




Speech By
Ray Stevens

MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (2.30 pm): In formulating this speech on the Palaszczuk Labor government's Appropriation Bill 2017, I perused my previous Appropriation Bill speeches of 2015 and 2016. There was an eerie similarity of the promises, wish lists, re-announcements of existing programs, heavy dependency on old LNP projects and claiming credit for federally funded initiatives. To be honest, in the words of that famous football coach Jack Gibson, this Appropriation Bill is *deja vu* all over again. A mantra and wordsmithing built around the political necessity for this government of jobs, jobs, jobs when the reality is that this piece of political propaganda, disguised as an Appropriation Bill, is a blatant effort to hide the fiscal truth about jobs in Queensland to save the jobs, jobs, jobs of Labor members of parliament in regional Queensland.

Despite the spin and rhetoric of future job promises mirrored by the 2015 and 2016 Appropriation Bills, the 2017 Appropriation Bill again highlights the inability of the Palaszczuk Labor government to provide any job-creating infrastructure in Queensland other than to hire another 15,000 public servants to the bloated taxpayer funded payroll of this Labor government to falsely delude the public that it has any fiscal credentials at all to deserve another opportunity at governing this wonderful state.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! Excuse me, member for Mermaid Beach. Can everyone please settle down into their seats? I know that we only just started the afternoon session, but I am already finding it hard to hear the member for Mermaid Beach.

Mr STEVENS: We have the Labor party dogma continually spruiked by the member for South Brisbane that the Cross River Rail project is the most important project in Queensland to save our state from economic doom. This is a blatant and transparent attempt by this government to shift the state's jobs and economic woes on to Malcolm Turnbull and the LNP for not providing a Labor Party ATM for an ill-costed, unfunded, Holy-Grail project that I can assure the Treasurer is not even on the radar of Gold Coast voters. I am sure it is actually a teeth-grinding enema for the people of Townsville and North Queensland suffering high unemployment and low job prospects, leading to unprecedented crime levels pervading their cities.

The Cross River Rail project may be the member for South Brisbane's answer to protecting her job from the Greens party onslaught in South Brisbane, but as far as the rest of Queensland is concerned we have operated well without it until now with the only problems for Queensland Rail being trains running late due to Labor's mismanagement of providing train drivers because of the union control of the Palaszczuk Labor government members of parliament. Reduced train timetables and delayed train arrivals are hallmarks of this Labor government. It is a debacle that never occurred under the LNP government. To commit \$2 billion to the Cross River Rail project without further funding available to complete the project is the epitome of financial irresponsibility and a smack in the eye for Queensland regions crying out for infrastructure and job-creating projects. This continues the failed Labor track record of the recycled water pipelines and the \$7 billion South-East Queensland water grid that blew out.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr STEVENS: That was in that grid, I take the member for Lockyer's interjection. It blew out Queensland debt under the Beattie watch, putting more debt and repayments on to the back of Queenslanders through higher water prices. Nothing has changed with Labor except the name of the leader. This poorly presented Cross River Rail project will be a further burden on the debt load of Queenslanders.

It goes without saying that Labor is committed to more credit card debt on behalf of every Queenslanders with a firm and resolute direction that imposes \$80,000 million of debt on every mum and dad Queenslanders while at the same time hitting them with higher fees and charges to pay for Labor's financial mismanagement. The absolute audacity of their mantra of looking after Queensland battlers while pouring more financial debt onto their hip pockets daily is unbelievably arrogant in the extreme in its bare-faced hypocrisy, delivered unflinchingly from their padded leather ministerial benches. The promises, wish lists, buck-passing and blame sharing is not believed by Queenslanders anymore.

After three Labor budgets delivering a replica of drivel, diatribe and dismay, displayed so deceitfully by a government bereft of fortitude to put real job-creating infrastructure from the private sector in place because of ideological turgidity and left-wing patronising recalcitrance from their union-backed puppeteers, it is with an almost comedic sense of sadness that one must laugh or be reduced to tears.

I make note of the Palaszczuk Labor government trend of an ever-increasing public servant wage bill, which is set to continue with another record high this financial year of 216,636 full-time-equivalent employees who will cost the Queensland taxpayer almost another \$1,000 million extra this year with on-costs. As I stated last year—and I will state again—adding 16,000 to the Queensland government bureaucracy is not the answer for providing jobs for regional Queensland. By the Premier's own admission, that is certainly the case. Inflating our Public Service is a statistical sugar hit that does not address the real need for job creation for our youth or regional unemployment, yet it has the diabolical effect of putting more debt on to the back of Queenslanders already struggling with cost-of-living pressures such as electricity and water charges, which should be affordable, and reasonable government services provided by their government of the day. Putting the public servant numbers up may hide the unemployment reality for a short-term political fix but does little to address the genuine and heartbreaking shortage of jobs and job opportunities in our regional areas.

In the 2015 Appropriation Bill, my LNP colleagues and I saw the likely effect of the debt swap to our electricity suppliers and their assets. 'It will be fine,' Labor said. 'It will not push any extra costs onto the Queensland public,' they said. Lo and behold, it has come to pass that electricity bills have jumped up on average \$104 a year, which has resulted in a bandaid fix promised by the Premier for this year. It is now clear to me that the only concern of the Palaszczuk government and the Treasurer is for themselves and their hope of saying anything and promising anything to get elected for another four years.

I am ashamed to report to my Mermaid Beach residents that the only money set aside for the Mermaid Beach electorate in this deceitful, pork-barrelling regional Labor electorates budget is a rehash of previously announced programs such as the Mermaid Waters ambulance building. Unfortunately, it is what I have come to expect from a Labor government blind to the needs of the rapidly expanding Gold Coast. It is a Labor government promoting the rise again of criminal outlaw motorcycle gangs through their watering down of tough law breakers legislation, put in place by the LNP, and their reduction of the rapid action police squad police numbers to enforce the peace and safety of our community in an age of increasing violence, primarily due to the horrendous drug ice which is being peddled throughout our community by these criminal outlaw gangs that the Labor government has welcomed back into the Gold Coast.

Again referring back to my speech on the Appropriation Bill 2016, I note there are a couple of Gold Coast projects that did not get a mention or an iota of funding for resolution of major issues for our Gold Coast region. The first is the cruise ship terminal proposal put forward by Mayor Tom Tate and the Gold Coast City Council which would have enormous impetus for tourism on the Gold Coast. There is overwhelming community support for a CST on the Gold Coast and it seems that an offshore facility satisfies many of the environmental and operational concerns that plagued the previous proposal to put large cruise ships into a very shallow Broadwater. What is missing is a single state government to assist with feasibility, planning and job creation on the Gold Coast. The procrastination by this Labor government over the cruise ship terminal is a reflection of their attitude to the LNP controlled state seats, which rejected their union controlled puppet masters at the last election and even gave us an extra seat in an otherwise statewide wipe-out.

While I am talking about The Spit, the uncertainty and squabbling over high-rise development on The Spit could be easily resolved by a state government actually concerned with the development of its own state land on The Spit being proactive and putting in a stakeholders group of residents, landowners, council and state government representatives to sit around a table and come up with a worthwhile, workable development plan for the long-term attractiveness and sustainability of one of the most iconic areas of the Gold Coast. It would cost a pittance to commit to from a government's point of view and yet not one dollar or mention of the Labor government's plans for high-rise on The Spit is in this year's budget. I think their silence on The Spit before a state election is more secrecy to deflect any fallout from whatever their real plans are for The Spit area.

Finally on matters relevant to the Mermaid Beach electorate and the Gold Coast generally, I reiterate my constant calls in this House to start planning and providing for an alternative route to the M1, which is near bursting point already. Not one dollar is allocated to further develop the interregional transport corridor again for an alternative to the M1 and yet we know that at 142,000 cars per day the M1 is near capacity. This is a real game-changing, job-creating project which could be undertaken by the private sector as a toll road and yet again the Palaszczuk Labor government is too timid and left-wing wounded to address an obvious infrastructure need that will demand action on the problem in the very near future.

This budget has been howled down by all independent commentators who have not been pork-barrelled in an attempt to save the bacon—pork-barrel, bacon—of the Palaszczuk Labor government in its death throes in the regions of Queensland. To put forward as the most important project for Queensland a South Brisbane electorate Holy Grail for \$2 billion spits in the face of every regional Queenslander doing it tough. I surely hope that this incompetent, job-inhibiting budget for 2017, driven by a clueless, bumbling Treasurer, is the final nail in the coffin of a Labor government not fit to govern Queensland.