




Speech By
Michael Berkman

MEMBER FOR MAIWAR

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

University of Queensland, Draft Site Development Plan

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (2.12 pm): Today I rise to address some goings-on at the St Lucia University of Queensland campus and in particular with regard to the Schonell Theatre and the Union Complex. Anyone who studied at UQ, like me, will have fond memories of the Schonell—sharing that pizza amongst four people so you can afford to see what it is that is screening that night. An open letter from the UQ Law Revue recently described it as the beating heart of UQ's creative community, and I think it speaks for many Brisbane locals and UQ alumni with that description.

Concerns about the Schonell were recently expressed in a change.org petition which garnered 7,500 signatures in quite quick time. I want to give a quick shout-out to Nick Comino, Georgia Millroy, Paige Howard and Hannah Dawe who were on to this very quickly and put the petition together. The concern is that the draft UQ site development plan proposes the demolition of the Schonell and the Union Complex. This would mean the loss of UQ's professional class theatre, and my conversations with UQ administration suggest that there is no clear time line for replacement of this theatre and certainly no committed funding at this stage. The petitioners are concerned—and I share their concern—that UQ would lose its only professional theatre space without any real plan for a satisfactory alternative.

At a minimum I would have thought that the demolition should not go ahead without a replacement venue in place or at least funding for that to occur in the future. We need to bear in mind as well the very real heritage values of the Schonell. They should not be overlooked, but I am the first to accept that it is a little dated and could potentially use a revamp. I take this opportunity to table a report that I have been given, which I think was prepared for a subcommittee of the UQ Senate and which addresses the possibilities for a refurbishment of the Schonell Theatre.

Tabled paper: Document, undated, titled 'Schonell Theatre Refurbishment Consideration Item 8.2 TLSC meeting 2/15' [1794](#).

I have recently written to the UQ Vice-Chancellor, Peter Hoj, about this and I am very keen to discuss these options with him and I will raise some of the various options that are addressed in that report and also other issues that have been raised by students and the broader community about the site development plan. I want to reiterate that I am happy to take views from anyone in the community who has concerns or issues they would like me to raise in that forum. I want to acknowledge the organisers who are holding their first meeting tonight to look at defending the broader heritage values of the UQ Union Complex. These kinds of collective decommodified spaces like the Schonell and parts of the complex give us all so much and they are really integral to the fabric of campus life. These are the places between the cracks of officialdom and outside bureaucracy and the authority of campus and political hierarchy and they are so rich. We see this in iconic Brisbane bands like the Go-Betweens and the Saints that emerged from this space and our longest running community radio station 4ZZZ, which has its roots there. In closing, submissions on the draft site development plan close tomorrow, Friday, 2 November. I encourage everyone locally to have their say.