeits the long-term opportunity to create something truly enduring for the city.

**Demolition of the Gabba: A Loss of Heritage**

Equally concerning is the proposed demolition of the Gabba—a Brisbane icon with a proud history dating back to 1895. The Gabba is not just a sports venue; it is a heritage site woven into the cultural fabric of our city, with international recognition across multiple codes including cricket, AFL, rugby, and soccer, as well as music and community events. To see it replaced with high-density residential development, at the cost of further green space loss, is deeply disappointing.

**Environmental and Social Imperatives**

As Brisbane's population continues to grow and urbanise, protecting our existing green spaces becomes not just a preference, but a necessity. The importance of parks extends beyond aesthetics—

they play a vital role in physical and mental health, social cohesion, cultural identity, and ecological sustainability.

Green spaces help regulate air and water quality, enhance biodiversity, and provide crucial urban cooling and flood mitigation—capabilities we desperately need in the face of worsening climate impacts. We've already seen the devastating effects of natural disasters, from the 2011 and 2022 floods to the 2020 bushfires and recent Cyclone Alfred. Parks and green infrastructure build the resilience cities need to adapt and recover.

### **Good Governance and Public Trust**

There is also a broader issue of public trust and democratic accountability. The current Premier was elected on a platform that explicitly promised not to build on Victoria Park. The reversal of this commitment—without community consultation or the opportunity to reconsider our vote—undermines public confidence in government processes.

Laws, policies, and planning frameworks exist to ensure thoughtful, balanced development that reflects the will and wellbeing of the community. To sidestep these frameworks for short-term political or commercial gain not only devalues those protections but erodes faith in the system itself.

### **In Conclusion**

While growth and development are important, they must be weighed against the long-term needs and values of our city. Victoria Park presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to preserve and enhance a central green space for future generations—not pave it over for a two-week event. I am sad and angry, and strongly urge you to please reconsider the proposed development and prioritise a vision for Brisbane that values its natural assets, cultural heritage, and the voices of its residents.

Please find further information below from Save Victoria Park.

### **1. Why Victoria Park Matters**

Victoria Park / Barrambin is Brisbane's largest inner-city park. It spans over 64 hectares and is a rare green space for recreation, ecology, and cultural heritage. The site is deeply significant to Aboriginal peoples, and it also holds immense value for Brisbane's broader community.

The Victoria Park Master Plan was developed after almost four years of community consultation so the surprise announcement of Olympic venues in Victoria Park is a shocking betrayal of community trust.

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

Building a stadium in Victoria Park / Barrambin is impractical, environmentally damaging, and contrary to community interests. Key reasons include:

1. **Challenging Topography:** The park's hilly terrain and hard Brisbane Tuff rock would require extensive excavation and blasting, increasing costs and potentially disrupting nearby hospitals due to vibrations.
2. **Violation of Olympic Host Requirements:** Constructing a stadium here would breach the Olympic Host Contract, which mandates avoiding permanent structures in protected areas and prioritizing previously developed sites.
3. **Existing Traffic Congestion:** The area already experiences significant traffic from nearby hospitals, schools, and universities. A stadium would exacerbate congestion, affecting emergency services and daily commutes.
4. **Inadequate Public Transport:** Unlike other stadiums, Victoria Park lacks sufficient public transport access. The nearest station is a considerable walk away, posing challenges for attendees, especially those with mobility issues.
5. **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.
6. **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.
7. **Lack of Surrounding Amenities:** The area lacks the bars, restaurants, and entertainment venues that typically support stadium events, leading to potential overdevelopment within the park itself.
8. **Environmental Impact:** The park serves as a natural cooling area, mitigating urban heat. Development would increase heat retention and reduce air quality.
9. **Cultural Significance:** Victoria Park holds deep cultural importance for First Nations communities. Development risks disturbing sacred sites and erasing historical significance.
10. **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.
11. **Community Opposition:** There is strong public resistance to the stadium proposal, with concerns about environmental degradation, cultural disrespect, and loss of public space.

### **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 such Olympics venues and villages from 15 Queensland planning, environmental and heritage laws. The Bill would also remove any access to the Courts in relation to the construction of Olympics venues or villages. 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**

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 Queenslanders. The Bill proposes to remove this right with sweeping provisions in relation to Olympics venues and villages.

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

The potential use of public parkland for commercial Olympic 'villages' risks corruption. These exemptions from planning laws and court review bypass scrutiny and reduce transparency when privatising very valuable public assets.

#### **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;
4. The Victoria Park Master Plan be upheld as a reflection of the community's vision for the park.