

# COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2023



**STEPHEN BATES MP**  
MEMBER FOR BRISBANE ▲

Hi there,

Last month I hope you received my print newsletter in your mailbox. This month, we are back with a digital edition, including a rundown of what I've been up to in **Federal Parliament**, and some updates about **local issues**.

I've spent the last four weeks in Canberra for Parliamentary sittings, and there have been some exciting developments in our **negotiations with Labor over housing**, but I couldn't be happier to be back home and spending time in our amazing community.

## Parliament Update

### GREENS SECURE \$2 BILLION DIRECT FUNDING FOR HOUSING

As you might know, the Greens have been fighting to improve Labor's Housing Australia Future Fund bill (HAFF) to ensure their centrepiece housing policy actually starts to tackle the scale of the housing crisis.

**Pressure works. As a result of holding firm in our negotiations, the Greens have just secured an additional \$2 billion of immediate investment in social housing that, until recently, Labor refused to even consider.**

As yet, the Labor government has not offered any compromise to the Greens on our second key ask: to act on skyrocketing rent increases. However, National Cabinet is currently considering rental laws across the country, with a view to 'harmonising' renters' rights, and will discuss this at their next meeting between August and October.

**Additionally, this past week, the Greens established a Senate inquiry into the national rental crisis.**

The inquiry will consider rising rents and rental affordability; supply and demand; actions that governments can take to reduce rents or limit rent rises; and improvements to renters' rights, including rent control, length of leases and no-grounds evictions.

Once the interim report of the Senate inquiry is provided in September and National Cabinet has met, the Greens will again consider the HAFF bill.

**The reason the Greens are fighting so hard to limit rent increases is because, unless we stop rents skyrocketing, the queues for public housing will blow out no matter how much housing we build, and our chances of tackling this crisis will drop to zero.**

To put all this in context, the current shortage of social and affordable housing in Australia is 640,000 homes and is due to grow by 75,000 homes in the next five years. 62% of Australia's 8 million renters are already in financial stress.

Labor's entire plan, at best, will build 30,000 social and affordable homes over five years with \$500 million invested per year. I have seen misinformation that our ongoing negotiations will prevent the HAFF from providing further immediate relief. However, the HAFF itself will not build a single home until 2025, after the next election, and doesn't guarantee any spending until 2024/25. This delay to continue negotiations will not impact the original build timeline attached to the HAFF.

**If Labor's plan goes through now, without locking in greater investment every year and national limits on rent increases, millions of people will be left behind and conditions for renters will worsen.**

Our electorate of Brisbane has close to a 60% renter population, so the housing crisis is disproportionately impacting us here. Furthermore, a recent Essential poll shows 68% of Australians think that the federal government is not doing enough to curb the rental crisis. I will continue doing everything in my power to fight for renters.

### NATURE REPAIR MARKET

The Nature Repair Market Bill is the first piece of environmental legislation the Albanese Government has introduced and its extremely disappointing. Labor is calling it the 'green Wall Street' because it would effectively marketise our environment, and outsource the government's responsibility to corporations.



We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians, the Jagera and Turrbal Peoples, and pay respects to Elders past and present. We live, work and play on stolen lands. Sovereignty was never ceded.



I know it sounds dry, but stick with me, because the stakes couldn't be higher.

The devastation of our natural environment jeopardises our safety and health, our water, our ability to grow food, and the air we breathe. Our beautiful forests, beaches, parks, and wildlife are at risk, with 2000 native species under threat of extinction.

Whether it's coal mines, gas fracking, or native logging, corporate greed often drives environmental destruction, and we can't rely on corporations to save us.

**You can watch my speech in Parliament here explaining how this Bill will fail to protect the environment.**

## COST OF LIVING AND INFLATION

Last week, the Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) announced that unemployment would have to rise to bring inflation under control. This comes after an unprecedented run of rate hikes by the RBA that has crippled millions of every-day Australians with surging mortgage repayments.

Well, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is the latest leading economic body to publish counter research, showing the important role played by historically high corporate profits in explaining the surge in inflation after the COVID pandemic.

**This follows recent research by the Australia Institute which shows wage increases were well beneath the rate of inflation, but price hikes were well above the rate of inflation.** Corporations like supermarket giants Coles and Woolworths, airlines like Qantas, and energy and resource companies like Santos, have been posting record profits. Without these excess profits, inflation would have actually been near the RBA's targets.

**Increasing interest rates will not stop inflation caused by corporate profiteering and price gouging.**

It's the Greens position that if the federal Labor Government wanted to bring inflation under control, they would introduce a corporate super profits tax. They would scrap the Stage 3 Tax Cuts. They would cap rents and stop interest rate rises. Instead, they are making everyday Australians pay the price.

If the Reserve Bank Governors and the Treasurer believe Australians losing their jobs and livelihoods is the only way to control inflation, I say they should be the first to hand in their resignation letters.

## EDUCATION SHOULD NOT BE A DEBT SENTENCE

On 1 June, millions of Australians received a massive 7.1% hike on their student debt, an exorbitant increase that places further financial pressure on young people, students, and those already doing it tough. My office has received dozens of emails and calls from local residents who are concerned about their own HECS, or the debt that their children are graduating with. This just isn't good enough.

Through one of the worst cost of living and housing crises this country has seen in decades, graduates and students are expected to bear the brunt of inflation, which is primarily being driven by excess corporate profits.

Earlier this year Greens Senator for NSW, Dr Mehreen Faruqi, introduced a bill to freeze student debt and raise the minimum repayment income to the median wage, but it was rejected by the Labor Government. A Labor Government led by a Prime Minister who had the benefit of attending university for free (**Something I emphasised when questioning the Prime Minister in Parliament, which you can watch here**).

This decision by Labor will disproportionately impact women, widen the wealth inequality gap, and disincentive the next generation from pursuing higher education.



I am grateful for Mehreen's staunch advocacy on behalf of students, and for visiting QUT Kelvin Grove with me. Her advice and support was a great comfort to many of the community members who stopped to have a chat.



## VOICE REFERENDUM

Our community lives on lands belonging to the Jagera and Turrbal peoples. Their lands, and those of hundreds of sovereign Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island nations, were invaded. Sovereignty from First Nations people was never ceded.

On 19 June the Australian Parliament passed the Voice Referendum Bill. If a 'yes' vote is achieved at the referendum to be held later this year, it will establish a First Nations' advisory body and recognise First Nations peoples in the constitution.

**It is important to note that The Voice is just one element of the Uluru Statement from the Heart and, in isolation, will not adequately advance First Nations justice. We must progress all elements and I have urged Labor to take genuine action on Treaty and Truth-telling this year.**

**If you're interested you can watch me speak on this issue in Parliament here.**

**TRUTH  
TREATY  
VOICE**

## Local Issues

### ATHLETES' VILLAGE HOUSING PETITION

**The 2032 Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games threatens to make the housing crisis drastically worse for the residents of Brisbane City.**

We know that mega-events like the Olympic and Paralympic Games cause surging house prices and rents while pushing everyday people out of their communities.

**Expo '88**



**In Brisbane, house prices rose by 238% in the eleven years before**

**Sydney 2000**



**Between 1996 and 2001, median house prices increased by 88%**

Many property developers look to increase their profit margins by turfing out their tenants to make way for short-term accommodation. Between the 1980s and 2010s Summer Olympics related developments displaced more than two million people.

Instead, the 2032 Games could provide an opportunity for the Government to tackle the housing crisis head on, by investing in publicly-owned housing, cracking down on short-term stays like Airbnb, and capping rent increases.

The Athlete's Village will host 10,000 athletes and team officials for the Olympics, and more than 5000 for the Paralympics. Rather than selling this housing off, like we saw in Sydney, this housing should be turned into beautiful, accessible, publicly-owned housing for anyone who needs it.



*From my electorate-wide community survey:*  
**79% of Brisbane residents said all infrastructure built with public money for the 2032 Games should remain in public hands.**

**Sign our petition to tell the Queensland Government to:**



Retain the 2032 Brisbane Athletes' Village as 100% publicly-owned, genuinely affordable housing, including high-quality public housing, disability-accessible housing, and essential worker housing;



Pass regulation to prevent existing residential accommodation from being converted into short-term accommodation, like Airbnbs;



Implement a long-term cap on rent increases.



*Click here to sign*

## SENATE INQUIRY: AUSTRALIA'S PREPAREDNESS TO HOST COMMONWEALTH, OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES

Brisbane residents should be excited about the 2032 Games and deserve to see a positive legacy created from them, but this will only be possible if we continue to put major pressure on all three levels of government to be accountable to the people.

I'm pleased that my Greens colleagues in the Senate are doing just that - they have secured an inquiry to scrutinise the adequacy of oversight and accountability related to the Games, its claimed economic benefits, and the impacts of the Games on housing affordability, communities and small businesses.

Head to these links to:

[Read my submission to the inquiry here](#)

[Watch my speech in Parliament here](#)

## WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE HAPPEN AT THE VICTORIA BARRACKS SITE?

The heritage listed Victoria Barracks, at the top of Caxton Street between Petrie Terrace and Countess Street, was built in 1863.

According to internal Defence Department advice it has fallen into a state of disrepair and become a safety hazard - 'doing nothing' is no longer an option.

Excitingly, Defence's 2022 heritage plan highlights the potential to 'reimagine' the barracks as a cultural & creative community hub, inspired by examples from overseas.

However, Defence indicated to the Brisbane Times in May 2023 that progress has not been made on this idea.

There is so much potential for this massive inner-city site, and if we don't push for something soon, its heritage value could be lost.

So, we'd love to know what local residents think should happen to this site?

[Take a couple of minutes to fill out our survey here.](#)

## FLIGHT NOISE PROTEST, PRIVATE MEMBERS BILL, AND PETITION

On Sunday 10 June I attended a flight noise protest with BFPCA and my colleagues Elizabeth Watson-Brown, Max Chandler-Mather, and Wendy Aghdam.

It was a powerful demonstration of community power that put the Government and Brisbane Airport Corporation (BAC) on notice – We won't stop fighting until we have real reform that addresses this serious health issue.

I was proud to offer my support, both at the event, and in the lead up by assisting with promotion. Brisbane residents are only asking for what Sydney residents have: a late-night curfew and a cap on flights.

The Greens will be re-introducing a private members bill into Parliament for these measures at Brisbane Airport, and a long-term operating plan for more flights over the water.

In the meantime, Greens MP for South Brisbane, Amy MacMahon, has sponsored BFPCA's petition to Queensland Parliament to establish an inquiry into the impacts of Brisbane's flight paths, and ways to rectify excessive noise pollution using the powers and advocacy of the State of Queensland. After all, the Queensland Government has a direct stake in BAC via a 25% share held by the Queensland Investment Corporation.



At the June 10th flight noise protest.



CLICK  
HERE TO  
SIGN THE  
PETITION

## STAFFORD BOWLS CLUB

This week we received some incredibly disheartening news that the Queensland Government's Office of Liquor and Gaming (OLGR) have granted a gaming licence to Brisbane Racing Club for 50 pokie machines at the Stafford Bowls Club site.

This follows Brisbane City Council handing the lease for this publicly-owned site to Brisbane Racing Club in a closed-door deal without tender or community consultation.

This site is located at the centre of public infrastructure and essential services in Stafford. It is frequented by locals across the entire precinct, and there is a very high likelihood that allowing 50 pokies at the site would increase convenience gambling. The site is surrounded by a school, shopping centre, community sports fields and a retirement village. There are neighbourhood centres, pawn brokers, emergency relief providers and even a gambling help service centre just kilometres away.

**The potential social harm of this development is immense. I'm proud to support the local residents who have been fighting for a better deal for the Stafford community.**

900 local residents signed the petition to Brisbane City Council, hundreds also lodged a submission with the QLD Government's OLGR, and now both levels of government have chosen to treat their Stafford constituents with contempt.

As I've said before, the LNP and Labor have accepted more than \$9M in donations from the gambling industry, and this represents another case of the major parties prioritising their corporate donors over their communities.

**Shockingly, once OLGR has granted a gaming licence, the community has no objection or appeal rights under the Gaming Machine Act 1991**, except for a judicial review in the Supreme Court which can be expensive and narrow in scope.

In 2019, Michael Berkman - Greens MP for Maiwar, campaigned against a similar harmful application to install pokie machines at the Pig n Whistle at Indooroopilly Shopping Centre. At the time, Michael advocated in Queensland Parliament for community members' right to appeal gaming licence decisions via the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT). Michael was advised by the Attorney-General that the Queensland Labor Government was not interested in appeal rights, but would be carrying out consultation on how best to improve confidence and transparency in OLGR.

**Well it's 2023, and I would say confidence in OLGR is at an all time low in Stafford, and the process certainly has not been transparent.**

In fact, community members had to formally lodge a right to information request to try to get a straight answer out of the Queensland Government regulator. Furthermore, my office has had to request an external review from the Commissioner for Information because we're not satisfied with the reasoning provided for redacting parts of these documents.

**I'll be sure to keep the community informed about what we uncover.**

**NO POKIES ON PUBLIC LAND  
AT STAFFORD BOWLO**



# 2024 COUNCIL ELECTION: MEET YOUR GREENS CANDIDATES

Recently, I've been excited to co-host pop up offices with Wendy Aghdam - Greens Candidate for the Central Ward, and Seal Chong Wah - Greens candidate for the Paddington Ward, to hear from local residents about what matters most to them.

The Greens made history in Brisbane last year's federal election, and put the major parties on notice. Now, our sights are set on the Brisbane City Council elections in March 2024. Brisbane City Council is the largest local government in the Southern Hemisphere, with a massive budget of over \$4B.

We're aiming to pick-up up to 10 additional Wards and we'll use those numbers to give residents a real say, protect our environment, and deliver more affordable housing and public infrastructure, by making developers pay their fair share.



## SEAL CHONG WAH FOR PADDINGTON WARD



Seal Chong Wah works in I.T., is an artist and musician, and has lived in the Paddington Ward for more than 20 years where she now brings up her two children.

Seal is a deeply caring and embedded person in our community who will fight to put people over profit, and give residents a real say in how this iconic neighbourhood grows and changes.

She is a woman of colour of Australian and Chinese heritage, and will represent Paddington Ward's diverse and artistic community with passion and integrity.

➤ [Get in touch & find out more here](#)

## WENDY AGHDAM FOR CENTRAL WARD



Wendy Aghdam is a child and youth mental health nurse, and has lived in the inner-city for more than 15 years with her husband and young child.

Wendy brings a lifetime of professional experience in understanding the impacts of local government decisions on our community's health and wellbeing. She has worked and volunteered on the frontline of our hospitals, schools and community centres, empowering countless locals from all backgrounds.

Wendy will be an effective, compassionate and energetic advocate for the cultural epicentre that is the Central Ward.

➤ [Get in touch & find out more here](#)

## DROP BY OR GET IN TOUCH!

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