




Speech By
Joseph Kelly

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Record of Proceedings, 22 May 2025

ADJOURNMENT

Greenslopes Electorate, St Maroun's Maronite Catholic Church

 **Mr J KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (9.18 pm): 'And who is my neighbour?' That is a question that is posed in the New Testament. There will be many answers to this question. Theologians will be better able than me to answer that from a biblical perspective. To me this parable seeks to remind us that our neighbour is anyone in need. It is a passage I contemplate as I walk down my street—the street I have lived on for nearly 30 years. I have gotten to know many of my neighbours over that time. I am able to look at the houses and answer that question with names and stories of triumph and hardship.

Tonight I want to spend a bit of time speaking about one of my favourite neighbours. It is not just a neighbour; it is a community of neighbours: St Maroun's Maronite Catholic Church in Greenslopes led by my good friend Father Fadi Salame, supported by his wife, Andree, and his wonderful family. Originally, this was a Roman Catholic Church, Our Lady of Lourdes, but the Maronite community had been celebrating mass here since 1984. In 1988 they purchased the property and on 26 February 1989 it was officially dedicated and opened by His Grace Archbishop Khalife, Maronite Archbishop of Australia.

The church is the centre of the Maronite community in Queensland with nearly 4,000 registered parishioners in South-East Queensland and approximately 250 families. The community regularly gathers for worship and community celebrations. I have been fortunate enough to be invited to join the community on many occasions for both worship and community celebrations. It is a warm and generous community where you can see people putting their Christian values into action. I saw that firsthand last year when they joined me on part of the Really Big Walk.

The Maronite community was founded nearly 1,500 years ago by Saint Maron, so three minutes is not enough to cover that amount of time. They are originally from Lebanon, with strong links remaining to this day between Brisbane and Lebanon. This community also has strong links to all the other Lebanese faith communities in South-East Queensland. It is part of our rich tapestry of successful multicultural communities.

There have been so many significant events since the church opened. In 2005 the sacred relics of Saint Charbel, Rafqa and Nimatullah left the shores of Lebanon for the first time ever and were celebrated in Greenslopes in a four-day festival. I was lucky enough to be there in 2018 when Archbishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay brought the relics of the founding Saint Maron to his namesake church. There are so many other regular church events and significant events I could mention, but let's look to the future.

The church is about to undergo a major reconstruction with a new church and a community centre planned—a community centre where people can learn Aramaic, the language of Jesus Christ. This is so exciting for the Maronite community and for our whole community. It will continue the nearly 40-year history of Greenslopes being the centre of the Maronite community in Queensland. I will continue to be glad to have the Maronite Catholic community as my neighbours and my friends.