




Speech By
Ray Stevens

MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

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ADJOURNMENT

Annette Kellerman Park, Moreton Bay Fig Tree

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (10.06 pm): Close to my electorate office is the beautiful Annette Kellerman Park, named in memory of an Australian icon, known as 'the Little Mermaid', from the early part of the 20th century. It is a wonderful public space on the Gold Coast Highway with a barbecue area, play equipment and full facilities for use by the members of our community. It has been well cared for and protected by the Gold Coast City Council over many years. For those who do not know, Annette Kellerman is an important Australian historical figure, as, in addition to her writing, film and vaudeville acting, she was a famous swimmer, introducing the Annette Kellerman's one-piece ladies swimwear—the first step towards today's modern swimwear. She retired to the Gold Coast.

I am sad to report that the Annette Kellerman Park, with its large, well-established Moreton Bay fig tree, has recently come under attack by disreputable members of society who late last year poisoned this beautiful tree so badly that it is now reduced to dead firewood. The at-least-60-year-old Moreton Bay fig was a beautiful, big, shady tree that epitomised strength, durability and a calm serenity, reflecting the beauty of the Mermaid Beach area.

Mr Walker: Like yourself, Ray, in many ways.

Mr STEVENS: I take that interjection from the member for Mansfield. Due to the dishonest and disgraceful actions of those persons, whose efforts in poisoning this tree have come to fruition—the poison was so strong that the ground surrounding the tree is unlikely to support plant growth for some time—our community has been defiled by an ignorant perpetrator who is obviously a blow-in to our community.

In my view, it is no coincidence that the death of this magnificent Moreton Bay fig happened at the same time as a huge illuminated advertising billboard was placed on top of a building adjoining the park and which would not have been able to be seen if the fig tree still had its foliage. I cannot believe that the Gold Coast City Council did not take this possible consequence into account when it approved the tacky sign. I believe it is incumbent on the council, because of the failure to recognise the consequences of approving this gaudy advertising intrusion on the community of Mermaid Beach, to replant the park with a similar size and kind of reforestation to reinforce the commitment to the community that vandals in the city will not get their way, regardless of what dollars are spent and what nefarious activities they use to chase those dollars.

The replanting should be accompanied by visual monitoring devices to ensure that criminal activity of poisoning public property is not repeated while the abominable flashing sign continues to remind us of this blatant environmental skulduggery. I am disgusted that a member of society has committed this crime against nature and, in cooperation with the Gold Coast City Council, I hope to see an equally large and beautiful tree planted in its memory close by.