




Speech By
Michael Berkman

MEMBER FOR MAIWAR

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ADJOURNMENT

Homelessness

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (9.26 pm): Yesterday, the LNP Lord Mayor of Brisbane announced that any homeless person sleeping in a Brisbane park would be fined, would have their belongings confiscated and would be moved on. Let's ask ourselves: moved onto where? They are going to pay that fine with what? The mayor said—

Virtually every rough sleeper in Brisbane was offered secure accommodation before Tropical Cyclone Alfred, but shockingly the vast majority refused.

It is a barefaced lie to say that the majority of people sleeping rough have refused secure housing.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Maiwar, I will ask you to withdraw that unparliamentary language.

Mr BERKMAN: I withdraw. It is a blatant mistruth to say that the majority of people sleeping rough have refused secure housing. One has to be wilfully ignorant or plain cruel to buy into that kind of rot.

There are almost 50,000 people with very high needs waiting for social housing in Queensland—waiting for social housing that just does not exist. Thousands of these applicants, including children, retirees, young men and middle-aged women, are currently homeless. Thousands of others cannot even get on the wait list.

Sasha is a homeless woman who comes to the free meal that my office and our volunteer community put on in Guyatt Park each week. There are a number of genuinely terrible life events that have contributed to Sasha being homeless, not least of all the death of her eight-year-old son earlier this year. When Sasha was offered temporary accommodation in a hotel last week ahead of the cyclone she accepted it. Unfortunately, that has ended and she is back in the park. She is also now missing her belongings that the council threw out when they moved her into the hotel, including her son's picture books. The mayor has tried to paint people sleeping in tents as magnets for crime, violence and illegal drugs. Sasha is not violent. In fact, according to the Australian Institute of Criminology, she is 13 times more likely to be a victim of violent crime than the general public as a person who is homeless.

The overwhelming majority of people who are homeless are not criminal offenders. Some of the most common risk factors for homelessness include domestic violence, parental drug use, mental illness, trauma, workplace injuries, and cognitive and physical disabilities. Not everyone who experiences these challenges ends up homeless, but almost everyone who is homeless has lived with one of these, and poverty on top of that.

Of course, we want people living in safe houses. Of course, we want our parks to be safe places for everyone, but you do not do this by kicking people like Sasha in the guts. You do that by building public housing, by capping rent increases, by pushing down the cost of housing. You do it by supporting victims of abuse, supporting people with disabilities and supporting people in a housing crisis to live

with dignity. If you want to solve homelessness, go after the billionaire developers, the land bankers and the real estate lobby donating to the LNP and Labor, go after Peter Dutton and Anthony Albanese who have profited millions from rising housing costs, but leave Sasha alone.

(Time expired)

Mr SPEAKER: Before you resume your seat member for Maiwar, I let you finish your contribution but you did use another unparliamentary term. I would ask you to withdraw.

Mr BERKMAN: I withdraw.