




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MAIWAR

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Climate Change

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (2.56 pm): Last week in South-East Queensland was a tense time. It was a long wait for the cyclone to hit, especially for residents in low-lying coastal and flood-prone areas. I wish we could say that this was a once-in-a-century event but, having lived through the 2011 and 2022 floods, my community knows all too well that that just is not the case. In Maiwar, we were incredibly lucky that the gale-force winds never arrived, but the damage right across the south-east—in particular on the Gold Coast, the bay islands and countless other places—has been intense, and the rains and flooding that followed have been devastating.

I have been so impressed with the way this community, and mine in particular, swung into gear to help each other. It has been a real silver lining in what has otherwise been a pretty wretched and infuriating time. It should not fall on individuals, families and tiny community organisations on shoestring budgets to patch up the gaps left by an ill-prepared government. Our communities might have rallied around each other, but it was no thanks to successive LNP and Labor governments that have fuelled extreme weather events by opening up new coal and gas projects and then failing to adequately prepare and adapt to predicted climate change scenarios. In Brisbane, not a single evacuation centre was considered safe to withstand a cyclone. When the RNA showgrounds eventually opened up, it had no food, no water, no cooking facilities and no bedding—bare-bones facilities.

We are not ready for the worsening impacts of climate change. Some people in this chamber are not even ready to genuinely engage with, let alone properly understand and act on, the science of climate change. Let me be clear: now is precisely the right time to talk about climate change. We know that the climate is warming as a result of human activity. We know that its effects will continue to hit Queensland hard in many and varied ways. We will be hit with increased flooding and storm surge events, sea-level rise, more intense cyclones and storms, heatwaves, ocean acidification, crop losses, longer droughts in arid areas, more bushfires and a rise in vector borne diseases. Bare supermarket shelves will steadily become the norm as supply chains are interrupted and crop losses increase grocery prices.

The cost of repairing and replacing infrastructure and homes will grow. Already some home owners are completely unable to insure their homes while countless others have seen premiums skyrocket to the point of being effectively unaffordable. Tropical cyclones have long been a part of life for many on the east coast of Queensland, but rising ocean temperatures mean that those cyclones will carry more moisture, they will remain stronger for longer, they will move more slowly and they will dump even more rain when they reach land.

The north-eastern Coral Sea, where Tropical Cyclone Alfred formed, experienced its fourth-hottest February and the hottest January on record. Higher sea levels due to climate change also mean more dangerous storm surges and coastal flooding. Already sea levels today are 20 centimetres

higher than a century ago, and as ice caps melt and the oceans continue to warm and expand they are expected to rise by as much as 1.1 metre by the end of this century. For decades now scientists have warned us of the risk of cyclones intensifying and moving further south as the planet warms.

In densely populated South-East Queensland, a region without cyclone-proof infrastructure and housing, this issue is deadly serious. The prediction of climate impacts is complex and it is difficult, but thousands of scientists have collaborated over many decades to do just this. We have been on notice about these risks for decades. To continue to ignore these warnings is not just dangerous; it is deeply immoral. What we do here in Queensland really matters. It matters because Australia is the third biggest global exporter of fossil fuels. Multinational coal and gas corporations, which pay very little in tax in most cases, are fuelling the kind of weather South-East Queensland has just endured and that could have been so much worse, and they are doing it with the express support of LNP and Labor governments. Neither the LNP nor Labor have any plan to stop that. They have zero plan to stop digging up and shipping out the fossil fuels that are cooking the ocean, cooking the planet and cooking up ever bigger cyclones. It is shameful that not one other member in here—not one member of Labor or the LNP—can look Queenslanders in the eye while they continue to dig up coal and gas and tell them that they take their lives seriously, their safety seriously or—

(Time expired)