




Speech By
Ray Stevens

MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

Record of Proceedings, 13 March 2025

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (SUPPLEMENTARY 2023-2024) BILL;
APPROPRIATION (SUPPLEMENTARY 2023-2024) BILL**

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (5.04 pm): I rise to talk to the Appropriation (Parliament) (Supplementary 2023-2024) Bill 2024 and the Appropriation (Supplementary 2023-2024) Bill 2024. We can call those two cognate bills the Labor debt bills in terms of their mishandling of the budget appropriation processes for 2023-24.

When we look back through history, and as I have said before, Queensland's worst treasurer was Andrew Fraser, who got the AAA credit rating downgraded to AA. I believe that the previous treasurer we had who is responsible for these appropriation bills—the ex-member for Greenslopes and current member for Woodridge—has outdone the former treasurer Mr Andrew Fraser in terms of being the worst treasurer Queensland has ever seen. He has taken us to a debt level that has placed an incredible burden on the taxpayers of Queensland and on the businesses and investors in Queensland.

Ms GRACE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I note that the member rose to a point of order on relevance last time. I rise to a point of order on the same thing. This is a 2023-24 appropriations bill. I ask the member to come back to that appropriation bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Martin): Member, I have given you a bit of latitude. Appropriation bills do have a lot of latitude. I will let you carry on, member.

Mr STEVENS: When I am talking about appropriation bills, for the member for McConnel's information, this is about the extra unforeseen expenditure that adds to the debt levels of Queensland. Basically, they are unexpected expenditures that for some reason were not in the budgetary processes. Therefore, they have to be acquitted through the parliament. They are basically all Labor expenditures from previous years.

I will look back through history for the member for McConnel's benefit. When we were last in government, in 2012-13 our unforeseen expenditure was \$643 million; in 2013-14, it was \$447 million; and, in 2014-15, for the member for McConnel's benefit, it was \$12 million. That was responsible government. We had a very responsible treasurer at the time. The member for Clayfield is here. I congratulate him on his wonderful achievement of budgeting correctly so that the supplementary appropriations were of a minor nature—\$12 million.

I compare that with the appropriation bills under the Labor government. Guess what? In 2017, which was an election year as I recall, \$2,270 million was expended in appropriations. Again, under the Labor government in 2018-19, \$1,400 million was expended. In 2019-20, which was an election year again, \$1,400 million was expended. It is quite clear that a lot of this expenditure was for the betterment of a Labor government not caring about proper budgetary processes and incorporating expenditures in the normal budgetary processes. They just went out and spent willy-nilly.

We heard from previous Labor speakers that it is not a cost blowout when it doubles the cost you estimated in the budget. In relation to Cross River Rail, I think originally it was \$5.9 billion. Now it is somewhere up near \$9 billion and rising from those estimates in the budget. I can give members an

example on the Gold Coast: light rail, through the BPIC process, was an extra \$250 million in the previous budget and last year, a month before the election, there was another \$320 million for light rail 3 and we have not even got to light rail 4 yet. These expenditures are not accounted for in the normal budgetary processes and show a complete lack of responsibility and financial sense in terms of proper budgeting processes and their capacity to willy-nilly spend at any opportunity. They could not run a kindergarten tuckshop. That is the problem with the Labor governments we have had here over the last 10 years. Now the ball will have to be picked up by our current Treasurer and Crisafulli government to make sure that responsible expenditures are incorporated in normal budgetary processes. We look forward to a much smaller supplementary appropriation bill coming forward next year, probably about September. Hopefully, it will be far more responsible in its exaggerated expenditure which comes after normal budgetary process. I assume that a fair bit of the \$4 million in the Appropriation (Parliament) (Supplementary 2023-2024) Bill was in relation to expenditure for extra staffing the Parliamentary Service had to front up for coming into that particular year.

This bill highlights the inefficiency of the previous Labor government to budget properly in the interests of Queensland. We have a debt level now heading out in the four-year budgetary term of \$170-odd billion. I imagine the interest on that is somewhere between \$7 billion to \$8 billion, depending on what happens to our downgrade as a result of Labor's expenditure. When you think that the federal government has committed \$7 billion to the Bruce Highway, then you understand how unfortunate it is that this Labor government has committed to large interest payments of taxpayers' money—which will probably increase because of our downgrade because of Labor's budgeting—because we could fund the Bruce Highway's upgrade even without the federal government's commitment of \$7 billion on the interest payments alone. I know that a lot of people's eyes glaze over when you talk about financial matters and how important they are, but that is a real shame.

Unfortunately, all those taxes, cost-of-living rises and increases you will see coming through that are landing on people's doorstep—even in fines et cetera—which the previous regime put in place looking for extra money, are the result of bad financial planning by previous Labor governments. The Crisafulli government and our responsible Treasurer, the member for Toowoomba South, will have to address this in the years to come. Unfortunately, I have run out of time to highlight further—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr STEVENS: I thought I heard someone say I would be further heard. Did I hear that from the other side? No, I did not. I do thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to highlight the failings of the previous government to properly plan financially for the future of Queenslanders. The sad fact is that responsibility for the extraordinarily large supplementary appropriation bills we have had over the last couple of years lies at the feet of the Labor government. It will be quite a while before we, as a financially responsible LNP government, can correct the situation on behalf of Queenslanders so we can put ourselves back in the best economic position as the best growth state across Australia and regain our rightful position, with all of our resources, tourism and agriculture, as the No. 1 state for investment in Australia.