




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MAIWAR

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Brisbane City Council Libraries

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (2.48 pm): My office is right next to the Indooroopilly shopping centre, where our local council library is located. When library staff last month had to break the news to parents that the incredibly popular First 5 Forever sessions like Rhyme Time and Toddler Time were being cut, a lot of those parents headed straight from the library to my office. They wanted to know why anyone would cut a program that teaches babies, toddlers and children crucial literacy skills—a program that provides a community for parents who might otherwise be dealing with social isolation, a program that is so popular that families are regularly turned away at the door because these rooms are full. Why? Why would that be cut? It was because that is what the LNP does. They make these cruel, indiscriminate cuts to public services, regardless of the impact on people's lives.

From December, the LNP council is cutting around a quarter of the First 5 Forever sessions across Brisbane. The petition I started to oppose these cuts received more than 2,000 signatures in the first 24 hours. It now has almost 5,000. Anyone can see that if you care about the cost of living, strong communities and children's development, you would expect programs like this to be expanded, not cut. I know the LNP is going to whine that this is all Labor's fault, just like we have heard them do countless times in the four sitting days we have had so far this term, so let's be clear about what happened.

The First 5 Forever program has had state funding since 2015. The state government reduced its share of the funding to Brisbane libraries about five years ago, so Brisbane City Council contributed more to keep those sessions running. Now the council has cut that money. For the council to blame Rhyme Time cuts on a five-year-old decision—a decision about which they did not say a peep at the time—is just ridiculous and, frankly, no-one is buying it. If the council really wants to blame the current situation, the cuts to the First 5 Forever program, on a five-year-old decision by a former Labor government, I have to come really good news for them, because guess what? Guess who is in state government now? It is their mates in the LNP.

I have asked the new arts minister whether he will increase funding for this program to save Rhyme Time and other free sessions at Brisbane libraries and I would love it if he could give me that answer before we reach the maximum 30 days for a response to a question on notice. Those families across the city who rely on and who are now desperately missing those sessions would certainly appreciate that, because this program is far too important and popular to be on the chopping block. It should be a priority. The LNP should prove that they value it, like families across Brisbane do, by stumping up the funds for Rhyme Time right now.