




Speech By
Ray Stevens

MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

Record of Proceedings, 18 February 2020

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 2); APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2)

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (3.07 pm): I rise to speak on Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) 2019 and the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2019 being dealt with cognately. Firstly, I will deal with the parliamentary expenditure under the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2). This bill was introduced to the parliament on 19 September last year. Here we are debating this bill two months out from the next state budget. That is typical of the Labor Party's responsibility and organisation in bringing bills before the House and being accountable to the taxpayers of Queensland for their financial misappropriation.

In relation to the Parliamentary Service, we note that there is unforeseen expenditure of \$639,000. Before we castigate the Clerk on the blowout in his budget, we should recognise that there were increased IT costs and also unforeseen rising costs in terms of the Queensland Remuneration Tribunal. That is what the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill has always been about.

We understand and recognise that that unforeseen expenditure was reasonable and acceptable in terms of the appropriation bills delivered in September shortly after last year's 2018-19 budget for the 2019-20 period. I will take this opportunity to raise a matter that has concerned me in relation to the Parliamentary Service; that is, an expenditure for the relocation of offices of around \$600,000 per annum that was, in the main, caused by the redistribution of seats around the state. In my opinion, to save Queensland taxpayers there should be a directive that, in terms of the consideration of boundary relocations, the Electoral Commission should take into account the location of offices before they draw up their boundaries. Sometimes an office can move 100 metres, which causes a lot of expenditure for no good reason. That is my contribution for the future in terms of the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2).

However, what I would like to comment on in particular is the blowout of almost \$1.4 billion—\$1,400 million—in terms of the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) by this particular government. Mr Deputy Speaker, I refer you to the admittedly brief time the LNP was in government, when the unforeseen expenditure in the 2012-13 budget—and this appropriation bill is all about unforeseen expenditure—was \$63,445,000, which is a very reasonable amount in terms of unforeseen expenditure in the budgetary process, so well done to the treasurer in 2012-13. In 2013-14 under the LNP there was a significant amount of \$447,569,000, the most significant of which, unfortunately, was \$265 million for increases in superannuation benefit payments and long service leave scheme payments which could not be foreseen. In other words, in 2013-14 there was a genuine reason for that almost half a billion dollars being unforeseen in proper budgetary processes.

In the last LNP budget of 2014-15 the unforeseen expenditure was \$12 million, which is a minor figure in terms of proper budgetary processes. Yet when we look forward to 2019-20 for these 2018-19 appropriation bills you will find that this government has blown another \$1,397,441,000. You just cannot comprehend how this government can be that far out in their budgetary processes in terms of expenditure. We find the Department of Education, for example, with \$262,545,000, which tells you that this Labor government has failed to implement proper planning processes to adequately allow for proper

education department expenditure. If we look to the Department of Transport and Main Roads, with \$699,762 million—which is a major part of the overspend—you can understand why there is probably \$50 million worth of rolling stock up in Maryborough. I hate to use the word pork-barrelling in the Maryborough electorate, but we see that sort of expenditure in Maryborough to try and save the hide of the local member.

Mr Saunders interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Weir): Member for Maryborough, I advise you to put your name on the speaking list if you would like to contribute.

Mr STEVENS: The member for Maryborough needs all the help he can get up there. I understand why they put a fair bit of money into the budget, but it should be budgeted for rather than coming in as unforeseen expenditure. That is the problem. If they need to spend a billion dollars to get the local member elected in Maryborough, they have to budget that in their pork-barrelling and not put these items into the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) at the last minute. You can clearly see—

Mr Saunders interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Maryborough, you will be warned at the next outburst. I put you on notice.

Mr STEVENS: While I am on the member for Maryborough—no, I will leave him alone. These appropriation bills are absolutely typical of the bad financial planning of this government. We see it today; they are jumping up and down. There is no money left. With their \$90 billion debt and \$3.5 billion in interest payments, how many schools could you build for that? How many trains could you build in Maryborough for \$3.5 billion, which is the interest rate they are paying on the record borrowings they have incurred on behalf of Queensland taxpayers.

It beggars belief that the people of Queensland will not recognise this government is a sham in terms of its financial planning, which is what this bill is all about. They have led Queensland into the highest level of unemployment nationally we could possibly have. At the time of the committee's report there were 178,000 unemployed Queenslanders because of this particular government. Unfortunately, no amount of writing cheques, unforeseen expenditure, pork-barrelling or coming up with money they have not spent before will hide the fact that those opposite are the worst fiscal managers Queensland has ever seen. It is a tragedy that the Deputy Premier and Treasurer, who has overseen the total demise of proper fiscal planning in Queensland, has the hide to stand up and say what a wonderful Treasurer she is by her own admission.

This appropriation of \$1,397,441,000—small change in relation to the total overspend on the bank card, which this government routinely does—is just another indictment on a government leading Queensland up the bankrupt trail. With the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) being this large, unfortunately in two months time we will see a budget that will again rob the people of Queensland through higher taxes, more grabs at every level and higher charges every which way possible. You can see it coming now. Public servants will have their financial benefits through the superannuation scheme robbed, and that is only a paper figure anyway. If the markets go down, I warn you now that the taxpayers of Queensland will have to top up the superannuation defined benefits scheme. That is coming. What is also coming on the back of this Appropriation Bill (No. 2) is a financial downgrade for Queensland so that again we will pay a higher interest rate in Queensland. It is a shame, and it will not be fixed until we get Labor out of government in Queensland.