




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MAIWAR

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**PLANNING (SOCIAL IMPACT AND COMMUNITY BENEFIT) AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (5.16 pm): Here we Joh again. This bill is dragging us back to an era of unaccountable, undemocratic and regressive governance that is the hallmark of conservative politics in this state. This bill is all about trashing process and represents some of the most extraordinary overreach we have seen in generations. This is the 2025 equivalent of the Deen brothers rolling up in the middle of the night to avoid public scrutiny or challenge so that a bloody-minded, pig-headed government can simply ignore the very real community concerns that exist and will continue to emerge as the government rushes in to the Olympics vanity projects.

Every Queenslanders should know that for the sake of the Olympics this government is willing to shred the Environmental Protection Act, the Environmental Offsets Act, the Vegetation Management Act, the Nature Conservation Act, the Coastal Protection and Management Act, the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act and the Planning Act—and that is not even the entire list. It is also proposing a new watered-down process to effectively bypass cultural heritage protections.

For the sake of the Olympics, and so this government can please the fat cats and vested interests in the Olympics committee, this government is willing to shred the usual requirements for community consultation, override processes to protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage and simply erase vital environmental protections. It is, as far as I am aware, completely unprecedented to override 15 separate planning and environmental controls for the development of Olympics and Paralympics infrastructure. This tells us that this government does not give a toss about its constituents or their concerns, our communities and the future of our cities and regions.

This government is so eager to grovel at the feet of Olympics fat cats that it is willing to sacrifice green space, sacrifice Aboriginal cultural heritage and silence any community concerns or opposition. Despite all the grandstanding we have seen from Labor on this bill, Queenslanders have not forgotten that Labor treated them with the same level of contempt around the Gabba stadium redevelopment—a project that the former government forged ahead with despite enormous opposition and on the back of next to no community consultation.

Rethink the Gabba is the alliance of community members around East Brisbane State School and Raymond Park that successfully fought to quash the ludicrous Gabba stadium plans. Rethink the Gabba writes that this bill, framed around ‘efficiency’ is in essence—

... a fairly thinly veiled attempt to limit not only the ability of any dissenting voices to have their say, but to have any meaningful consultation ... It may seem like this is a good way to “get things done” more quickly, but we would like to remind you what happened when the previous State government tried to impose massive changes on the community of East Brisbane and Woolloongabba in 2023.

They continue—

If the current State government tries to override planning laws in the mistaken belief that communities are willing to prioritise the Olympics over everything else, they risk suffering the same consequences. In short, when you exclude communities from essential decisions impacting their future, they will push back, sometimes with devastating political consequences.

Let's not forget who really benefits from the Olympics. It is not everyday people. It is not small local businesses. It is the out-of-touch elites on the IOC and it is the already wealthy—the big property developers, the media and broadcast corporations, the corporate sponsors and the massive hotel chains. It is certainly not the everyday people who will instead see the costs of rent and housing skyrocket. Even those residents who are super keen on the Olympics need to remember that the tickets to any events, particularly any tickets to finals, will almost certainly be at costs that are out of reach for the everyday person.

There were over 780 submissions to this bill—the vast majority of which were in strong opposition. Two hundred and thirteen of those were form submissions but there were even bigger numbers of unique submissions. This is members' constituents taking the time to register their opposition. They can see what is coming.

In changes that the Environmental Defenders Office described as 'unorthodox' and 'dangerous', the bill provides that the development of any infrastructure designated under it will be lawful and not subject to compliance or approval under the Planning Act or any of the other 14 pieces of relevant legislation. The EDO writes—

The complete suspension of significant planning and environment legislation is not justified and is a disproportionate response to the need to roll out Olympics infrastructure. These laws exist to ensure that developments are safe, environmentally sustainable, and conducted in accordance with the public interest (informed by public consultation). A lack of preparation for the Olympic and Paralympic Games should not be used as a pretext to erode public participation and regulatory safeguards which are designed to protect the integrity and safety of development and to minimise impacts.

The South East Queensland Community Alliance writes that the operational requirements which form part of the host city contract require that the host city assess impacts on 'climate, biodiversity/natural sites, sourcing and resource management/circular economy, infrastructure and mobility' and focus on 'public engagement and communication'. In excluding the games infrastructure from 14 separate pieces of legislation, the SEQ Community Alliance argues that this bill contravenes contractual obligations within the host city contract and represents an 'unjustified level of overreach and community exclusion'.

The apparent safeguard is that the parliament will need to pass further amendments to the act to designate each piece of relevant infrastructure. I do not need to tell anyone here, and we do not need to pretend, that that is any kind of safeguard in this unicameral parliament. It is in fact just a licence for the LNP to designate whatever they want whenever they want without any genuine community consultation. The community will be left with no ability to appeal these decisions or even commence civil proceedings against a development if it would cause delay, and there is no legislative requirement for detailed environmental assessments, despite the apparent commitment to doing them.

As the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties said in its submission, 'If Queenslanders cannot enforce their legal rights, they have no rights at all.' The whole thing again calls to mind the Joh era of Queensland, when around 60 buildings were demolished and the community saw its important gathering spaces just destroyed, often in the middle of the night.

Projects designated under these new laws will evade existing requirements under cultural heritage legislation. They will get an alternate framework that significantly curtails the time for consultation, with just a 60-day timeframe for negotiating a cultural heritage management plan. I have to say it was a little galling to hear the minister talking just before me about her consultation with First Nation leaders.

There is no requirement for free, prior and informed consent to projects—no ability for them to say no. Instead, if negotiations are unsuccessful within the timeframe, a default plan will be imposed and the project goes ahead without any regard for place-specific First Nations management of land and culture. This is in direct contravention of cultural rights under the Human Rights Act and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, but we know what this government thinks of human rights, don't we?

We have at least one concrete example of how the LNP would like this to play out in Victoria Park—Barrambin. This government has broken its pre-election promise that it would not build an expensive, wasteful new stadium for the Olympics and is putting it on top of this much needed inner-city greenspace. It is a breach of the Olympic Host Contract, which mandates avoiding permanent structures in protected areas and prioritising previously developed sites.

Of course, the LNP is no stranger to bulldozing and selling off greenspace in Brisbane, but this is particularly egregious given the loss of cultural history and the destruction of sacred sites that this bill is designed to facilitate at Barrambin. Barrambin holds deep cultural and spiritual significance to the First Nations Yagara and Turrbal peoples. It is a campground and meeting place for corroborees,

dancing, hunting and gathering and a place for First Nations people from neighbouring regions to visit and stay. The LNP are ready to destroy all of that heritage for a new Olympic stadium that they promised they would not build.

There is one promise that the LNP is clearly determined to keep, and that is taking us backwards on renewable energy. I have long advocated for community involvement in planning decisions, including decisions about renewables. For years now I have been pushing the government to review the Planning Act so it adequately accounts for this, but consultation and assessment should apply equally to all large developments with potential for significant social impacts. Instead, these laws are specifically designed to hamper Queensland's transition to renewable energy. In fact, as QCC pointed out, this bill will result in stricter regulatory requirements for a two-hectare solar farm than for a coalmine that extracts any less than two million tonnes per annum of coal. The latter will continue to enjoy exemptions from environmental impact assessments, actively discouraging investment in renewable energy.

I have a further quote from the EDO that I have run out of time for. Honestly, it is no wonder they want to defund them. This is a dog of a bill and it needs to be voted down.

(Time expired)