




Speech By
Ray Stevens

MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

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ADJOURNMENT

Gold Coast Turf Club

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (7.20 pm): For the umpteenth time—initially announced when Peter Lawlor was the racing minister back in 2011—the Minister for Racing has announced a \$31 million package for the Gold Coast Turf Club to facilitate a tunnel under the racetrack, an all-weather racing track and lights on the course proper for Friday night racing. Good luck Gold Coast Turf Club with that for, as most dodgy operators infamously say, the cheque is in the mail.

It is the issue of Friday night racing that concerns me most. As anyone with a modicum of racing knowledge would know, if you race Friday night you will not be racing on Saturday afternoon. As a Gold Coast Turf Club board member for 14 years, I know that the Gold Coast Turf Club generates its well-known public attendance on Saturday afternoons primarily because of the metropolitan racing in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. Any major diversions from the current scenario will see a serious drop in attendance and fundraising capacity of the Gold Coast Turf Club. Our motto used to be 'racing every Saturday in paradise', and that branding was nearly as good as 'beautiful one day; perfect the next'.

Racing Queensland is obsessed with the notion that its betting turnover will be massively increased if it races on Friday nights at the Gold Coast in conjunction with Moonee Valley in Melbourne and Canterbury in Sydney. Both of those venues conduct their meetings with little public attendance on Friday nights, and at the Gold Coast it will be even worse. The hype that it will be the 'Happy Valley of Australia' is pure fiction, as gambling in Hong Kong is a different world to Australian racing. On Friday nights the Gold Coast Turf Club will be competing with the array of restaurants, nightclubs and pokie palaces for the younger patrons, while the over-50s, who are the majority of Gold Coast members, will be tucked up in bed.

I cannot stress enough how much I believe this is a serious negative for the future of the Gold Coast Turf Club, which is a venue and an organisation extremely dear to my heart. I understand the logic behind the other proposed asset improvements to the club. If that government cheque ever arrives, as a member of the club for 40 years I will look forward to the opening of those new facilities.

In reality, Friday night racing is a turn-off for public attendance and industry participants, trainers and jockeys preparing at 3 am Saturday for their big money day on Saturday afternoon. This is a short-sighted gamble by Racing Queensland to try to show that they are doing something to generate more turnover, but it is to the total detriment of the Gold Coast Turf Club individually, which is hobbled in this decision by its desire to seek funds for its other facility improvements. Shame on Racing Queensland. Let them limit their night racing to a midweek at the Gold Coast so that the Gold Coast Turf Club can continue to race on Saturday afternoons where they generate their enormous income and support the Queensland racing industry.