



**MICHAEL BERKMAN MP**  
*For Maiwar* ▲

Dear Friend,

Estimates hearings are finally over, and **I'm back in the Indooroopilly office after two weeks in Parliament.** This email will give you a quick rundown on Estimates, some community initiatives seeking your support, where to find grants and funding for community groups and projects, local issues in Mt Coot-tha, Fig Tree Pocket & Taringa, and a few upcoming events.

### **Estimates hearings**

Every year MPs like myself can ask questions of government Ministers about their policies and how they're spending public money. Just like last year, I attended every day over seven days of hearings. Even though the process is still really broken, this year I got a little further - but maybe that's because I've started pushing questions more assertively.

We did discover **a few things that you might be interested in:**

- An options analysis (including infill, more classrooms, or a new school) for how to deal with **overcrowding in State schools in Maiwar** is still underway, and that analysis will be released to us when it's complete. [I'll continue calling for a new school](#) to deal with long-term population growth.
- The government has [no transition plan for thermal coal workers](#), and its "**just transition**" strategy doesn't include workers and communities in the fossil fuel export industry - it focuses exclusively on power stations. This is a major gap given how many people work in the coal and gas export sectors and the urgency of stopping carbon pollution ASAP.
- The government [has no plan or policy to reduce the number of pokies](#) in Qld (currently there are more than 40,000). This is despite the Premier [confirming earlier in the week](#) that she'd like to see fewer pokies in the State.
- The government [will not release its final royalty holiday deal with Adani](#) (due on 30 September 2019). We still don't know:
  - if there's a limit to the payments Adani can defer under the agreement;
  - what security the government will get;
  - how long Adani will have to pay; or
  - what happens if their whole business goes bust.

- The [Qld Mental Health Commissioner agrees](#) that **drug decriminalisation** would take pressure off the police, courts and prison systems, and resources could be better directed towards providing health and social support.
- The government hasn't put aside any money for compensation under the Federal Disability Discrimination Act regarding **inaccessible train stations** - despite the Minister saying repeatedly that Qld stations won't comply with the 2022 deadline for full accessibility. [We're currently at less than 60%](#).

Ultimately, I **still believe Estimates needs a serious overhaul**. Early in the first week, I asked the Premier whether she'd consider [my suggestions](#) to make the process more democratic, but she seemed largely uninterested.

The thing that worries me most about this broken process is that it could create an illusion of transparency, without really holding the government to account. People deserve to know about decisions the government is making on their behalf, and how it's spending public money.

There were a few key moments that demonstrated the need for reforms:

- Last Wednesday, I tried to ask the Environment Minister about **Adani's groundwater management plan**. (For a quick, plain English explanation of why this is important, [check out this 5 minute video on my Facebook](#).) But I was cut off by the committee chair. The chair has an extraordinary amount of power to shut down lines of questioning - which is why it's so counterintuitive that they're always a government MP. This means they can basically run a protection racket for the government whenever they like.
- Not only was I cut off, but right afterwards the committee moved on to the biggest time waster of all - a "Dorothy Dixer" question. **Dixers** are questions asked by a government MP, where the Minister already has a prepared response. In the first week of Estimates last year, we lost 42% of time - on the public purse - to this time wasting.
- If we'd had more time (for example, if two committee hearings were run concurrently) I could've asked more questions on really important issues like [religious instruction in State schools](#) or [renters' rights](#). As it is, non-government MPs like me have to rush to get their questions in, and don't get a chance to drill down for real answers.

I asked questions on many more issues, like the social housing wait list, [midwife-led maternity care](#), [raising the age of criminal responsibility](#), [the secrecy around the Toondah Harbour development agreement](#), [fixing our broken planning system](#), free public transport for kids, the NDIS, free hospital parking, autonomous "killer drones", [private ecotourism leases in national parks](#), the impact of climate crisis on reef tourism, and scrapping NAPLAN. **For more detail about specific questions I asked and the answers I got, plus questions I didn't get time to ask, check out my Twitter**. You can also check out this brief "what you missed" Estimates [wrap-up in the Brisbane Times](#).

## Community initiatives to support

[Share the Dignity](#), a fantastic charity that provides sanitary products and funding for services and campaigns to support people experiencing poverty, homelessness and domestic violence, is doing its **August dignity drive** and I'm helping to collect donations. **Drop pads, tampons, menstrual cups in the big pink box at my office anytime Mon-Fri 9am-5pm.**



And don't forget to **drop your milk bottle caps in to the office** - these two Bardon students, Amelia and Samuel, are collecting them for recycling into plastic limbs for kids in need.

## Grants and funding

I've just recently posted a [big roundup of available grants and funding](#) for individuals and community organisations on my Facebook (and, for those who prefer not to use Facebook,

my [website](#)). If you're in Maiwar and want a letter of support for any applications, just get in touch with the office via [maiwar@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:maiwar@parliament.qld.gov.au).

### Good news: pokies rule change

After our community put up a formidable fight against the Pig N Whistle pokies last year, we've had a huge win that I'm really proud of: [Qld licensing laws will now require the reasons behind new liquor and gambling licences to be made public](#).

I've been pushing for more transparency around these decisions, and while this is a really valuable improvement, there's still a lot to be fixed - like the fact that applicant companies are allowed to appeal these decisions, but communities can't. With momentum clearly picking up for gambling reform, I'll continue calling for the State government to do better, and ultimately to phase out pokies in pubs and clubs.

### Get in touch: sound barrier issues at Fig Tree Pocket, Indro & Taringa

Over the past couple of months I've heard from a few Indooroopilly and Fig Tree Pocket residents about [traffic noise from from the Centenary Motorway](#). I'm keen to hear from more people about this, so **if it's impacting you or your family, email my office at [maiwar@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:maiwar@parliament.qld.gov.au)** and I'll help coordinate public submissions to push for higher sound barriers.

### Upcoming events

I've got a couple of pop-up offices happening this month, where I'm inviting folks to stop by for an informal catch-up and to let me know about any local issues or concerns you have. There are also some local community events and rallies coming up which I'd encourage you to get along to:

#### [Climate Walk Out](#)

**AUG**

Friday 9 August | 5pm | King George Square, Brisbane CBD

**9**

Uni Students for Climate Action are inviting students across the country to walk out of their classes into the streets of their major cities to protest inaction on climate change.

#### [Ambrose Treacy College P&F Trivia Night](#)

**AUG**

Saturday 10 August | 6pm | NJ Hall, Ambrose Treacy College, Twigg St, Indooroopilly

**10**

Come along to the ATC Trivia Night to support the P&F. The theme is "bands" - get in touch with the coordinator beforehand to secure your team's band. Tickets are \$25 per person - [book via this link](#).

### Pop Up Office at Taringa

**AUG**

Tuesday 13 August | 8-9am | The Spot Specialty Coffee, 191 Moggill Rd, Taringa

**13**

Join me for a coffee or tea at The Spot in Taringa. This will be an opportunity for anyone to check in for an informal chat, sign a petition, meet other residents, discuss concerns and share ideas about our local community.

### CWCN Bird Walk - Biami Yumba Park & Brisbane River Reach

**AUG**

Saturday 17 August | 7.30am-9.30am | Meet at shelter shed in park at end of Fig Tree Pocket Rd, Fig Tree Pocket (UBD 198 G2)

**17**

Cubberla Witton Catchment Network have organised this amazing bird walk at a local favourite birding place. The lagoon promises lots of waterfowl. The vegetation along the Brisbane River parallel to the Equestrian Centre and towards Mactier St is usually alive with small birds. The odd bird of prey exploring the area might be seen too. For [more info, download the flyer](#). Contact: Lyn Cole - Phone 07 3378 1465 - Mob 0427 599 890

### Protest against exemptions for discrimination against LGBTIQIA+ communities

**AUG**

Saturday 17 August | 1-3pm | Queens Gardens, Brisbane

**17**

Equal Love Brisbane and local advocate Johnny Valkerie have called this rally to voice opposition to the planned 'religious freedoms' Bill which, far from simply protecting religious freedoms, seeks to protect rights to discriminate (for example, by allowing religious schools to discriminate against LGBTIQIA+ staff and students). They're asking the community to mobilise as it did during the 2017 marriage equality plebiscite, to support LGBTIQIA+ people and their right to live free from discrimination.

### Pop Up Office at Bardon

**AUG**

Thursday 29 August | 8-9am | French Tarts, 198 Boundary Rd, Bardon

**29**

Not everyone can make it into the office to meet formally, so this is another opportunity to meet up - stop by, say hello and have a cuppa on me.

## [The Glenleighden School 40th Anniversary Gala Dinner](#)

**AUG**

Friday 30 August | 6:30-11pm | Hillstone St Lucia, Carawa St, St Lucia

**30**

Join families, students, staff and friends of the Glenleighden School to raise vital funds. This will help the school continue the its legacy of supporting children with speech, language and communication needs to find their voice.

If you've got an event you'd like included in this e-newsletter, please email us back on [maiwar@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:maiwar@parliament.qld.gov.au) and we'll help get the word out.

Until next time, remember to follow me on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) where I post more regular updates.

Yours in hope,

Michael

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