



Speech By  
**Michael Berkman**


**MEMBER FOR MAIWAR**

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**PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT**

**Maiwar Electorate, Schools**

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (2.36 pm): Last week I went to the Toowong State School P&C meeting and heard from parents and teachers about the impact school overcrowding is having on their students right now, in particular those students with special needs. Toowong does an exceptional job in providing a truly inclusive educational experience for all students, including those with particular needs. The school is short of classrooms, meaning that these kids have no certainty about where they will be learning this year. There are some demountable classrooms on the way—too late for the start of term—but even when they arrive they will eat up a massive portion of the school oval, and we all know how important this space is for kids to play, grow and learn.

Similar stories are repeated across the west side. Instead of making big developers pay for more public infrastructure, the state government and city council are letting overcrowding in our schools get out of control. Today I am repeating my call for a new P-12 school on the west side. The state government should immediately start work on identifying a site for a new school, and securing that land for the future.

On Monday I went to the P&C meeting at Indooroopilly State School where enrolment growth is eye watering. The school is getting some much needed extra classrooms this year, but like every local school, there are huge concerns around student safety at the beginning and end of the school day. Among other incidents and near misses, I heard from a mother who was walking to school with her two children, one in a pram, when she was hit by a car on Moggill Road. A federally funded expansion of the drop-and-go zone along Taringa Parade has been totally bungled by council because they failed to undertake any meaningful consultation with local residents. Opinion is divided, with some parents and residents concerned that it will not make things safer and that century-old trees will be lost without proper deliberation. In the long term, we need to get kids out of cars, which means making walking, cycling and catching public transport to school easy and safe.

Alongside infrastructure for cars, there are plenty of practical steps we could take to ease the school drop-off crunch, including longer pedestrian crossing times, permanent 40 kilometre an hour zones and better funding for the Active School Travel program. As well as those steps we should aim for something ground breaking. The Greens are calling for free public transport for all kids under 18 years old, and today I am asking the government to consider it. Free public transport for every kid in Queensland, from Brisbane to Cairns, would cost just \$56 million per year. Just for context, the government will spend \$2.5 billion this year just on roads. For parents, it would mean no mucking around with go cards, less hassle and more peace of mind. For kids in my electorate, in the outer suburbs, and especially for families that do not own a car, it would mean a new sense of freedom. For people who have to drive, this would also mean getting cars off the roads at drop-off times, which would do wonders to ease congestion. If we are going to build a future for all Queenslanders, we cannot be scared of big ideas like this. We should be providing free public transport for all kids.