



Speech By  
**Michael Berkman**


**MEMBER FOR MAIWAR**

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**PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT**

**Housing**

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (2.56 pm): In recent weeks we have once again seen the Brisbane City Council callously evict homeless people from public parks. These are people who have literally nowhere else to go; people who are victims of a housing crisis worse than any in living memory. Rent and house values in Brisbane have grown more than 50 per cent since COVID and prices are only expected to continue to increase. UQ, in my electorate, tells us that a student on Youth Allowance and living in purpose-built student accommodation will spend 66 per cent—a full two-thirds—of their income on rent for a shared room. Across Queensland, average households are spending more than 37 per cent of their income on housing, so debilitating housing stress is now the status quo.

Against that backdrop, around 22,000 people are experiencing homelessness in Queensland, although it is fair to assume that is likely underestimated. Having created those very conditions, is the state offering any solutions for those sleeping rough? No, quite the opposite. The Department of Housing and Public Works has opted once again to tighten its eligibility guidelines for emergency accommodation. The new guidelines require a person—someone who is no doubt living in circumstances that the housing minister cannot even begin to imagine—to prove they cannot afford accommodation. This inevitably requires access to detailed documentation of the sort that people who are sleeping rough, fleeing domestic violence or living with debilitating disability would find extraordinarily difficult to piece together. Many simply will not be able to prove it, even if that is their current reality.

The guidelines also exclude anyone who has left so-called safe and stable accommodation or declined a so-called reasonable offer of alternative accommodation, as though anyone would choose to be homeless unless their very safety and wellbeing was at risk. I have been told that just last week the emergency accommodation at Turbot House was shut down. This is accommodation that homeless people have been staying in for years and saying it is more unsafe than sleeping in a park, yet people who have left Turbot House are excluded from being offered accommodation anywhere else under the updated guidelines. These guidelines are simply offensive.

While they are trying to overcome the enormous barriers to even be put on the waiting list, rough sleepers are now being thrown out of their tent homes, having their possessions thrown into rubbish trucks and being left with nothing by local governments and the Queensland Police Service working together. Precisely this scenario played out just last week, with BCC and QPS evicting rough sleepers from parks not more than a kilometre from this building. This crisis will not be solved by tinkering at the edges or patching up a system that is designed to profit from a basic human need. It demands bold action—a complete rethink of the tax breaks and incentives that have inflated the housing market beyond reach for most people. We need governments with the courage to treat housing not as a commodity but as what it truly is: a fundamental human right.