



Speech By  
**Ray Stevens**

**MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH**

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Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2021


**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL**

**APPROPRIATION (2020-2021) BILL**

**Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)**

**Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill**

**Economics and Governance Committee, Report**

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (11.37 am): No-one can doubt that last year's estimates process and the appropriation bills of 2020 were all about the health crisis that hit the world and, in particular, hit Australia. We understand that and we support the measures taken, particularly by the federal government, which really were the ones that kept us safe by shutting Australia's borders. In a moment I will speak to the claims made here about the tourism sector, but I am told that 450,000 Australian expats are coming back from overseas and they are flooding the Gold Coast and northern New South Wales property markets. That is also why no-one can get a rental property in those areas, because the rental market has gone berserk. That has put a lot of pressure back onto the Queensland economy, which is another issue that I will get to in a moment.

Turning to the budget process, we went in to the health crisis—which we all recognise—with a debt of \$102 billion, which is proportionately higher than any other state and affected our ability to prepare for the financial fallout that was part of the health crisis. An economic crisis followed the health crisis and we are still going to see the impacts of it as the year rolls on and throughout the 2021 budget. I am sure that the cries from this Labor state government for the federal government to keep funding JobKeeper, JobSeeker and so on are just about trying to bail them out of their horrible predicament where they are second last—not last, I will grant them that; they have moved to second last—on the table relating to unemployment across the states of Australia.

Ours is a state with bountiful tourism. The Gold Coast is the most popular tourist destination in Australia. We also have the mining and agriculture industries, as well as the education industry, yet this government has presided over the second highest unemployment rate in Australia. The Labor Party is supposed to represent the workers of Queensland. You are kidding me!

All they know is debt, debt, debt. The \$102 billion—guess what? I predicted they would borrow another \$30 billion and I was \$2 billion out. They borrowed another \$28 billion so they can keep the lights on in Queensland. They are spending a lot of that \$28 billion on recurrent expenditure because they cannot manage a budget properly. Then they call for the federal government, left, right and centre, to bail them out of their own created problems.

On the Gold Coast—I can talk about this as a member from the Gold Coast—we are going very well in terms of tourism. Even though international tourism has failed because of the borders being closed, we are going extremely well in terms of domestic tourism. The domestics have found the Gold

Coast again and that has made it a very busy tourism sector. We understand that. The federal government has committed \$520 billion as part of its debt input into keeping Australia ticking over as an economic powerhouse, but that will be stopping in later March and we will see more fallout from that particular economic move after March.

The estimates process this financial year has been truncated. Last year we had the election, then we had the budget and a fortnight later we had the estimates process. That did not allow for the normal process of questions being asked and the provision of answers to build on. It was a truncated estimates process, and that is why we have complained that some of the answers given were not in the fullest of forms. The perception in the community of any politicisation of the estimates process can be understood. That is what we have heard from several sources in terms of the operation of that questioning period, which is imperative under the Westminster system in order for the opposition to hold the government to account.

This government is using the old pea-and-thimble trick—borrowing more money and blaming it on the health crisis, when in fact it is its financial mismanagement that has caused those borrowings to get out of control.