

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

Submission No: 695
Submitted by: Richard Copeman
Publication:
Attachments:
Submitter Comments:

Submission to the State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee

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

Name: Richard Charles Copeman

Address: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Organisation: n/a

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.

I grew up close to Victoria Park and spent a lot of time exploring, playing and exercising in it. It is still, for me, a wonderland of ridges, gullies, ponds, paths, trees and wildlife, most of which will be lost if the proposed developments go ahead.

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. **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. Brisbane has the warmest climate but the least inner-city parkland of all Australian state capitals. There are mature native trees in this park which pre-date European settlement and date to pre-1750. As the population density in inner Brisbane increases, its inhabitants will need more, not less, access to nature and green space for exercise, socialisation, play and psychological relief.
2. **Environmental Impact:** The park serves as a natural cooling area, mitigating urban heat. Development would increase heat retention and reduce air quality. The park supports much birdlife, including, in particular, rosellas that nest in the hollows in the old trees and bush stone curlews that hide in the lower vegetation. Loss of vegetation and habitat will be catastrophic for these birds.
3. **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.
4. **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.

5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. 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.
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.

The previously un-announced Inclusion of 'villages' in addition to venues in this Bill, along with the artist's impression showing multiple high-rise buildings along the ridgeline, indicate that the loss of green space will be much larger than previously suggested. This potential use of public parkland for commercial Olympic 'villages' also risks corruption. These exemptions from planning laws and court review bypass scrutiny and reduce transparency when privatising very valuable public assets.

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.

Over-riding such a large tranche of hard-fought-for legislation that is vital for protecting our environment and culture, and the probity of public investment, is deeply worrying for all like me who value our democracy. It puts our democracy under threat and could start a 'slippery slope' of similar

legislation whenever a new development is deemed to be urgent or controversial by the government of the day.

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.