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

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ATTN: State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee

As the elected representative for, and a resident of, The Gabba Ward, I respectfully submit this response. The Gabba Ward is a vibrant community deeply committed to transparency, accountability, and meaningful public participation in all planning decisions. I extend my sincere gratitude to the Parliamentary Committee for the opportunity to provide this submission.

The Gabba Ward is home to a diverse tapestry of residents, businesses, renters, workers, including diverse multicultural and First Nations communities and cultural organisers—each with a vital stake in how decisions under the state's planning and infrastructure frameworks are made.

Significantly, The Gabba Ward will be at the very heart of the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. From venue construction to urban redevelopment, the decisions made under this legislation will shape not only the neighbourhoods, housing, public spaces, and cultural sites within The Gabba Ward but also those of surrounding wards and, ultimately, the broader face of Brisbane and beyond for generations to come.

Our communities expect and deserve processes that uphold democratic principles and protect cultural, social, and environmental values.

While I recognise and support the intent behind introducing mandatory Social Impact Assessments (SIAs) and mechanisms for genuine community benefit, the current iteration of the ***Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025*** significantly undermines the very principles it purports to uphold. Instead of empowering communities, it concentrates power, restricts democratic oversight, and threatens the social, cultural and environmental fabric of our region.

That said, there are some constructive aspects of the Bill. The inclusion of Social Impact Assessments (SIAs) and Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs), if genuinely co-designed and enforceable, offers a pathway to achieving better outcomes for affected communities. Additionally, integrating renewable energy infrastructure into the planning framework is a necessary step toward accelerating Queensland's transition to clean energy—provided it does not come at the cost of community or cultural rights, or introduce unnecessary delays to vital clean energy projects.

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I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land which we live and work on, the Jagera and Turrbal peoples. Sovereignty was never ceded.

My concerns with the Bill, however, focus on five critical areas:

1. Erosion of Democratic Protections and Overriding of Key Legislation
2. Olympic Venue Governance and Community Trust
3. Development Risks Across Olympic-Impacted Sites: Case Studies
4. Risks to Renewable Energy and Wind Farm Development
5. Threat of Public Land Privatisation and Market-Led Proposals

1. Erosion of Democratic Protections and Overriding of Key Legislation

The Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 introduces provisions that empower the **Games Independent Infrastructure and Coordination Authority (GIICA)** to override numerous foundational planning and environmental laws. These laws were developed through democratic processes to safeguard transparency, public consultation, environmental integrity, and cultural and human rights.

Clause 66, Part 2 of the Bill grants extraordinary exemptions for all Olympic-related developments—including venues, athlete villages, and transport infrastructure. Under this clause, such developments are deemed lawful and automatically compliant with 15 major legislative frameworks, including:

- **Environmental and planning protections:** Environmental Protection Act 1994, Planning Act 2016, Nature Conservation Act 1992, and Queensland Heritage Act 1992
- **Local governance:** City of Brisbane Act 2010, Local Government Act 2009
- **Water, vegetation, and coastal management:** Vegetation Management Act 1999, Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995, Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2006

This sweeping override removes the essential checks and balances that protect community interests, the environment, and democratic participation. By sidelining legislated processes under the guise of "expedited delivery," the Bill prioritises speed over justice, disempowering communities and weakening long-standing legal safeguards.

The Bill also introduces a streamlined approvals process that bypasses environmental assessments, cultural heritage protections, and meaningful public engagement. Centralising authority in **(GIICA**)—

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established in July 2024—further entrenches this top-down approach. Disturbingly, **Section 53EG** explicitly removes the right to judicial review or appeal of Games-related infrastructure decisions, stripping the public of any legal recourse.

The cumulative impact is a serious erosion of transparency, accountability, and public trust. By excluding communities from decisions that directly affect their lives, this legislation threatens to entrench a model of development that is opaque, unaccountable, and fundamentally undemocratic.

2. Olympic Venue Governance and Community Trust

The Bill proposes a major restructuring of Olympic venue governance that significantly reduces board representation and weakens consultation protocols. **Under Clause 58**, governance boards can be composed entirely of Ministers, Members of Parliament, and company directors—excluding community members, Traditional Owners, local businesses, cultural organisations, environmental experts, and independent oversight bodies. These are the very stakeholders who have historically played a crucial role in protecting public interest, cultural heritage, and community wellbeing.

By concentrating decision-making power within the newly created **GIICA** and state-appointed boards, the Bill sidelines those with the local knowledge and lived experience needed to ensure Olympic infrastructure delivers lasting community benefit. The exclusion of Traditional Owners from meaningful consultation processes further erodes cultural heritage protections, while removing independent experts weakens transparency and scrutiny.

This approach is particularly concerning given the irreversible impacts these developments will have on neighbourhoods, public land, and community infrastructure.

Framed as an efficiency measure, the centralisation of power under Clause 58 instead undermines public trust and limits accountability.

Olympic infrastructure should reflect the values and needs of the communities it impacts. That requires broad representation, robust oversight, and genuine consultation—not top-down governance dominated by political and corporate interests.

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3. Development Risks Across Olympic-Impacted Sites: Case Studies

A) Barrambin / Victoria Park

Barrambin, also known as Victoria Park, is a site of profound cultural, environmental, and historical significance to First Nations communities in Brisbane. Legally protected through its inclusion in the Queensland Heritage Register since 2007 , the park has served as a traditional meeting place, ceremonial ground, and settlement area for Indigenous peoples for centuries.

Despite these protections, the **Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025** introduces sweeping powers that could override existing safeguards, enabling redevelopment plans such as the construction of Olympic facilities that jeopardize the site's integrity. The Bill's weakening of cultural heritage protocols effectively sidelines Traditional Owners, allowing decisions to proceed without meaningful consultation or consent. This fails to respect Indigenous sovereignty and risks irreversible cultural desecration.

The lack of a mandated **Conservation Management Plan** or a binding post-Games legacy framework means there is no legal obligation to safeguard Barrambin after the Olympics, risking neglect or inappropriate uses that erase cultural memory and environmental value. Furthermore, the Bill's accelerated development framework prioritises fast-tracked approvals, significantly weakening environmental impact assessment processes. This streamlining risks superficial or incomplete assessments, which fail to fully account for the direct and cumulative impacts of construction and ongoing facility operations on fragile ecosystems.

Community consultation, especially involving environmental groups and Traditional Owners who hold cultural and custodial knowledge of the land, is vital to ensure development respects environmental and cultural values. The Bill's removal of judicial review and appeal rights effectively silences these voices, preventing meaningful input that could enhance environmental protections or identify alternatives that better safeguard sensitive habitats.

Such exclusion of oversight and participation undermines Queensland's commitment to environmental stewardship and contradicts national and international obligations to protect biodiversity, including commitments under the **Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act** and state-level conservation frameworks. By prioritizing rapid development over ecological sustainability, the Bill risks contributing to the loss of crucial wildlife corridors and exacerbating the impacts of climate change on vulnerable species.

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B) GoPrint Site and The Gabba PDA

The Gabba cricket ground and surrounding GoPrint site are among the last major public land holdings in inner-city Brisbane. Co-managed by Stadiums Queensland, these sites have historically served community and sporting needs and hold enormous potential to deliver public housing, green space, and cultural infrastructure.

Instead, t**he *Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025*** proposes sweeping changes that centralise planning powers in the unelected Games Independent Infrastructure and Coordination Authority (GIICA). This removes oversight from both local councils and State Parliament, effectively sidelining communities from decisions that will shape Brisbane for decades to come.

Clause 66 of the Bill allows Olympic-related developments—stadiums, athlete villages, and major transport infrastructure—to override 15 core planning and environmental laws. **Section 53EG** removes judicial review and legal appeal rights, stripping communities of any way to contest decisions that impact their neighbourhoods.

This poses a serious threat to the Gabba Priority Development Area (PDA), declared in July 2023 under the ***Economic Development Act 2012*** to fast-track urban renewal around the stadium. The PDA was meant to deliver affordable housing, green infrastructure, community infrastructure and accessible public space. But since the change in government, no updated or enforceable development scheme has been released. Instead, reports suggest the PDA may be drastically scaled back to prioritise commercial redevelopment—particularly the proposed Brisbane Live entertainment precinct.

Premier Crisafulli's public support for progressing Brisbane Live through a market-led proposal confirms plans to hand over the GoPrint site to private interests. This would mark a permanent transfer of public land without transparency, accountability, or guarantees of social benefit. Both the Gabba and GoPrint sites risk being lost to private development, undermining opportunities to build a community-led Olympic legacy.

This reflects a broader shift toward developer-driven, top-down planning that sacrifices long-term public good for short-term profit. Renters, public housing tenants, and long-time residents face growing displacement risks, while the city loses critical opportunities for inclusive, climate-resilient neighbourhoods.

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C) White Water Rafting Development – Environmental and Koala Habitat Concerns

The proposed white-water rafting facility near critical koala habitat highlights the serious environmental risks the ***Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025*** fails to address.

Koalas were listed as an endangered species by the Australian government in 2022; they, face ongoing threats from habitat fragmentation, urban sprawl, disease, and climate change. The area surrounding the proposed facility is part of an important ecological corridor—not just for koalas but for a wide range of native flora and fauna essential to regional biodiversity.

Yet the Bill's fast-tracked development model sidelines robust **environmental impact assessment (EIA)** processes. It prioritises speed over scrutiny, increasing the likelihood that projects will proceed without proper understanding or mitigation of their environmental impacts. Without thorough, independent EIAs, serious consequences—such as habitat destruction, disruption of breeding patterns, wildlife fatalities, and loss of ecosystem connectivity—may go unexamined and unaddressed.

Critically, the Bill does not require binding environmental mitigation or rehabilitation plans. Instead, environmental safeguards are left to the discretion of developers, with no clear accountability mechanisms. This lack of enforceability raises serious concerns about post-construction habitat recovery and long-term environmental stewardship.

Just as troubling is the Bill's removal of judicial review and appeal rights. Community voices—including those of environmental experts, Traditional Owners, and conservation groups—are being excluded from decisions that directly impact our natural heritage. These groups hold deep ecological and cultural knowledge essential to responsible land use planning, and their exclusion undermines both environmental justice and cultural integrity.

This approach runs counter to Queensland's obligations under national environmental laws, including the ***Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act***, and risks further degradation of already-stressed ecosystems. By sidelining meaningful consultation and gutting environmental oversight, the Bill threatens not just biodiversity but community trust in our planning systems.

Queenslanders expect a future where economic development and environmental responsibility go hand in hand. To achieve that, we need stronger—not weaker—protections. That means requiring

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rigorous, enforceable environmental assessments, restoring rights to appeal, and centring community and cultural voices in planning decisions.

We can't afford to trade irreplaceable habitats and native wildlife for rushed Olympic infrastructure. If we're serious about a Games legacy, it must include protecting the natural systems that sustain us all.

D) Post-Games Legacy Concerns

Across all these sites and beyond, the Bill's failure to embed enforceable post-Games legacy frameworks threatens to convert once-public assets into commercially driven developments with little regard for long-term community needs. The transfer of control to state-appointed authorities and private developers removes elected representatives and local voices from governance, breaking democratic accountability and risking social fragmentation.

The lack of transparency, weakened consultation protocols, and the erosion of legal protections collectively jeopardise housing security, cultural heritage preservation, environmental sustainability, and community wellbeing for generations to come—not just within The Gabba Ward, but across the entire state.

4. Risks to Renewable Energy and Wind Farm Development

While the Bill includes requirements for social impact assessments and community benefit agreements for wind farms and other major renewable projects, it simultaneously introduces discretionary regulations that may stifle investment.

Key issues include:

- The imposition of potentially discretionary and complex regulatory requirements risks discouraging developers from investing in renewable projects.
- Appeal rights are limited to developers, excluding affected communities from having a voice in the process.
- Cultural heritage protections are diluted, weakening Indigenous consultation and protection obligations.

Alarmingly, the government's own **Statement of Compatibility** concedes that these changes could increase emissions and delay Queensland's transition to clean energy.

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This is a regressive step at a time when urgent climate action is needed.

5. Threat of Public Land Privatisation and Market-Led Proposals

There is a significant risk that publicly owned land within Olympic Priority Development Areas (PDAs) will be sold or leased to private developers without transparency or meaningful community consultation. Premier David Crisafulli has publicly confirmed that the Brisbane Live arena will proceed through a market-led proposal, with the GoPrint site—currently a critical public asset—as the preferred location.

> "Let me be clear, Brisbane needs a world-class Brisbane Arena in the CBD… I have already seen offers from the private sector."
> — Premier David Crisafulli, March 2025

This signals a permanent transfer of public land into commercial hands, bypassing public scrutiny and accountability. These kinds of transactions set a dangerous precedent, undermining democratic planning processes and prioritising private profit over public interest.

Similarly, there is no clarity on the post-Games future of the publicly owned Gabba Cricket Ground and surrounding land. The demolition of the stadium post Games raises serious concerns about further loss of public assets, especially in the absence of transparent, enforceable legacy plans. Without clear protections, this land too is at risk of being handed over to private interests under opaque processes.

Beyond GoPrint and the Gabba, other publicly owned sites—including parts of Victoria Park / Barrambin, RNA Showgrounds land, and sections of Cross River Rail-associated holdings—could also be subject to sell-off or long-term leasing. The centralisation of planning authority under **GIICA** and the removal of judicial review means these decisions could be made behind closed doors, without community input or oversight.

What we're witnessing is not an Olympic legacy—it's an Olympic land grab. Without strong, enforceable public benefit commitments, the 2032 Games risk becoming a vehicle for the privatisation of Brisbane's most valuable remaining public spaces.

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Recommendations

To uphold democratic principles and secure lasting community benefit from the Olympic legacy, I urge the Committee to:

1. Remove or substantially revise provisions overriding existing Acts, particularly the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act, Planning Act, and Environmental Protection Act.
2. Restore judicial and community appeal rights related to social impact assessments and community benefit agreements.
3. Mandate independent cultural heritage assessments for all Olympic and energy projects.
4. Ensure Local Governments and affected communities are formally included in Games infrastructure planning and decision-making.
5. Guarantee that community benefit agreements are co-designed with communities and are legally enforceable.
6. Provide clear, renewable energy-specific guidelines for SIAs and CBAs to avoid unnecessary delays in clean energy projects.
7. Publish the full Gabba PDA development scheme and subject it to transparent community consultation.
8. Reserve the GoPrint site and all public land within Olympic PDAs exclusively for public use—including social housing, cultural spaces, and green areas—and prohibit any sale or lease without full public disclosure, genuine community consultation, and independent review.
9. Establish a public register of all Olympic-related land transactions to ensure transparency and accountability.

Conclusion

The 2032 Olympic Games represent a unique and historic opportunity to create a lasting legacy that transcends the physical infrastructure and financial arrangements associated with hosting such an event. This legacy must be grounded in principles of justice, equitable community control, housing security, cultural preservation, and robust environmental stewardship. These foundational values are essential to ensuring that the Games leave a positive and enduring impact on the people and places most affected—particularly the residents of The Gabba Ward and the broader Queensland community.

Regrettably, the **Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025**, in its current form, risks undermining these critical objectives. By concentrating power in state-appointed authorities, curtailing community consultation, and weakening existing protections for heritage, environment, and social equity, the Bill threatens to

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marginalise the very communities it should serve. It places short-term development agendas and market interests above the long-term wellbeing of local people and ecosystems.

I submit this response with the utmost conviction that genuine community voices must be placed at the centre of the Olympic planning and delivery process. The Games should not be an exclusive project benefiting a select few but rather a catalyst for positive change that is inclusive, transparent, and accountable. The decisions we make now will shape the social, cultural, and environmental fabric of our city and state for generations.

Therefore, it is imperative that this legislation be amended to reinforce democratic governance, protect vulnerable communities, safeguard our environment, and guarantee that the Olympic legacy is truly one that benefits all Queenslanders—not just those with the loudest voices or deepest pockets.

Respectfully,

[redacted]

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