



Speech By  
**Ray Stevens**

**MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH**

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Record of Proceedings, 8 September 2020

**MOTION**

**Referral to Economics and Governance Committee**

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (12.46 pm): I rise to support the amendment moved by the Manager of Opposition Business. I have been in this parliament for 14 years last weekend, and I have never seen such a display of hubris and arrogance in my whole time in the parliament as I have with this motion today. I will run through the premiers that I have been here with—former premier Beattie, former premier Bligh, former premier Newman and current Premier Palaszczuk. I have never, ever seen such arrogance and such hubris to the Queensland people as this important financial expose of Queensland's wellbeing rushed through with a couple of days to go and to be heard for three hours on Friday.

The Treasurer himself has previously said that he would make everything available and make it open and transparent. Those opposite cannot spell 'transparent'. They are hiding everything they can in this MYFER to ensure that Queenslanders do not understand the gravity of the dire economic situation that this government put us in before coronavirus. Coronavirus has added to the problem, yet this government has no way out of the economic financial dire straits that Queensland will be in—except for its hidden agenda of taxes which the Treasurer will not rule out for the future. It will be called the COVID tax. One does not have to be Nostradamus to work out that a taxing government like this particular one, with nine new taxes in this 56th Parliament, will be making Queenslanders pay for its mistakes prior to coronavirus. This election is not just about coronavirus; this election is about this particular document that it wants to deal with and hide away in three hours on Friday. The motion moved by the Leader of the House says that we can only have three hours, including 1½ hours of Dorothy Dixers—or Lane Calcutts, as they are now known—so there will be 1½ hours of Lanes followed by 1½ hours of questions from existing EGC members.

I will add, and I am not breaking any confidences of the committee, that it was announced through the media last week that this was a process that the Premier would be following. The EGC had a meeting on Monday at which I asked the committee secretariat had they heard anything about a proposed meeting, and they had not. This has been rammed through on a Tuesday so that it can be hidden as much as possible by this government. They will provide the minimum of scrutiny to the Queensland people. That is what the estimates process is all about.

It is one of the guiding principles of the Westminster system that the opposition gets to grill the government to make sure the government is doing a good job. That is what the opposition gets paid to do. Guess what? That has been chopped to 1½ hours on Friday with, unless we can get this amendment to the motion up, no opportunity for the opposition leader or the shadow Treasurer to have questioning and input. It will be left to the existing three members of the EGC. The shadow Treasurer and opposition leader would have a far greater grasp of all matters Queensland rather than the three members of the EGC. That in itself is an embarrassment because in opposition Labor Party leaders and shadow Treasurers have always had the opportunity to question the budget through the estimates process.

The Treasurer himself said they would make it open and accountable. The EGC does not have time to meet between now and Friday, so this amendment is the only way to allow the opposition leader and shadow Treasurer to ask questions of this government. Does that tell you that they have plenty to hide, Mr Deputy Speaker? I am afraid it tells not only you that that is the case; it tells the whole of Queensland that this government is all about hiding the financial position that this Palaszczuk Labor government has got this state into. It is a very grim and dire situation. This amendment gives an opportunity for Queenslanders to be heard. Opposition members are paid to represent Queenslanders who want to know about the current budget, the current CFER that is being put out by the Treasurer, and where they are going to go.

As the Manager of Opposition Business said, it is beyond belief that the Treasurer can stand up here with a straight face and say, 'We will not be able to deliver a budget until a month after the election. We do not want to do it a month before the election but we can do it a month after, on 1 December.' That smells to me like a government flying like a crow, squawking like a crow and basically should be shot like a crow that is hiding from Queenslanders all the financial evidence of a dim and dire situation.

In my 14 years in this parliament, this is the most embarrassing time I have witnessed. It is a shame and is absolutely a comment on the way that this Palaszczuk government wants to treat Queenslanders. It wants to hide the truth from them and to put spin on it and not allow the opposition leader and the shadow Treasurer to ask pertinent, relevant questions that Queenslanders are searching for answers to. It is okay to put on the fairy show of the AFL grand final, have movie stars coming into Queensland and those glamorous events that the Premier likes to associate herself with. We have here an opportunity for this government to be open and accountable, and they are shutting it down to an hour and a half. That is a total embarrassment.

If the Leader of the House is genuine about accountability and being open and transparent for the people of Queensland, she should make sure her side supports this amendment, which gives us eight hours of questioning. It will be four hours when taking into account Dorothy Dixers plus ours. If those opposite support the amendment which allows the opposition leader and the shadow Treasurer to be present at our committee, which is always the way for estimates since time immemorial, that will show this government is prepared to have relevant, hard questions asked on the way forward in this particular CFER that will be brought down on Friday. To ram it across to the EGC for an hour and a half on Friday morning is basically not worth doing. It is an embarrassment to the government, it is an embarrassment to the Treasurer and it will be an embarrassment to the Economics and Governance Committee to have just 1½ hours to run through the whole documentation, the whole future of Queensland, for the next four years.

This is not just a budget that is for the next six or nine months. Normally we are looking at the whole four years. This one is reduced to a very minimal period to get us through until the COVID virus is not destroying the Queensland economy. All in this House agree that this is a very sad time for Queenslanders. We do know that there is economic heartache across the board in Queensland. Government, please, open up the doors to accountability and transparency and support the amendment to the motion moved by the manager of opposition business—which will not affect anything—to have a reasonable accountable process on Friday morning.