




Speech By
Ray Stevens

MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

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ADJOURNMENT

Mermaid Beach Electorate, Homelessness

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (9.29 pm): Of significant concern for residents in the Mermaid Beach electorate is the rise of presumably homeless people setting up camps along the beachfront in prime public locations. Whilst I and many other people feel very sorry for them, given the Labor induced housing shortage and ridiculously high rental prices, it is not acceptable for them to just set up camp in these highly visible and environmentally sensitive areas such as Broadbeach, Miami and North Burleigh. With some having mental issues, or perhaps drug and alcohol dependency, it may also present clear and present danger to the many tourists and residents who have to pass these camps either early in the mornings or at night when many women, in particular, feel very uneasy about their presence. The smells of urination and defecation are also present and there are many local voices contacting my office to ask what I am doing to protect their residential amenity. My first call, of course, is to my local police station to try and get some resolution to some very bad behaviour. One local father took his son into the public toilets at North Burleigh and unfortunately, ran into some of these illegal campers fornicating in the public toilets. I repeat: this is not acceptable.

The police reluctantly tell me they have no legislative power to move these people on, which I find incredibly disappointing. The vagrancy act is no longer applicable and unless there is demonstrable public disturbance the police, I am told, cannot move them on. This is unacceptable. The police's answer to the illegal camping is to refer them to the local council who have a designated relocation unit for their intervention but obviously, council officers have no physical capacity to force the removal of these illegal campers. When they do get temporary removal of these campsites, it is only a short time later before the illegal campers are back on some of the most sought after locations anyone could wish for—absolute beachfront.

Whilst I do understand that there must be solutions to where the homeless people can be moved to, it is imperative a solution be found that includes giving law enforcement officers the legislative power to enforce the removal of these illegal campsites from these visually and environmentally sensitive sites. Some of the campers, I am sure, do not want the provision of mainstream housing and prefer their nomadic lifestyle. The overall interest of the community must take precedence over the preferential desires of an individual, regardless of their mental competence to understand the gravity of their situation. As part of a Crisafulli government determined to shape a better Queensland, I look forward to legislative solutions coming forward that will alleviate this shortcoming in Queensland's society and prevent these camps being set up in main public areas along the Gold Coast region.