




Speech By  
**Ray Stevens**

**MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH**

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

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (8.28 pm): Ray is back! I rise on behalf of the good residents of the Mermaid Beach electorate to again point out the fiscal irresponsibility of the Palaszczuk Labor government in sinking Queensland taxpayers further into debt and inflicting higher taxation—fact. It is in Labor's DNA: debt, taxes and rubbery figures.

When they get lucky with a windfall in mining royalties, they immediately rush out and spend it on more staff and fairyland projects such as Cross River Rail. They also put more debt on the credit card, taking Queenslanders to \$83.5 billion of debt which they have no intention of repaying. It just puts a higher burden on taxpayers, who pay an extra \$1,000 million a year in wages to a Public Service they are intent on bloating to falsify the real employment problems out there in the private sector. Regions across the state are struggling, and on the Gold Coast the infrastructure spending associated with the Commonwealth Games has come to a screeching halt, leaving thousands of workers looking for jobs. When the current high-rise building boom stops, this budget does nothing to provide jobs for the Goldie through the private sector and makes business investment through higher taxes more difficult again.

People on the Gold Coast want the M1 travel snarl fixed. They could not care less about the Treasurer's pet project in her electorate of South Brisbane: Cross River Rail. Another \$733 million on top of last year's almost \$2,000 million for Cross River Rail is pork-barrelling of the South Brisbane electorate in the extreme. We have seen some monumental pork-barrelling done in this House, but Cross River Rail is the big daddy—or should I say 'big mama'—of all. Ask the people of Townsville, Rockhampton, Mackay or Sunshine Coast if they would like almost \$3,000 million splashed on a big project in their area, which would create huge employment, and they would jump at the chance.

This obscene and reckless spending is typical of a government characterised by financial mismanagement and broken election promises. In 2015 Labor made a six-year commitment to cut Queensland's debt. Instead, they have opted to go on an irresponsible and careless spending spree. The result of this negligent credit spending is a whopping interest bill of almost \$3.7 billion per year. That is a lot of capital infrastructure every year. It is unconscionable, but unsurprising, that at the same time Labor is tipping \$83 billion in debt onto the heads of Queensland families and businesses it hits them with \$2.25 billion in new taxes and fees over the next four years. The Appropriation Bill reveals yet again a broken commitment from the government, which gave election costings before the election of \$491 million in new taxes but has betrayed the trust of Queenslanders by delivering a waste tax \$1.32 billion; a wagering tax of \$367 million; a land tax of \$311 million; a property investors tax of \$132 million; and a car stamp duty tax of \$100 million.

If the government wants to focus on rail issues, it would do well to accept responsibility for the abysmal state of Queensland's rail service, which has spent a staggering \$65 million over 18 months in overtime and replacement buses. That is almost \$1 million in overtime per hour. Queenslanders still have to endure reduced services, driver shortages and, compounding this, outdated restrictions on hiring externally for Queensland Rail. This is a blatantly defective system that is consistently ignored by

an incompetent Labor government and transport minister, who blindly do the bidding of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union. Queenslanders are forced to sit back and watch their hard-earned taxpayer dollars being poured into the void that is the Cross River Rail project while having to endure restricted services in the ongoing debacle that is the Queensland rail fail, all so that the Labor government can point the finger at the federal government for refusing to take part in the Cross River Rail pork-barrelling scheme.

Turning to how the Gold Coast fared in this year's state budget, it is disappointing and saddening to see that once again our city has been overlooked by a government that does not care about the Gold Coast because it has only one out of 11 seats on the Gold Coast. The fabulous seat of Bonney is represented by Sam O'Connor, who is brand-new. The Gold Coast repeatedly misses out at budget time under the Labor government because its residents made a mindful decision to vote in the LNP as a majority across-the-board. Given the damage done to businesses across the Gold Coast during the Commonwealth Games—former Labor premier Peter Beattie told them to 'suck it up' after exaggerated projections by the Labor government—one would think that Labor might feel an obligation to pay attention and help small businesses on the Gold Coast. Instead of delivering opportunities for business growth on the Gold Coast, this Appropriation Bill delivers another slap in the face in the form of Labor's waste tax, which will cost Queensland's small businesses and their customers \$1.3 billion over the next four years.

Having heard of the struggles endured by many Gold Coast businesses as a direct result of Commonwealth Games disappointment, I am disgusted to have to report to my Mermaid Beach constituents that once again they have been overlooked by this cash-grabbing and dishonest Labor government. I am also ashamed to report to the Mermaid Beach electorate that nothing has been done to address the record electricity and water prices that derive from Labor's irresponsible investment choices last year. We heard that the budgeted generator income was \$482 million. This Appropriation Bill exposes the truth: Labor made \$1.241 billion from government owned generators. By extracting record dividends from government owned corporations Labor is using electricity as a secret tax, and Queensland families are paying the price. In terms of direct funding for the Mermaid Beach electorate, I am pleased that the government has announced \$2 million towards building at Varsity College, and any addition to education for our schoolchildren is always welcome. I also think it is appropriate that \$2 million is committed to a study on the extension of light rail to Burleigh to answer questions on the viability, route selection and cost benefit of extending the current light rail system south.

In relation to state government revenue from slot machines, I cannot let this opportunity pass without highlighting the desperate ploy by the Palaszczuk Labor government to fatten their revenue streams to pay for their ballooning debt through the addition of more gambling machines on the Gold Coast. The Gold Coast is well served now for all forms of gambling by a plethora of clubs, pubs, sporting clubs and the Star Casino, which contributed greatly to the income line of this year's state budget, paying for Labor's debt and mismanagement of the Queensland economy to the tune of \$2.3 billion as reported by the *Gold Coast Bulletin*.

To avoid the very real possibility of a financial downgrade of the state's credit rating by Moody's and the like, this deceitful Labor government has recently spruiked about a Gold Coast gambling hub similar to large gambling venues in Las Vegas, which the Premier and tourism ministers have recently visited and enjoyed the hospitality of. They have disguised their blatant attempt at gambling revenue raising under the guise of a tourism hub under the integrated resort model of development to hide the fact that it is the government's cut of poker machine revenue they are after to fund their skyrocketing debt and soften the income fall from mining resource royalties when coal stops being a boon to the Queensland economy.

The clubs, pubs and community facilities with pokies cannot compete with the large promotional budgets of the big casinos, and another large casino and any so-called Gold Coast tourism hub would be the death knell for the many small operators who eke out a small income stream to supplement their community interest. The Star Casino itself has just invested \$600 million in good faith to upgrade their casino and committed over \$2 billion to build Queen's Wharf in Brisbane to further cater for gambling needs in South-East Queensland.

Saying that the Gold Coast needs another slot machine is like telling an alcoholic he needs another brand of whiskey. The Palaszczuk Labor government has just paid the ASF consortium \$9 million in hush money for its failed, Labor government instigated project on the Spit. There has been no business case provided to outline the necessity for another casino on the Gold Coast; nor has there been any impact study done on the effects of another couple of thousand poker machines that a new casino would need to make itself viable.

I am aware that some have reportedly expressed a view that they would like to see the Gold Coast adopt a Las Vegas model for many casinos, but I am sure that is not the view of the vast majority of Gold Coast residents. Las Vegas draws on a gambling population of almost a billion people, yet the Gold Coast draws on a very small population of a half a million residents and an inbound tourism number of eight million tourists to Australia. If you cannot access a slot machine on the Gold Coast now, you are seriously not trying.

The slot machine pie is finite. Another major incursion, or slice of that pie, will mean less return for the current operators and the communities they support. The LNP supported the mayor's proposal for a cruise ship terminal, which required a casino licence to support the development of that proposal. Times change and move on. With the cruise ship terminal proposal not surviving, it is hard to identify any reason for the Labor government to be pursuing another casino on the Gold Coast—other than to bolster its revenue take from the slot machines to prop up more Labor debt.

We have integrated resort developments working sensationally well on the Gold Coast—Sanctuary Cove, Hope Island, Royal Pines and Robina Land Corporation—without casinos as their financial foundation. I might add: these were approved during my tenure as Albert shire councillor and mayor and also when the Queensland state government was great under the LNP banner. Let's make Queensland great again!

To finalise my contribution on the absolute non-need for a Las Vegas style pokie palace on the Gold Coast, another casino is a clear and obvious attempt by the Palaszczuk Labor government to generate more revenue streams for the income side of the state budget to underwrite the Labor Party's obsession with creating debt to fund their wilful spending ways. Hiding their profligate fiduciary irresponsibility under the blatant disguise of a global tourism hub is a cheap Labor Party trick that does not fool anybody. The only fools it identifies are the propagators of this fraudulent nomenclature, to their eternal shame.

We had the 'world's greatest treasurer' from the Labor Party in the shape of Andrew Fraser, who lost Queensland's AAA credit rating under the Beattie-Bligh regimes. Now we are staring down another downgrade, to Queensland taxpayers' great expense, under the Labor Party's newest 'world's greatest treasurer' in the shape of Jackie Trad—member for South Brisbane and left-wing warrior of financial irresponsibility—whose only vision in this year's state budget is hanging on to her seat against the Greens onslaught in her electorate with her infamous, unfunded Cross River Rail project. She can thank the LNP for her opportunity to deliver her first budget, which really gives me no pleasure at all. This budget is consistent with the Labor Party policy of Labor premiers—

**Mr Power** interjected.

**Mr STEVENS:** I look to the member for Logan; we got him a gig too! This is consistent with the Labor Party policy of Labor premiers gone by in that it concentrates on more taxes, more borrowings and more debt to fund media friendly projects. People do not seem to worry about the long-term pain being inflicted on Queensland taxpayers with the implementation of Labor's wild and costly projects. A blowout in the current Public Service wage of \$1,000 million per annum to stomp up Queensland employment numbers with more public servants does not seem to raise an eyebrow. It is particularly galling in regional Queensland.

*(Time expired)*