



Speech By  
**Michael Berkman**


**MEMBER FOR MAIWAR**

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## **ADJOURNMENT**

### **Toowong Central**

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (7.23 pm): Right in the heart of Toowong in my electorate there is a giant empty concrete pit, right next to the Toowong Village shopping centre. It used to be a Woolworths grocery store, but it closed almost seven years ago. Since then, the block of land known as Toowong Central has sat derelict and disused.

Two development proposals have fallen over at the Toowong Central site including the Stockland plan for three towers that never eventuated and the Aviary proposal from SDC, who announced a few months ago that that had fallen over too. Despite some shiny PR work from the new owners who say they are teaming up with SDC and the developers next door to create an even bigger up-market development, there is still no DA.

The combined block is 1.3 hectares of land in a prime location in the heart of Toowong. It is right next to the shopping centre, the train station, buses and countless other services. It has the potential to reshape the entire suburb. Yet the major parties are happy for it to be left empty and derelict by developers so they can one day make huge profits from their up-market apartments that no locals can afford. I read today that the *Macquarie Dictionary* word of the year is 'cozzie livs'. For those who do not know the term, it is shorthand for the cost-of-living crisis and the *Macquarie Dictionary* describes it as a humorous play on the term. I suppose if you do not laugh, you cry.

Housing is driving the cost-of-living crisis because the major parties refuse to ban unlimited rent increases, refuse to prioritise public housing over private profiteering and refuse to intervene in crippling interest rate rises. The government has just released its social housing waitlist data and, despite their claims that applications have stabilised, a closer look shows an increase of about 1,500 people on the register between June and September. There are more families desperate for affordable housing because the private market has failed them and because Labor has failed them by allowing unlimited rent hikes.

I wrote to the housing minister, the Treasurer and the Premier asking them to consider acquiring this land in Toowong to build public housing. I have also written to Brisbane City Council asking them to deliver a new park and community services on the land. There is more than enough space on this property for both levels of government to work together and make something useful happen.

I received a remarkably brief response from the housing minister last week informing me ever so helpfully that the site is owned by a developer. Indeed, it is. Thank you kindly for the information. Has she considered buying it or at the very least even requiring just some of the new homes to be public or genuine affordable housing? Instead, the government continues to outsource its responsibility for housing provision to the private market. This is their legacy: the concrete pit at the heart of Toowong, the sold-off community housing, the people sleeping in tents across Queensland, the Queensland Labor legacy delivered in collaboration with their land-banking, profit-hungry developer mates.