



Speech By  
**Ray Stevens**


**MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH**

---

Record of Proceedings, 21 August 2018

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL**

**Economics and Governance Committee, Report**

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (6.09 pm): As members would know from the statement of reservations in this report, the non-government members of the committee were extremely disappointed in the budget presented by the government. I have witnessed 12 estimates hearings—some were a little changed in the middle years—and this year I saw the most deliberate obfuscation, avoidance and dodging of questions that I have seen in those 12 years. I remember good Labor ministers such as Terry Mackenroth and Rob Swarten who actually answered questions. I take the glare from the member for Clayfield. I did not say they were good ministers; I said they were good at answering questions. Basically, there were no holds barred and members could ask whatever they wanted.

However, this year we saw a deliberate strategy of obfuscation as the government made a half-baked attempt to use standing orders to block questions from the opposition. The opposition was allocated 89 minutes to question the Premier and government members were also allocated time. However, in reality, opposition members had just 50 minutes because all we heard was 'I'm sorry, that's an imputation', 'I'm sorry', 'I'm sorry'. The hearing went on and on in that vein and the Premier dodged 39 minutes of our allocated question time. That was deliberate and we could see that they were directed to do it. It tells me that the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the racing minister were not across their portfolios and could not answer questions. That would not have happened with former ministers of the Labor Party, such as Robbie Swarten, who would answer questions fully. It might not have been the answer that you wanted to hear and it might not even have been the correct answer. As Gordon Nuttall found out, questions can lead to one's demise. He spent a while in the iron house because of estimates.

The reality is that questioning of the government under the Westminster system of estimates hearings was deliberately fouled by a Labor Party that is short on its capacity to answer genuine questions from the opposition. Ministers hid behind their departments because they have no knowledge of their own portfolios, which is a sad indictment on a government that is incompetent and not across its portfolios. Junior ministers could not answer questions. Even the good media, including the independent ABC, found the estimates process totally hopeless because of the deliberate strategy to try to foil the opposition's attempts to ask questions.

Why wouldn't the opposition question the debt blowout in this budget, unreal projects such as Cross River Rail that mean waste for Queenslanders and all the other matters that are a smokescreen for the Labor government? Unfortunately, government ministers were not prepared to answer our questions, which were all very simple and straightforward questions that were non-political in direction. They only needed to be answered correctly. Unfortunately, these ministers do not have the capacity to front up and be counted. The Premier was the worst of them all, which is a sad indictment in itself. In the days to come there probably will be an opportunity for the Deputy Premier to run a bit of a challenge, which I hear is all the go at the moment. The racing minister was also short on answers for where the racing industry is going. Racing is an important industry for Queensland, but the committee never benefitted from correct answering. It was a very disappointing estimates process.