



Speech By
Ray Stevens


MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 3)

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BETTING TAX AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (3.03 pm): In the short time I have I would mostly like to talk about the Betting Tax and Other Legislation Amendment Bill because I have been known to have an occasional flutter and I have some experience in this particular area.

An honourable member: Go Gold Trip!

Mr STEVENS: I backed the winner of the Melbourne Cup—Gold Trip. Mine was a real gold trip; it was not a trip to Melbourne on a boat! Anyway, I will move on from that.

I would like to put some facts before the House in relation to matters that the member for Logan raised about the \$2.8 billion in appropriations that this bill is addressing. Members on the other side often refer to the LNP government years of 2012 to 2015. We hear it time and time again in this House. Under the LNP, unforeseen expenditure in 2012-13 was \$63 million—I will round it up. In 2013-14, it was \$447 million. In 2014-15, it was \$12 million. The figure in this appropriation bill for this Labor government in 2021-22 is \$2,800 million. That shows us the care they take in spending Queensland taxpayers' dollars. Unfortunately it is in their DNA to keep spending willy-nilly.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart): Pause the clock. This has been a fairly wideranging debate. I want to hear what the member for Mermaid Beach has to say. There will be no more interjections or I will start warning members.

Mr STEVENS: In the \$2.8 billion of expenditure, we see \$227 million going to a white elephant. Thailand is the land of the white elephant; Queensland should be the land of the white elephant. They have history. This is the same project and approach that the Bligh and Beattie governments used when they put in the water grid across South-East Queensland which gave us another white elephant in the form of a desal plant at Currumbin and a recycled water pipeline—

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Members, I just gave a general warning. The member for Maryborough will cease his interjections. The Attorney-General will cease her interjections. All members on this side of the House will cease their interjections. I will start warning members.

Mr STEVENS: The hallmark of a Labor government is to spend willy-nilly on different projects with no concern or regard to the long-term debt that they place on Queenslanders. The forward estimates are up to \$130 billion. Unfortunately, this appropriation bill—it has all been expended so there is nothing for us to oppose, so we will be supporting it—highlights the fact that this government has no regard for financial duty to Queensland taxpayers whatsoever.

I now move to the other cognate bill, the Betting Tax and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This bill did not come before our committee but one thing we did note was that the consultation process involving the people who were going to be affected by this particular bill was zilch, nothing, diddly squat, crickets. That is not the way to deal with any new taxes that you are proposing.

I remind everyone that this point-of-consumption tax was introduced by a previous treasurer, then treasurer Trad, who had no intention of putting any of the 15 per cent tax back into racing mainly because she is on the lefty side that hate horses being whipped and dogs chasing around Parklands. Unfortunately that changed and they did commit moneys, but they did not tell the betting agencies like Ladbrokes and Bet365. There is a new one called betr. They tell me that it had 90,000 subscribers on the first day it was launched. These agencies are a big part of the betting community in Queensland.

I would like to say that I have always had a TAB account. I have not had any of these other accounts because as a former racing person I know that the money that goes through the TAB goes back into racing, so I deliberately have not taken out an account with any of the other attractive betting mechanisms. It always amazes me how much advertising we are seeing on television from these groups about gambling responsibly. It is just like the cigarette companies saying—this is my wife's line—'smoke healthily'. It just does not happen, but they are a big part of the racing industry. The younger people in particular, like the 46,000 people who were at Randwick for the running of the Everest, are all into those betting groups rather than the TAB.

So the TAB gets hold of Evan Moorhead, that great racing aficionado, and takes him along to lobby on their behalf—very effectively—for a five per cent whack across the head for those gambling groups. They are a little upset, and I will tell you how they reacted. They reacted by wiping Queensland racing. As we all know, of course, the best channel on which to watch racing is Channel 7's free-to-air live coverage of what was Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales racing. As soon as this tax came in, bang, no more Queensland racing because Ladbrokes sponsored the day's coverage on the television. They took away all of the incentive programs for gambling—in other words, you get \$50 back or whatever—and there was none for Queensland racing. I would like the Treasurer to tell me in his windup speech what was the diminution in gambling numbers as a result of the new tax he whacked on these people without consultation in terms of the dollar downturn they will pay as a result. I am told by racing people that they are back in the groove a bit now and helping out Queensland punters with incentive programs as well. The fact of the matter is that there was a reaction, as there always is, to the extra tax they are going to cop like our mining industry and our good friends in Japan. People react to those sorts of things. For a government that promised no new taxes, hello, it is very, very embarrassing the way they have gone about introducing these new taxes.

I am sure that we will see more matters come to the fore in terms of irresponsible spending and irresponsible taxing by this government. As the economy gets worse—we have had a bit of a boom through coal and other matters we have heard about—and we move forward into next year you can see that worldwide problems are hitting Britain, Europe and America. I hear the Democrats are not travelling too well over there at the moment, so that might be reflected by the lefties over here in Queensland at the next election. When times get tough they will not be relying on the profligate spendthrifts over on the other side of the House in government coming up with \$2,800 million worth of extra expenditure, particularly on white elephant projects like the Toowoomba Wellcamp accommodation—

An opposition member: 'Wastecamp'.

Mr STEVENS: Yes, 'Wastecamp'—exactly like the desal plant that is still rusting away down at Currumbin. What about the recycled pipeline? I think there is about \$9 billion worth in that water grid. It is just more Labor spending, and we will see it continue until 2024.