




Speech By
Michael Berkman

MEMBER FOR MAIWAR

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Coyne, Mr T

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (2.41 pm): Today I rise to pay tribute to our dear friend Thomas Coyne, who lost his life last week at just 21 years old. Thomas was a hardworking and passionate friend, activist and comrade. He was a bright spark in the Greens and the broader movement for social justice and he was a beloved son and carer to his mum, Jo.

I remember him best, among his many roles, as the Queensland Greens rural and regional convenor and for his energetic determination and commitment to fighting for a better world. Thomas was also a founding member of the Queensland Greens Disability Working Group, the convenor for the Toowoomba and Western Queensland Greens, and our candidate for Toowoomba South just last year. He was actively involved in the Rainbow Greens. Many of us will remember Thomas, with a rainbow flag tied around his neck, leading his community through the streets of Toowoomba at the rally for the 'yes' campaign during the 2017 same-sex marriage plebiscite. I know my home town and that takes some courage.

People such as Thomas inspire us to keep showing up, to sit through the late-night committee or branch meetings, to get up at 4 am on election day and to push through the exhaustion and the disillusion to fight for a better future. I asked a few people whether they wanted to contribute something for me to read out today. There is way too much for me to say in this short speech. I will table some statements from a few in the party who best knew and loved Thomas, and I will read just a few words now.

Tabled paper: Document, undated, titled 'Statements on Thomas Coyne' [555](#).

Alyce, who was supported by Thomas in her campaigns as a candidate, said—

Thomas was a bright light in this world. He was relentlessly committed to doing good. He was a good friend, kind, witty, and full of effervescent energy.

The Queensland Rainbow Greens said—

Thomas was a fierce advocate who cared passionately about so many social justice and environmental causes, and this world was a better place for having him as a part of it.

Senator Larissa Waters said—

Thomas' passion, drive, glorious zest for life, and wicked sense of humour will be greatly missed.

Michelle, the convenor of the Queensland Greens Disability Working Group, said—

Thomas was incredibly brave, compassionate, intelligent, loyal and so very funny. He taught me not only to accept my neuro diverse traits, but to celebrate them. We will continue the fight and make him proud. Love you forever, Tom.

I want to finish with this recent memory from my colleague, the member for South Brisbane. She said—

I last saw Thomas in person when he and other young regional members joined me for my first speech, just a few months ago. He sat in this chamber, and made his presence known—he joined the chorus from the gallery when they declared 'We're here.' We're here, Thomas, and we will keep up the fight for you.

To his mother, Jo, I cannot tell you how desperately sorry I feel for your loss. Thomas, you will be missed more than you could possibly know, mate. Rest easy.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Thank you, member. Condolences.