




Speech By
Hon. Leeanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

Record of Proceedings, 14 February 2024

ADJOURNMENT

Neighbourhood and Community Centres

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Treaty, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Communities and Minister for the Arts) (7.28 pm): The electorate of Algester is home to so many incredible community organisations that make a real difference for families feeling the pressures of rising costs of living in our community. One such organisation is the Acacia Ridge neighbourhood and community centre, known as Belong, which is operated by Community. Belong is a trusted, inclusive and respectful place for individuals and families across the Algester electorate where the local community can connect with each other and with specialist staff and services to not only help people in need but also build an inclusive and thriving community.

Miranda Mallet and her dedicated team work hard every day to provide support for vulnerable households and find new ways to connect our community. Whether it is running the well-attended food co-op that sees hundreds of local people receive discounted and sometimes free-of-charge food and household items; hosting free community lunches; running regular English, citizenship, tutoring and art classes every week; or holding their annual Christmas appeal, where Christmas gifts and food hampers are provided to so many who might otherwise go without during the festive season, the team makes a real difference to people in Acacia Ridge and the Algester electorate more broadly.

Whether it is Belong in my electorate of Algester or neighbourhood centres across the state, our government recognises and acknowledges the important role these centres play in our community, especially at times of great need. That is why we have almost doubled the core operational funding of the 128 government funded centres across the state, including Acacia Ridge and also, importantly, locked in certainty by establishing five-year contracts. Moving to five-year contracts is vital for the sustainability of our state funded neighbourhood and community centres. Providing a level of funding certainty means that attracting and retaining quality staff is made easier. It also means that the community can be provided with consistency of service over the time it takes to help address what can be complex, long-term challenges.

Not only have we doubled the core operational funding; we have also expanded Emergency Relief Program funding—funding, I might add, that was callously cut by the LNP last time they were in government. This program provides support for vulnerable Queenslanders experiencing immediate financial hardship, providing access to food and transport vouchers, essential household items, food parcels and, where applicable, assistance with utility bills. This program has been incredibly important given the increasing cost-of-living pressures many Queensland families are currently experiencing. That is why our government has invested an additional \$3.3 million in the Emergency Relief Program funding in 2023-24. The Miles government understands the pressures that Queensland families are under, and of course we will continue to ensure we are addressing those through cost-of-living measures.