



Speech By
Ray Stevens

MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

Record of Proceedings, 12 May 2022

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (3.57 pm): I am pleased to rise and make a contribution to the Health and Environment Committee report on its inquiry into the provision of primary, allied and private health care, aged care and NDIS care services—not because I think the inquiry or report is of much benefit to Queenslanders given its biased narrow scope, but because in my view the inquiry and the report is representative of what is wrong with the parliament's committee system. This inquiry was established by a resolution moved by the health minister, who is also the Leader of the House, and was nothing more than a cynical misuse of the committee system to distract from the state government's ineptitude in running the health system by attempting to deflect the blame to the Commonwealth government. The media and professional organisations belled the cat about this cynical exercise. The AMA Queensland president, Chris Perry, after the inquiry was moved, said—

The parliamentary inquiry into the problems in Queensland's health care system must look at issues of State funding, not just areas of Commonwealth responsibility.

In a further blatant move, debate on the issue was moved up the *Notice Paper* so it could take place before the Commonwealth election. Every bit of time, energy and resources spent on government distractions such as this is less time, energy and resources spent on the scrutiny of government.

The committee system is an integral and important part of the legislative process to deliver good governance in Queensland. The current system, first introduced in 2011, was designed to deliver checks and balances that are necessary in the absence of a house of review, commonly referred to as an upper house. In 2011 the Committee System Review Committee recommended 'that there be a presumption that portfolio committee proceedings be open to the public unless the relevant committee otherwise determines'.

Unfortunately, I believe that the current system of portfolio committee representation, where there are three government members, with the government chair have a casting vote over the three non-government members, fails to deliver the open and transparent public interest disclosure that the review committee envisaged in 2011. An upper house has parliamentary privilege for members whereby non-government members can make important public disclosure under the protection of parliamentary privilege.