




Speech By
Michael Berkman

MEMBER FOR MAIWAR

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MOTION

Queensland Floods

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (4.13 pm): Nearly every suburb in Maiwar was hit hard by the floods. St Lucia, Fig Tree Pocket, Indooroopilly, Toowong, Taringa, Milton, Auchenflower and Rosalie all felt it. Essentially, everyone hit this time was affected in 2011. Whether locals experienced the previous floods or had moved into the area since, I do not think anyone was expecting a repeat of 2011 in such quick succession. The community coordination in getting the suburbs cleaned up has been quite extraordinary to watch and it was something my team and I have been really privileged to support. There were parts of the electorate that did not get help from the Mud Army and it was fortuitous that we had already chosen one of these areas for a clean-up on Sunday after the Lord Mayor announced mission accomplished. I know that the folks we helped that day still needed it, and I am sure there were countless others in that position.

Like many climate fuelled disasters, this one hit poorer people, pensioners, renters, international students and migrants harder than most. I have heard countless stories already from renters whose homes were trashed and many who were simply turfed out to fend for themselves in an increasingly hopeless rental market. It was disgraceful that once again the federal government excluded international students and migrant workers from its \$1,000 disaster payments. I heard of students sleeping in the UQ libraries, at the student centre and at the Toowong shopping centre, relying on free meals provided by the UQ Union, Meals on Wheels and other locals. The generally smaller state government grants have unfortunately proved difficult to access for some, especially given that many international students do not have a driver's licence and a Medicare card. I was really pleased to get help from department of communities and housing staff out to the temporary student accommodation around the city to help a bit, but it has been perplexing that it has so far failed to send those staff to the UQ campus where so many students are going to seek help.

The Indooroopilly community was really rocked by the tragic death of a 34-year-old man on Witton Road in the early hours of 27 February. Waking up to that news will stay with me as one of the most harrowing moments of the 2022 floods and the point at which the seriousness of the looming disaster became clear. In the following days I spoke to Ramy, one of the residents on Witton Road who was there in the moments before the tragedy. It was only because of a brief pause in the torrential rain that he heard the young man's cries for help. Ramy called 000 while another young couple was desperately trying to call him back to their side of the overflowing creek, but he was not able to swim to safety and emergency services located his body soon after. Like so many other people in and around Maiwar, Ramy and his family are still cleaning up their house and I know they will get through that process eventually, but this experience will be with him forever and that man's family and friends will be without him in their lives forever.

This is the very real human cost of climate fuelled disasters, and it is a cost that will only grow over time if we do not do what the science and experts have been telling us for decades now. Just as the disaster unfolded, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released its latest report on the effects of runaway climate change caused by burning coal, gas and other fossil fuels. The timing was devastating but significant and it confirmed that this is just the beginning.

Sea level rise of just half a metre along with more rain and wild weather means that floods like those we just endured could happen every single year. More people will die. More people will lose their homes. Whole cities and suburbs will disappear. Here and across the world billions of people will be displaced and many thousands will die. It is just so galling to hear the Premier make comments like she did just this morning—that is, to acknowledge that climate change is making disasters worse, all while the state government is doing nothing like what is necessary to avoid 1.5 or two degrees of warming.

The coal billionaires and their backers in Labor and the LNP have made this mess, but it is my constituents and thousands of the people that we represent who are out there quite literally cleaning up the mud and the mess and piecing their lives back together. Queensland Labor is, to quote a recent ABC article, 'in lock step' with the federal coalition on cutting greenhouse gas emissions, matching its 2030 and 2050 targets almost exactly. Of the states with an emissions reduction target, Queensland Labor's is the worst—just a 30 per cent cut by 2030, net zero by 2050. Instead, we need to cut pollution by 75 per cent by 2030 and completely phase out coal and gas with a transition plan that guarantees jobs and incomes for workers and communities. Without a plan like that, all the concern from both sides of this chamber will be so many crocodile tears. Burning coal makes floods more frequent, unpredictable and deadly and it is simply time to stop.