

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

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**Submitted by:** Campbell Newman, AO  
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**Submission to the State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee**

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**Dear Committee Members,**

I wish to make a brief submission opposing the proposal to use Victoria Park as the site for a new Olympic stadium, as well as the legislation currently before the Committee.

A defining feature of great cities around the world is the presence of great parks—green spaces preserved for public enjoyment, with minimal infrastructure, protected for all time as open public land.

It was with such a vision in mind that, in the 1860s, the residents of the small settlement of Brisbane set aside approximately 130 hectares of land to create an inner-city park. This decision, made when Brisbane's population was just 25,000, was undoubtedly inspired by the great parks of London and the creation of New York's Central Park.

Sadly, over the past 160 years, this land has been progressively reduced through a series of well-intentioned projects, including the University, the RNA, the Inner Northern Busway, the Inner City Bypass, and the Legacy Way tunnel. More than half the park's original area has been lost.

For many decades, the park was largely inaccessible to the public, restricted to golfers through the operations of the Victoria Park Golf Club. The decision by Lord Mayor Schrinner in 2019 to return the park to the broader community was an exciting and principled step toward realising the original vision of Brisbane's own Central Park. During the 2020 Lord Mayoral election campaign, it was revealed that more than 16,000 people were involved in the public consultation process, with 5,500 formal submissions received.

The Lord Mayor made a courageous and visionary decision to return this green space to the people of Brisbane. It would now be a travesty to reverse this achievement by constructing a massive piece of infrastructure that directly contradicts the vision he articulated and led only five years ago.

It is critical to consider that, in the past 25 years, the residential population of Brisbane's CBD and inner suburbs—such as Kelvin Grove, Bowen Hills, and Newstead—has grown significantly. In addition, State Government planning

mandates mean the city must accommodate another 87,000 dwellings over the next 15 years—an 18% increase. This represents substantial and growing demand for green open space in Brisbane's inner north.

Importantly, the inner three kilometres of Brisbane already have less green space than Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, or Adelaide. While there are many possible locations for new stadiums, there is virtually no opportunity to create new parks in the inner city.

Brisbane has a regrettable history of inner-city public parks being converted into sporting infrastructure, resulting in the exclusion of the general community. A few notable examples include:

- **Suncorp Stadium**, originally Lang Park, once freely accessible to residents of Petrie Terrace and Paddington, is now entirely occupied by sporting infrastructure;
- **Ballymore Stadium**, which significantly curtailed community access in Herston/Wilston after redevelopment for Rugby Union; and
- **Perry Park**, where control by the Strikers Football Club has similarly excluded public use of large portions of the park.

These are just a few of many examples.

The precedent of Lang Park looms large in the current proposal. A stadium in Victoria Park—regardless of promises, assurances, or legislative provisions—would ultimately destroy this precious green space and limit public access. It is deeply concerning that, within Brisbane property circles, it is an open secret that some in the development sector are already planning residential and commercial projects surrounding the proposed stadium footprint.

I am equally concerned by the legislative approach being taken. The Bill seeks to override 15 separate laws, removing due process and eliminating essential checks and balances. Protections for cultural heritage, the environment, and vegetation are being swept aside in a draconian and unjustified manner. As I have publicly stated in the media, more consultation is typically undertaken for the installation of a children's playground in a local park than has occurred here. I also encourage Members to reflect on the irony that Brisbane residents must comply with Vegetation Protection Orders on their own land, while the State Government appears willing to bulldoze mature trees in a heritage-listed park.

Finally, as both a civil engineer and a former politician, I must warn the Committee that the Victoria Park stadium proposal has all the hallmarks of a major project failure. The location appears to have been chosen for political reasons, and there has been no transparent assessment of risks, impacts, or true costs. For example, access to the site would require new ramps to the Inner City Bypass. These are not depicted in artist impressions, nor have their likely costs—estimated at \$300 million to \$500 million—been disclosed.

If a new stadium is to be built, several alternative sites with greater transformative

potential and far fewer drawbacks should be prioritised:

- Woolloongabba;
- The Mayne Rail Yards; and
- Hamilton Northshore.

**In summary, my key concerns regarding the proposed stadium and the legislation are as follows:**

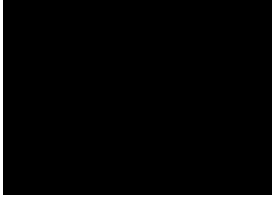
- Permanent loss of precious inner-city green space at a time of significant population growth and pressure on existing parks;
- Exclusion of the public and commercialisation of what should be free open space;
- Destruction of mature trees;
- Loss of cultural and built heritage values;
- Loss of Indigenous heritage values;
- Traffic and transport impacts, particularly in proximity to the State's major tertiary hospital, that have not been adequately investigated;
- Failure to properly assess the costs of developing the Victoria Park site, likely resulting in significant cost blowouts;
- The absence of proper checks, balances, and public consultation in the legislative process.

**I respectfully request that the Committee report to Parliament recommend the following:**

- That the Executive table in Parliament detailed documentation on critical aspects of the Victoria Park proposal, including:
  - Geotechnical investigations;
  - Construction access arrangements;
  - Traffic management plans for both construction and stadium operations;
  - Public transport and pedestrian access strategies; and
  - Impacts on the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital.
- That Victoria Park / Barrambin be removed from Schedule 1 (Authority Venues);
- That provisions overriding cultural heritage protections be withdrawn;
- That Olympic developments be subject to existing Queensland laws, as with all other developments; and
- That the Victoria Park Master Plan be upheld, consistent with the community's vision for the park.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

**Yours sincerely,**



Campbell Newman, AO