



Speech By  
**Ray Stevens**


**MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH**

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## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**

### **APPROPRIATION BILL**

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (12.03 pm): It is a great disappointment to me that I have to rise to speak in the debate on the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill and the Appropriation Bill 2020 when the bills have not been referred to the Economic and Governance Committee, of which I am a member and which several other members of the House who have spoken in the debate are. It quite clearly makes it very difficult to properly investigate the expenditure overruns from the 2019-20 budget which this Appropriation Bill is all about.

It is so disappointing that on the last sitting day of the 56th Parliament we have to deal with the scramble for money by this Labor government so it can put in place financial matters before the election on 31 October. This is the typical Achilles heel of the Palaszczuk Labor government which is hopeless in its financial management of the state. They cannot manage their own finances. They should not be governing Queensland because they cannot manage their own finances.

We see that clearly with the Appropriation Bill coming before the parliament late. Earlier in the week we had a Clayton's budget in the form of a MYFER which we will be discussing tomorrow in the Economics and Governance Committee. It is a 41-page glossy document that basically says we are going to be another \$4 billion in the hole. That is on top of the other moneys that have gone in the hole. It is classic Labor pea and thimble trickery to try to hide their financial incompetence coming into the 31 October election. I have no doubt that they are very fearful of ratings agency Standard & Poor's downgrading our current, what I understand to be, AA-plus rating. That tells everybody in the community before the 31 October election that this government is hopeless at running the finances of Queensland.

The Appropriation Bill that has been served up to us to debate today without being able to make full inquiries of the public servants expending these moneys on behalf of Queenslanders is another embarrassment. I would like to know where the Department of Education spent the extra \$432 million in 2019-20. Was it on air conditioning? Was it on extra schools? I am flying blind on those matters given this bill was brought before the parliament at the death of the 56th Parliament.

It is an embarrassment. On 31 October, if Queenslanders are interested in a government that will go forward with full accountability and transparency, with a plan for economic betterment rather than just implementing more taxes, grabbing more money or going into more debt, which has been the case with this state government—we now have well over \$100 billion in debt and it is not all to do with coronavirus, it was well on the way before coronavirus hit—they have a choice. The coronavirus has added to it obviously.

We are all aware of the border closures and how that has affected business and will in the longer term if this keeps going. That is why Prime Minister Morrison, as mentioned by the Premier herself this morning, is crying out for life in Queensland to go back to a semblance of normality so the economic damage when we come through coronavirus will not be as catastrophic as currently predicted. We have

seen some horrendous figures in terms of unemployment in Queensland. They are saying that another 72,000 people will be unemployed before Christmas. These numbers are horrific for Queensland's economy. We have a record 234,000 people currently out of work because Labor cannot manage the economy. There will be another 72,000 people unemployed before Christmas.

What we are going to see is a debilitated Queensland economy that can only survive or have a chance of going forward with an LNP government following the 31 October election. An LNP government would right all the problems in this Appropriation Bill. The former treasurer said that we would have a budget in April. That was wiped away so they could hide the financial incompetence of the Palaszczuk Labor government behind the coronavirus smokescreen.

I feel sorry for Queenslanders, but we will do our best as a government to put Queensland back on track by approving job-creating projects such as the Adani and Acland mines. Jobs will be the saviour of the Queensland economy. We will not have the social and union-building agenda that this current Palaszczuk Labor government has put forward to Queenslanders as an excuse during the last five years of governing Queensland for racking up debt on debt on debt as they turn Queensland, which should be the pride of Australia, into a basket case, with the highest unemployment figures and the highest debt around Australia.

They have been trying to hide Queensland from Australia and have been creating havoc, except for those global superstars they like to associate themselves with and take selfies with around the place. I love Tom Hanks, but I love the people of Queensland more. People of Queensland are suffering, whereas the Tom Hanks of the world get special treatment, as does the AFL and all of their favourite people that they like to be seen with in the media. This particular government concentrates on them rather than looking after Queenslanders and their financial interests. That is seen by the fact that the biggest project in Queensland is not in North Queensland, where they need jobs badly. I am sure that the member for Burdekin will talk about that further.

**Mr Last** interjected.

**Mr STEVENS:** Several times. Jobs would be the highest priority in North Queensland. Instead, we have a \$5 billion pork barrel in the electorate of South Brisbane for a Cross River Rail that they are now spending hundreds and thousands of dollars advertising right across Queensland, telling people that it is an important project because no-one knows anything about it. It is the biggest white elephant. They have put all of their eggs in one basket and nobody knows anything about it. That is why they are advertising Cross River Rail left, right and centre.

They are the sorts of financial failings that will see this Palaszczuk Labor government held to account for on 31 October, despite any matters that they try to hide through not bringing down a budget until a month after the election—which is ridiculous. Why they could not bring down a budget a month before the election needs to be explained. We have literally thousands of public servants. I am sure there is a pretty machine out there that could put budget documents together, but no. We are hiding our financial realities until after the election (a) so that we do not get a downgrade which would send the loudest message possible to Queenslanders; and (b) so that we do not frighten the horses come election day to see what absolutely hopeless financial managers Labor are. I do not blame them personally for it because none of them have been in business at all. They have all come from their union backgrounds and from offices of old party hacks. Maybe the member for Toohey has a bit of experience. I do not blame them for being incompetent.

The fact of the matter is that they should not be in government and claim that they know how to run a budget to keep the Queensland economy ticking over and to make sure Queenslanders will be safe, particularly in tourism areas. I refer to the fabulous Gold Coast, my backyard, in terms of the importance of tourism on the Gold Coast. Whilst we are holding up reasonably well because of our domestic tourists, it is still a nightmare for people coming across the border. Can you imagine how difficult it is for the good folks of Cairns and Barron River and those areas in the north who are hoping to see tourists go to their areas? I hope that they understand that they have an opportunity on 31 October to let the government know what they think of the government's approach to tourism and that they can fix that approach by changing the government. I am quite confident that that will be the case come 31 October.

The fact that the former treasurer appropriated \$3.1 billion in additional funds in April and they have come back to explain how they have spent another \$1.1 billion on top of that again in the 2019-20 budget tells us how incompetent they are and how they do not deserve a four-year term. We cannot afford a four-year term of financial incompetence. I cannot wait for the next 50 days or so to pass so that we can put Queensland back on track.