




Speech By
Ray Stevens

MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

Record of Proceedings, 16 August 2016

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (3.22 pm): In rising to speak to the 27th report to the parliament relating to the budget estimates and Appropriation Bill, I highlight the fact that the committee unanimously supported the passing of the Appropriation Bill. We understand that the estimates process is a very important process in answering questions for the year ahead and what has gone on in the past for the budget. I thank the secretariat in particular for arranging a very good estimates hearing. I thank the chairman again and fellow committee members for their involvement in the estimates process because it is a very important part of the questioning of the government. That is exactly what the estimates process and this bill are all about.

With regard to supporting the passing of the Appropriation Bill, the non-government members are obviously doing that because this Palaszczuk Labor government needs all the help it can get to bumble its way through its fiscal ineptitude led by example from the front by the mathematically challenged Treasurer and member for Mulgrave, Mr Curtis Pitt. In a sporting analogy, Rugby has its Honey Badger but the Queensland Treasurer is the Money Badger as he chases up any spare dollars he can find in any government's hollow log, regardless of the risk involved, for the purposes of grabbing savings from allocated purpose funds and dedicated Public Service retirement funds.

As a result of his callous risk taking, the non-government members have tabled a statement of reservation highlighting shortcomings in government ministers' answers at estimates and providing genuine concern at the capacity of this Premier and her ministers to guide Queensland through the turbulent financial years ahead. Running out and hiring nearly 5,000 new public servants may well bolster its union backers' membership and may well hide rising unemployment figures, but it also puts a \$500 million per annum extra burden on the taxpayers of Queensland. Was it necessary in terms of service delivery for Queenslanders? The answer is definitely no under any proven key performance indicators. It is a political answer to the Labor government's union masters and will further put pressure on a Queensland budget that this government cannot control. It does not care about debt and concentrates on short-term political expediency.

Matters that were raised with the Premier at the estimates—and these are alluded to in our statement of reservation, particularly on matters for the budget year ahead and some actions that have been taken by this government—were dodged by the Premier in particular referring to past years of past governments. That is not the way the estimates process works. There should be genuine answers to the questions put forward rather than a political answer. I remind the member for Stretton in particular given his inexperience and youthfulness at his second go at estimates that he did make a mistake, but for the Premier to sit there and argue—she is a 10-year veteran—that you had to quote the SDS page number before she could answer the question was another obfuscation and another showing that she clearly does not understand the estimates process. It is not necessary. I suggest that she should ask the Clerk for some advice and then she should come in and apologise to me after arguing with me and wasting good estimates question time.

The Treasurer did a great job in highlighting that the \$4 billion raid on the defined benefit scheme for public servants was absolutely a political move. The recommendation was \$2 billion but unfortunately that was ignored, so again the public servants of Queensland should be very worried about their future defined benefits if the markets go bad. It is not all cash in the bank that they have. There are a lot of assets out there that may get revalued et cetera and then it will be up to the Queensland taxpayers to make up the shortage in the defined benefit scheme. This is bad operation by a government and we stand by our statement of reservation on the Treasurer's activities.