



Speech By  
**Ray Stevens**


**MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH**

---

Record of Proceedings, 26 May 2022

**HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

**Report, Motion to Take Note**

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (3.02 pm), continuing: Unfortunately, the current portfolio system allows government members to block any disclosures by the use of the government's majority vote in that committee. Today's portfolio committees rely on the casting vote of the committee chair in the event of a tied vote between government members and non-government members. That can lead to a suppression of public interest matters that would otherwise be available under parliamentary privilege in an upper house or under an open meeting forum, as designated by the Committee System Review Committee in 2011. Private meetings should be the exception rather than the rule, as it currently stands under this government. We are servants of the public and the public has a right to know the reasons for our decision-making in their interest.

The portfolio system in the Queensland parliament could be a model for constitutional reform of other parliaments if applied correctly and in a nonpartisan way. I do not believe that the current domination of committees by government voting power on the committees, which can effectively mute the principle of parliamentary privilege, serves the people of Queensland well. It denies the Queensland parliament the key performance parameters of integrity, openness and accountability, which are essential benchmarks in a truly democratic society. I respectfully suggest that from here on—

**Mr BROWN:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. My understanding is that we are currently debating the health inquiry report, and this speech has nothing to do with that.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Bush): Member for Mermaid Beach, I appreciate the commentary on committee work, but I will ask you to come back to the discussion we are having today.

**Mr STEVENS:** The first part of my speech, which I obviously did not deliver today, drew the connection between the health committee report and the portfolio committees report. This report focused on federal responsibilities in health rather than on the state issues that should have been canvassed in this inquiry. The deprivation of important information from the public realm can lead to the suspicion that the government of the day is hiding material interest matters detrimental to the honest and efficient running of the state to enhance its electoral prospects.

**Mr Krause:** Including on the EGC.

**Mr STEVENS:** I am not mentioning the EGC in this speech, thank you, member for Scenic Rim. That suspicion can morph into voter anger when constituents feel, rightly or wrongly, that matters in relation to the health system, for instance, have been withheld because of the inability of that portfolio committee to deal with matters that cover a wide range of health effects—not only in the federal sphere but also in the state sphere. That is why I am saying that the portfolio committees are the way in Queensland for this parliament to deal with these matters in an open and accountable matter. We should be having open and accountable portfolio committee meetings.