

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

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

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My understanding of the legislation is that the State Government is wanting to change the usual requirements for any development plans and infrastructure relating to Olympic Games by way of avoiding the way these sites are required to align with the normal procedures for development applications in protected areas such as public parks, environmental protections and heritage site protections. Proposed developments for the Olympic Games will result in losing a public park, open green space and heritage protected sites of Victoria Park being just one example with future possible exemptions for any applications for Olympic villages and infrastructure. This change makes it difficult for the public to object or stop an inappropriate development. This proposal violates the rule of law as it operates in Australian.

Aside from community concerns about the building of an Olympic Stadium in Victoria Park, the Bill raises serious concerns about its consistency with the rule of law and the doctrine of separation of powers. These fundamental aspects of our parliamentary democracy are designed to safeguard against corruption by ensuring laws are applied equally and fairly to everyone under the watchful eye of an independent judiciary.

By effectively exempting declared venues and villages from 15 planning and environmental laws, and seeking to exclude any review by the Courts that may result in delay, the POLA Bill could

create an 'island of power immune from supervision and restraint' through which very significant transfers of wealth could occur.

Some of the preliminary concept sketches appear to envision significant villages in Victoria Park. This legislation is focussed on giving the State Government more powers than ever before to change the current levels of protection of parks and open spaces. The stated

purpose is to approve developments of venues for hosting the Olympic Games in 2032. But to push through bills which have long term implications on the protection of green spaces and public assets like parks, is wrong and dangerous and goes against the stated objectives of the Olympic Games 2020 mandate and Olympic Games 2020 + 5 mandates. This seems to say any court action, which is not criminal prosecution, cannot be brought if it will delay the declared venue or village. This does not appear to be limited to the 15 Acts mentioned

earlier in the section but any court action under any statute or common law cause of action.

In particular, the State Government has already developed a proposal to construct 2 Olympic stadiums in Victoria Park - currently an environmentally protected, heritage listed inner city green space - which has been protected since first gazetted as a park. This green space has already been drastically reduced to half its size since its initial inception. This last half needs absolute protection by the people of Brisbane.

The people of Brisbane should not be asked to sacrifice an inner city park to develop venues for hosting the 2032 Olympic Games. The Olympic Games charter includes the mandate that Olympic Games should be environmentally sustainable and parks and heritage sites should not be destroyed in order to provide venues and infrastructure for Olympic Games events. An Olympic Games is a 2-4 week event. Victoria Park in inner city Brisbane was legislated and protected space in the 1800's and is a public park asset for the people of Brisbane now and into the foreseeable future. The city of Brisbane could well be twice the size it is now and parks even more precious assets. Much of Brisbane has and will be built and rebuilt in the 200 years between 1850 and 2050. Parks are long term assets and should remain that way. This is not a sacrifice Brisbane should be asked to make and the Olympic Games International Committee should not agree to this proposal.

There are many other reasons why the proposal to erect 2 stadiums in Victoria park are in direct conflict with current standards for Olympic Games:-

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1. Using Temporary and Existing Venues: Due to the mounting evidence from past Olympic Games of green spaces in host cities being destroyed and venues being left to deteriorate and sometimes abandoned, most recent events have focussed on renovating existing sporting venues and building temporary venues to host the Games. If new venues are required then most recent hosts of Olympic Games have looked to brownfield sites to redevelop/rehabilitate - not inner city parks and heritage sites. Temporary facilities have the added benefit of being able to be removed and used in other locations around the State of Queensland or even Australia – eg in regional sporting venues, grandstands, seating and sports facilities can be re-erected as mobile structures.

Under Olympic agenda 2020 and Agenda 2020-+5 the type of legislation now being proposed in Queensland would now violate key principles of Olympic Games mandate such as

- Use existing or temporary venues wherever possible
- Preserve cultural and natural heritage
- Leave a positive legacy

At the Paris Games 2024 - 95% of Games venues were existing or temporary venues. For the planned Los Angeles 2028 Games - no new permanent venues will be built, existing sports infrastructure will be used and minimising environmental footprint is the goal.

These Games reflect the IOC growing emphasis on climate conscious planning, use of existing infrastructure, and integration of environmental legacy into the events core mission.

2. Inner city green spaces are irreplaceable. Victoria Park in inner city Brisbane has trees which have taken 50-100 years to grow and any attempts to replace such a park will take 50 – 100 years to re-establish something comparable. The city of Brisbane is not being offered an alternative inner city green space to the one being proposed to be destroyed by the building of 2 – not 1 – stadiums in it. Two stadiums in Victoria Park will destroy the park as a park. Once such proposed stadiums are built, there are always inevitable extensions to the areas serviced by such proposed stadiums – facilities relating to access, pathways, toilets, disability requirements, public safety, provision of utilities such as power, lighting, water, waste disposal services and facilities. Need for more parking and catering requirement, shops and cafes will all be considered necessary and encroach over many years on any remaining park in and around the stadiums. In other words, two proposed stadiums in Victoria Park Brisbane would destroy the integrity of the park as a park.

3. Inner City stadiums may be a thing of the past. Take the Games further out to a regional area like Sunshine Coast where they need a new stadium, or keep within the plans of Woolloongabba. The Olympic agenda 2020 allows for distributed games across multiple cities and regions. The Gold Coast sporting facilities are available for use and accessible. So much of the Games will be hosted on television and the number attending is a small fraction of the people of the world watching. The stadium in the inner city is no longer a necessity for the Olympic Games and the environmental sustainability of Olympic Games is now considered more important.

By planning new stadiums away from the centre of the city there is more space and opportunity to, for example, build an Olympic village with long-term urban use as needed residential housing with energy efficient buildings and green space.

The Olympic Games host city contract now explicitly includes sustainability and environmental protection making development of Victoria Park unlikely to be approved. The State Government's own environmental department has expressly stated they are not in favour of the Victoria Park Olympic stadiums proposal and the normal urban development rules are being changed to deliberately avoid processes which would oppose the building of stadiums in public parks.

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

In conclusion, if the Olympic Games can't be hosted in Brisbane without prohibitive costs of building new stadiums and environmental destruction of an inner city park like Victoria Park, then the Olympic Games committee should change the future Olympic Games and hold the Games in one designated city – probably Athens where it started – every 4 years; or at least limit the host cities to a handful (say 4 -6) cities identified as having sufficient venues for the event.