




Speech By
Ray Stevens

MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

Record of Proceedings, 15 February 2024

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Titles Queensland, Morecroft Family

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (2.33 pm): I bring great news to the House. My former constituents in Mermaid Beach Jess and Jackie Morecroft have won their court case in the Court of Appeal against the Queensland government and particularly against the belligerent and ill-formed judgement of the Queensland Treasurer, Cameron Dick. In a unanimous three-judge decision, the court rejected the mean-spirited appeal trumpeted by the Treasurer in this House against the Queensland government paying \$2.7 million in compensation awarded by a lower court as a result of the Morecrofts being defrauded of their home in Mermaid Beach. They have been homeless since the decision that was brought down meant they had to hand over their house because of the fraud, which had nothing to do with them whatsoever.

I have always lived by the mantra that public officers make recommendations but it is the politician who makes the decision for better or worse. This appeal and lengthy delay to the Morecrofts and further expense to the Queensland government could have been avoided if the Labor government had any sense of decency and compassion and abided by the original court decision. This was a one-off case with Powerball odds of setting a precedent for the government. I cannot fathom why the original court decision was not followed to not only save the government additional legal expense on a case they could not win but also to save them from paying the Morecrofts' costs which the Court of Appeal has ordered them to do.

The Treasurer blamed the minister for natural resources for this debacle because of his control over the titles office, but we all know it is the money man who controls the direction of the government's expenditure and the buck will always stop with him. This is just another example of the Labor government's waste of taxpayers' money which will be added to Queenslanders' rapidly rising tax bill.

The Treasurer took it upon himself to berate me personally for standing up for my constituents, and his unedifying, abusive speech is symptomatic of a Treasurer and now Deputy Premier who is out of touch with the harsh outcomes of the legal world for everyday, law-abiding, salt-of-the-earth Queenslanders. It is the Treasurer who should apologise to Jess and Jackie Morecroft for dragging them through another set of courts to again prove that his backing of legal excuses by his department's advisers was totally wrong.

This shameful and unnecessary political haranguing of a Mermaid Beach constituent has overtones of a class warfare ideology. I wonder if the same case would befall a constituent in the Woodridge electorate and if the same 'knock 'em down, drag 'em out' mentality would have been applied. The salutary lesson to be gained from this sad episode of political history is that this Labor government think only of squeezing every last dollar from Queenslanders regardless of court direction and regardless of compassionate and justifiable decision-making to show a willingness to do the right thing. Congratulations Jess and Jackie on being able to buy your new house.