




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MAIWAR

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ADJOURNMENT

Toowong, Proposed Development

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (6.17 pm): I rise to speak about a block of land in my electorate—quite a famous block at that. The land is at 600 Coronation Drive, Toowong and was home to the ABC studios for 50 years before a serious cancer cluster scare back in 2006 forced a relocation to the ABC's new home at South Bank.

After some years of investigation, the site was eventually cleared of any contamination or radiation in 2010. Back then, the federal government still owned the land, which is 15,000 square metres in size in a flood-prone area with a 130-metre river frontage, a heritage listed building, mangroves and a number of Moreton Bay figs and large gums. All of these factors made the site a perfect location for a public park. Even back then, the community leapt at this possibility. There were widespread calls from all levels of government to take the property off the market and keep it as a valuable investment in public space. Instead, it was sold off in a fire sale, for \$10 million less than it was worth, to a developer who wanted to build 555 apartments in three skyscrapers—the 'champagne flutes' as they became known.

At the end of last year, in an extraordinary win, the Court of Appeal upheld the local residents' challenge to the development on the basis that its height far exceeded local planning limits, among other concerns. Now that Sunland is back to the drawing board, we have a unique and fleeting opportunity to reignite the conversation about how this site should be used. That is why earlier this week I wrote to the Treasurer, calling on the state government to investigate the opportunity to buy this land back from Sunland and convert the entire lot into a public recreation space designed by the local community. I reiterate that request here today.

Opportunities like this to acquire inner-city riverfront land do not come around often, and Toowong is absolutely crying out for public space. In the last 10 years alone more than 3½ thousand new apartments have been built within 200 metres of the ABC site, yet in the last few decades half the public recreation sites including the Toowong pool, part of Moorlands Park and the original Toowong library and park space have been lost. Density in an inner-city, well-connected hub such as Toowong is inevitable and makes sense, but all over Brisbane we are seeing our public recreation and green space sold off and lost forever, with hardly any new infrastructure to keep up with the relentless profit driven development.

Cities are more than just apartments and offices built to line the pockets of big business. Our cities shape our lives, and decisions about how they are designed really do matter. They influence how often we see our friends and family, where we work and relax and how we get around. This spot would make an idyllic riverfront park that could be enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. It would also make a perfect landing point for a walking and cycling bridge connecting West End and Toowong. A bridge would do wonders to improve connectivity and access to both these hubs as well as help get cars off

the road, which is essential in reducing carbon emissions, congestion and improving livability in Brisbane. The state Labor government should jump at this chance to investigate building the infrastructure our city desperately needs because the opportunity is very unlikely to come knocking again.