




Speech By  
**Ray Stevens**

**MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH**

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**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SPIT MASTER PLAN BILL**

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (12.32 pm): In rising to speak to the Implementation of The Spit Master Plan Bill, the Spit did not just fall from the sky. I go back a long way with the Spit, and I note students from Coomera Anglican College in the gallery today listening to this debate. I was at the opening of Coomera Anglican College as mayor of the Gold Coast. For those members who are not aware, I used to be the mayor of the Gold Coast and therefore the Spit is a very important part of my history on the Gold Coast. Given that, I am speaking with a lot of experience with regard to the Spit.

Over the years I have seen the development and the protection given to the Spit by the Gold Coast City Council when Labor tried to put up 10 storeys on what we call the Indigenous land down the end south of Sea World. I have seen Hans van der Drift and his Andalucia dalliance, but we are going back a few years now. Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen facilitated the development of the fabulous Sea World. It did not fall from the sky; it was done with the fabulous support of the then National-Liberal government in Queensland. Then there is Doug Jennings Park. Doug Jennings—a wonderful National Party member for Southport—facilitated the development of all of those facilities there. Then there was my good old chairman from the Albert shire, Billy Laver. Good old Bill was the first chairman of the Gold Coast Waterways Authority that built up Wave Break Island and facilitated the rock wall so that boats could get in without disasters occurring on a regular basis.

The history of the Spit lies with the conservative side of politics, and I have seen so much procrastination by the party opposite in dealing with a master plan for the Spit that it is just downright embarrassing. The glacial speed with which it has dealt with this plan would make one think that there are icebergs coming to the Gold Coast. There is this plan worth \$60 million over a number of years, and that money will be fed out on a drip as they sell particular lands. One can guarantee that they have their eyes on every spare block of land there. There has been a three-storey limit under the Gold Coast City Plan for many years, and there have been proposals. My good friend Soheil Abedian from the Sunland Group wanted to go 40 storeys there, if I recall, but that was certainly not agreed to or supported by us in government at the time. The Spit itself is a prime piece of real estate, and that is why the Gold Coast City Council protected it with a three-storey limit. In fact, I was there when Chris Skase moved into town and built the beautiful Sheraton resort on the Hans van der Drift Andalucia site. We have seen the Spit develop over the years under a conservative approach to the matter and I strongly support the limit of three storeys on the Spit.

There is great development on the western side of the Spit. I do not know whether or not ministers stayed at Versace during the Commonwealth Games—they probably did—but the Versace development is a beautiful example of the current development, and again that was done by Sunland and Dr Soheil Abedian. It was formerly called Fisherman's Wharf and, as I recall, he paid \$14 million for the site and has turned it into a fantastic international six-star resort, deserving of Labor ministers staying in it during the Commonwealth Games.

I particularly support the comments of my good friend and neighbour the member for Surfers Paradise in relation to Curlew Island. The other day I was getting a briefing by the Gold Coast Waterways Authority, and the CEO of the Gold Coast Waterways Authority is a great guy—Hal Morris.

He is actually the son of Reverend Monty Morris, who started up the Robina church, so that is how far we go back in terms of the family connections. He has done a wonderful job at the Gold Coast Waterways Authority—not his board, as there are questions in relation to the board that I will not go into at this particular time. I will be keeping an eye on the new selections of the extra three members who have come up with the naming of a sandbank. I looked from my in-laws' Labrador unit across to this little sandbank that is an absolute boat wrecker that they are now going to call Curlew Island with one poor old mangrove hanging off it. That sort of thinking will not support the boating industry in the long term for the Gold Coast.

Again, it is part of a pumped up, man-made facility. The rock wall brings the sand in and it cannot get out, so it accretes, as one would know if anyone understood these matters. The Gold Coast Waterways Authority has a busy pumping program in terms of sending that sand that has accreted back on to the beaches and sending it north as the currents take it north. Quite clearly, the area of the Spit is perfect for leisure and for entertainment areas, and I refer to the polo match that was recently held—I did not go this year, but I have been in past times—attracting wonderful crowds as part of the Magic Millions wonderful carnival held in January which is an international event. We have royalty attending the polo—other than me; sorry, member for Gregory. He looked at me rather funny—but we have royalty attending the Magic Millions on the Gold Coast. That is a perfect area for those sorts of events to occur. Billy Cross—one of the well-known entertainers from the Gold Coast area—runs some fantastic functions. He has been curtailed in recent years by certain bureaucratic matters, but I do hope to see him in action bringing major events to the city again because it is the perfect venue for that entertainment.

That is the history, and that has always been my view. Even when Dr Abedian came to see me, I said that we need the eastern side kept as a beautiful park—an open space park—not just replanted. Keith Williams was part of the planting of all of that area on the eastern side of the road many years ago, but it really needs genuine funding to get it into a park scenario similar to Kings Park in Western Australia, if anybody has visited that fantastic tourist spot in Perth. It draws a lot of people to that area and we could have the same if the money is spent by an incoming Frecklington government on the Spit to ensure that the eastern side is maintained and kept for the people to enjoy.

I repeat that this has been a long time coming. I will give an accolade to one of the new residents on the Spit who has done a lot of lobbying in relation to this issue: a former minister Judy Spence. She has done a good job lobbying people on the Gold Coast, and some of the members opposite I hope, to come to a conclusion that will protect the Spit, because that is what is needed. It is limited by access. We need to make sure that the Spit remains a wonderful place for Gold Coasters, tourists and visitors from Brisbane. It is a fantastic open area on the Gold Coast and we want to see it maintained.

I am supportive of this bill before the House but I will be monitoring very carefully the funds expended by this government in the short-term—up until 31 October—and then it will be up to us to make sure that appropriate funds are spent in the Spit area to make sure it reaches the world-class standard of a serious park area for those on the Gold Coast and tourists to enjoy. Currently the so-called Gold Coast Regional Botanic Gardens are at Benowa. Tourists need a cut lunch to get out there. We have a wonderful bridge that I toddled across on Sunday—the green bridge, which is actually blue—from Chevron Island to the HOTA cultural area of the Gold Coast. This is a great step forward in protecting the Spit. I support it 100 per cent. It has been a long time coming and we need to make sure that the funding gets through to make sure that this is deserving of the Gold Coast's reputation as the best international resort in the world.