




Speech By
Ray Stevens

MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

Record of Proceedings, 1 May 2019

ADJOURNMENT

Council of City of Gold Coast

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (7.12 pm): I rise to advise the House that, following the taxpayer funded inquiry into possible corrupt activity within the Gold Coast City council and councillors by the Crime and Corruption Commission, I am advised that the chair of the CCC, Mr Alan MacSporran, has found no case to answer for any of the councillors and mayor. This reinforces my long-held view that this inquiry was predicated on antagonistic and vexatious complaints from failed political candidates and aggrieved political dissidents. I also smell a whiff of Labor Party instigation of an inquiry into a notionally politically conservative council to counteract the stench coming from the Labor-centric Ipswich City Council, which the local government minister has rightly sacked.

This is the third inquiry into the Gold Coast City council since 2005 by the corruption watchdog of the day. Apart from some minor findings and a slap-on-the-wrist penalty from the first inquiry for technical issues, the corruption watchdog has come up empty-handed. As the chief of staff to then mayor Ron Clarke, I had 20/20 vision on what was going on at the council and there was not even a sniff of corrupt activity—even though there were a few dumb decisions made by council. Councillor Peter Young, a well-known Greens activist, lodged a so-called 78-page dirt file to instigate that inquiry which the commission chairman subsequently threw out as supportable evidence. Again, we saw no evidence of corruption from councillors or the mayor.

The Gold Coast has a long-held reputation for being brash and brazen in certain aspects of night-life and colourful characters. However, that is no excuse for the council and councillors to be continually harangued with accusations of impropriety and malfeasance. Three inquiries later with different iterations of corruption watchdogs finding no chargeable corruption activities franks the finding that the Gold Coast City council is run efficiently, effectively and, importantly, on an impartial basis devoid of corruption.

As a result of these inquiries, surely it is time to stop the baseless innuendo, finger-pointing and downright mischief-making accusatory behaviour towards the council and just let the Gold Coast council get on with what it believes is the best way forward for our beloved Gold Coast city. I for one certainly do not agree with every decision the council makes, and I reserve my right to use my democratic power to voice my concern through the ballot box at the next Gold Coast City council election in March 2020, but I am appalled at the whipping-boy status the council has had for state Labor governments and their corruption watchdog arm. I urge the CCC to only ever revisit another inquiry on hard, corroborated evidence.

(Time expired)