




Speech By
Ray Stevens

MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

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ADJOURNMENT

Gold Coast Light Rail Stage 3

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (6.00 pm): As I reported to this House previously, Light Rail stage 3 on the Gold Coast is 85 per cent through my electorate from Pacific Fair to North Burleigh. This much heralded infrastructure was lauded by the Palaszczuk government as proceeding with John Holland construction as the preferred contractor in 2020—two years ago. According to the government's own latest time line, this project will not be completed until 2025—after the 2024 state election. What is the holdup? A glacier melting through climate change looks like speed dating on Tinder compared to the snail-like progress of this much vaunted project. Imagine the frustration and consternation of local business and commuters waiting for Light Rail Stage 3 to finally appear and businesses just getting over suffering from COVID at now having to deal with this major construction impediment to their operations.

I am told from reliable sources that the contract with Holland has not even been signed yet, and this is two years since the Premier's announcement. I believe that a major blowout in labour costs through the Jackie Trad inspired best practice union wage loading to the tune of some \$300 million on the project is the sticking point for the John Holland signature on the contract documents. I know the federal government, in their unbounded enthusiasm in an election year, has committed \$300 million to get the show on the road—stupidly, in my opinion—but John Holland will be locked in forever on future infrastructure projects if they cop this over-the-top ambit claim. My understanding is that they are not prepared to do it. What a quandary the Premier will find herself in if she has to find another contractor who will succumb to this extraordinary union blackmail. Or will she just sit on her hands over Light Rail Stage 3 and keep finding more excuses as to why the project has not even started two years after it was announced?

Businesses are waiting on final designs to see what effect it will have on their patron parking, and residents are already concerned about increased height limits and living densities being approved by the council in anticipation of light rail arriving. The council says it is not their fault that densities are increased; it is at the direction of the state government. The state government says it is up to the council to decide on densities in their location when they know it is not possible to put more densities into greenfield areas the state government is blocking. Both bodies know there will be increased densities along the light rail route, and my residents and businesses are piggy in the middle, which is a shameful way to deliver on openness and transparency. If this is the disaster that is the implementation of the Light Rail stage 3 to Burleigh, what hope in Hades does Light Rail stage 4 to the airport have in the future?