




Speech By
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ADJOURNMENT

Federal Budget, Young People

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (7.19 pm): As the saying goes, budgets are all about choices, and this week the federal Labor government chose a surplus over young people's lives. They chose tax cuts for billionaires over support for renters. They chose nuclear subs and increased fossil fuel subsidies over bringing welfare payments up to the poverty line. I am asking this government not to make the same mistake.

Let's start with renters. More people of all ages are renting, but especially under-35s. Most young people see home ownership as out of reach these days. They have lower relative wages and higher living costs than previous generations. Federal Labor is raising Rent Assistance by as little as \$12 a week, while average city rents increased \$115 last year. Millions of renters without that payment still get nothing—no rent freeze, no rent controls, no new money directly invested into social housing.

Under Labor, uni students will accumulate \$6 billion more in debt over two years. Labor is making more from rising student debt than they are from changes to their gas tax. Education should be free. The Greens have said many times that the federal government should wipe student debt and make TAFE and uni free again. Where the federal government is failing on education, the state government should commit to fully funding the minimum schooling resource standard from 2024 so that every young person can access free, quality education.

Similarly, in health, where the federal government has failed to make Medicare genuinely universal and free, the state government must step in. Young adults are largely excluded from the pitiful bulk-billing incentive payments to GPs in the federal budget, and the ramifications for mental health, the most common reason for GP visits, are particularly significant. Mental ill health incidence is highest among 16- to 24-year-olds and is the leading cause of disability and death among young people. Queensland has the lowest per capita spending on mental health services in the country. We also have a much higher rate of suicide among young people.

During the select committee inquiry into mental health, experts said we needed around \$700 million to a billion dollars in new money each year, and this government committed just \$350 million. We still have no commitments on how the mental health levy will be spent apart from 10 new beds at the Mater. Those beds are obviously welcomed, but the private Mater Hospital alone cannot provide the flexible, accessible care our communities need. If the government was willing to tax the big banks, as the Greens have proposed, they could fund public health clinics across the state where Queenslanders would access free GP and allied health professionals. We brought a fully costed plan for 200 of these clinics at the last election, and the need is even greater now.

Young people are just one of the groups left behind by the federal Labor government's budget this week. Disabled people are left behind. Working people are left behind. Renting families are left behind. I am asking this government to choose a different path with its next budget, one that genuinely leaves no-one behind.