




Speech By
Ray Stevens

MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (8.11 pm): I rise to speak to the government's Appropriation Bill (Parliament) 2015 and the Appropriation Bill 2015. The 2015 Queensland budget has been unfurled by the great Labor magician and trickster, Curtis 'The Great' Pitt, who has delivered his worst sleight-of-hand delusion to the Queensland public—a short-sighted, fiscally irresponsible example of traditional Labor management. It is no surprise that, with this inexperienced collection of union appointees, the budget really is the 'Pitts'.

Much was made by the Treasurer of this budget being a real Labor budget. I would say that it is a real smoke-and-mirrors budget, whereby the trainer-wheels Treasurer has attempted to hide Labor's lack of debt pay-down plans and broken promises from Queenslanders. The government promised a reduction in debt, but it has delivered increasing debt with a sneaky plan to rip out \$3.4 billion from the long service leave fund and raid public servants' superannuation fund contributions. I ask: why would the Treasurer be proud of a record spend when all Queenslanders are seeing is further increased debt combined with detrimental offset payments affecting our future? This is a sneaky plan that even Labor governments of the past did not and would not support. This is a breaking of a long-held trust with the Queensland people.

As we experienced in 2009 with the GFC, global markets experience downturns and the recent volatility not just in Europe but in China is truly a cause for great concern. An amount of \$3.4 billion will be removed from the long service leave fund, but only \$2.6 billion will be used to lower debt. That shows an ignorance of the downturn in the market. This Labor government exemplifies the saying, 'Short-term gain, long-term pain.' That long-term pain will be felt by Queenslanders in the future.

Long-term pain is something that my constituents and, indeed, all Queenslanders associate with Labor governments. The infamous Beattie-Bligh government set that unbearable trend with skyrocketing electricity prices. This tricky Treasurer is using fancy accounting to move debt from the Queensland government to our electricity suppliers—assets owned by the state government, assets they are planning to devalue through an ill-advised merger of which they will not fully release the details. My absolute fear and horror is that the QSuper fund will be used to purchase these merged entities in what I consider would be the worst possible investment of all time of my superannuation and that of thousands of others. I call on the Treasurer to flatly dismiss this avenue as a possibility in any shape or form. Having politicians making investment decisions in relation to public servants' superannuation funds would be like putting an alcoholic in charge of the XXXX brewery.

It would prove even worse if we left those investment decisions up to Labor politicians who have the dubious honour of losing Queensland's AAA credit rating. Mark my words, this budget and this government will be the starring performers in Queensland's next reality ratings downgrade coming soon to a television station near you. What is the effect on the Queensland public? Our Treasurer tells us

that there will be no increases in taxes, fees or charges—except for those likely to come from the electricity suppliers.

As the member for Mermaid Beach, I was saddened, but not shocked, by the blatant disregard this clueless Treasurer has shown for the Gold Coast, including Mermaid Beach, with no new funding for one of the fastest growing regions in Queensland. Infrastructure development, with transport being a key part of this development, is an important part of Queensland's economy, the Gold Coast economy and the economy of my electorate of Mermaid Beach. The infrastructure projects that the Treasurer announced in the budget—or, should I say, reannounced—was merely a spruiking of private projects with no government funding, such as the Pacific Fair Shopping Centre redevelopment and the Jupiters casino redevelopment. Furthermore, capital spending for the Gold Coast, Logan and Beaudesert area will be down seven per cent from 2014-15, which is another example of the infrastructure freeze biting.

I am sure that my fellow MPs who represent the Gold Coast are aware that transport remains an ongoing problem for our growing city, as traffic congestion increases as the Gold Coast continues to grow rapidly. But with no funding committed to the Gold Coast Light Rail, it will remain the light rail from nowhere to nowhere. It is the crucial missing link in the success of the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games.

Labor talks about being pro jobs—a statement I can question with nearly every project mentioned in the budget started under the LNP. That is not to mention the dearth of funding invested in public transport infrastructure projects, with a slump of 17 per cent—from 90 per cent under the LNP to 73 per cent under Labor—in all projects under \$5 million started no later than four months after the program commencement date. Labor claims to have a plan—'Jobs now, jobs for the future'—when it predicts that unemployment will be 6.5 per cent. That is a cumulative rise over the next three years of 2½ per cent. Labor has hoodwinked the public with its robbing Peter to pay Paul budget, which was hastily put together by its inexperienced and clueless Labor Treasurer. Already, it is set to fail the hardworking Queensland public. So what are the people of Queensland to make of 'Magic Tricks' Pitt's latest performance? It is more of the same old Labor, with no long-term fiscal plan and false presentations to deceive the Queensland voting public.

That same old Labor is returning fear to the Gold Coast with its softening on crime. The removal of \$1.78 million from the budget of the CCC has resulted in a reduction of seven staff to tackle these criminal motorcycle gangs made up of murderers, arsonists, standover men, drug dealers and other members of the CFMEU. I am sure that many members of parliament would remember how outspoken I was regarding the outlaw biker gang problem and, in turn, how relieved I was by the positive effect the crackdown on organised crime had by removing many of the scum of the underworld criminal biker organisations from the thriving Gold Coast nightclub scene. Alas, the security and safety that many of my constituents have enjoyed through those great laws and funding commitments from the previous LNP government will now be under threat from this Labor budget showcasing again our tricky Treasurer and Labor government's weasel words.

I have hope that the Labor commitment to continue the LNP promise to deliver 266 more police members will be over and above natural attrition. But wait, there is more. By slashing \$24 million from the Safe Night Out Strategy this clueless Labor government will see the Gold Coast night-life begin to suffer even more with a likely return of alcohol fuelled violence back to our currently peaceful streets. The LNP government expressed it was time to red card antisocial behaviour when introducing that bill. Well, I say it is now time for a red card for this Labor government and Labor budget.

The Safe Night Out Strategy was a strategy for the future—with over 60 initiatives looking at changing the culture, attitudes and social expectations through education of our young people and high school students before they start to experience the negative impacts of drugs and alcohol. It was a positive for the Queensland public that has now been removed. It was these successful programs that saw business confidence return to the Gold Coast. However, Labor cannot even manage to maintain or improve our economic growth, down half a per cent over the next three years. Nothing in its so-called master plan builds confidence in the Queensland economy, an economy that has taken a further hit. Gene Tunney, former Commonwealth Treasury official and head of Adept Economics, acknowledged that this failed Labor budget does not address our long-term fiscal challenges of getting down debt and returning our AAA credit rating. He stated—

There are a lot of fiddles, a lot of accounting fiddles, in this budget to give the illusion that they're meeting their fiscal strategy, but really it's, it's not a great budget, it's very disappointing.

It was the removal of this rating that saw a hit to business confidence in the past and hearing that it will not soon be returning is surely another blow for our previously growing economy now experiencing a unionised Labor slowdown. Long-term fiscal pain is something the Queensland public are only just beginning to experience the repercussions of from the Beattie-Bligh government. It was their

mismanagement and irresponsible funding spree that began a slow decline into the record high government debt we are set to experience. This clueless, unionised Labor government has failed in its promises of jobs, jobs, jobs and debt reduction to name but two and it is failing as a government the people of Queensland. Its smoke and mirrors attempt will not get past the hardworking LNP, it will not get past the media and it will certainly not get past the Queensland public who will condemn it for its shortsighted and irresponsible budget. Nothing in this budget builds confidence in the Queensland economy and debt will just continue to increase.

When the ratings agencies downgrade Queensland's credit rating again, the people of Queensland will understand that we are back to the bad old Beattie-Bligh days of debt, debt and more debt. That is not to mention the return of growth to the Public Service, with 19 new bureaucracies and plans to spend \$1 billion on hiring another 3,000 public servants, removing hard-won savings from the Public Service. We are not Greece yet, but the same principles that have reached their horrible conclusion on the world economy are the same principles this Labor government is using in this budget. This is a government that has not delivered on its promises, it has not delivered on fiscal responsibility and it has not delivered for Mermaid Beach, the Gold Coast or for Queensland.