



Speech by

**Dr Bruce Flegg**

**MEMBER FOR MOGGILL**

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## **TERRORISM, ORGANISED CRIME AND ANTI-CORRUPTION SURVEILLANCE BILL**

**Dr FLEGG** (Moggill—Lib) (7.50 pm): It gives me pleasure to rise to speak in support of the Terrorism, Organised Crime and Anti-Corruption Surveillance Bill. The purpose of this bill is to establish a recording, reporting and inspection regime to complement the Commonwealth Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979 so that the Queensland Police Service and the CMC can use telecommunications interception as a tool for the investigation of serious offences. Under current Queensland legislation, our own state law enforcement agencies cannot intercept telephone conversations without federal government guidance and supervision. The Queensland Police Service and the CMC have for almost a decade—at least since 1999 with Project Krystal, a strategic assessment of organised crime in Queensland—been calling for these important reforms. It is now 2007 and there has been a revolution in the telecommunications industry. People now have computers, faxes and all sorts of telephones with various communications functions, particularly with the prevalence of mobile phones. With new telecommunication technology comes the opportunity for more people to do amazing things, but it also brings with it a greater capacity to engage in corrupt and criminal behaviour.

In a globalised interconnected world, advanced telecommunication is not only an important tool for the illegal narcotic industry and terrorists but can also be a weapon to fight against corruption, organised crime and terrorism. Our own Queensland law enforcement officers need legislative powers to investigate, intercept and then prosecute unlawful behaviour. This relies on advanced communication technology and the capacity to intercept communication of criminal activity within Queensland's borders as well as outside them. It raises the question of whether the Bligh Labor government is serious about dealing with the local narcotic industry, the Gold Coast being the amphetamine capital of Australia. One wonders if perhaps it has become the place of choice to do this sort of business because this is the state that does not give its law enforcement agencies the powers to undertake proper surveillance. Is the Bligh government serious about suburban crime like local amphetamine labs and other drugs like speed, ecstasy, ice and crack? Is the Queensland government serious about letting the Police Service do surveillance and intelligence on bikie gangs? This is a serious matter because the other states have this capability while Queensland does not. If one wants to set up a crime activity of this type, where are they going to go? Queensland will be their state of choice.

The introduction of Queensland legislation to provide telephone interception capacities is essential to the effective disruption of organised crime, suspected terrorist activities and corruption in government, especially with the advances and availability of affordable mobile phone technology. Communication interception technology is more selective and less intrusive than the listening device capabilities currently available to Queensland law enforcement agencies. All other states in Australia now have these powers for their law enforcement agencies. We have heard the lame excuses from members on the other side. The reality is their fellow Labor governments in other states saw the importance of this and were prepared to allow their law enforcement agencies to have this power. Clearly, they are using this as an excuse. I remind the House again that the Queensland Police Service and the CMC have for almost a decade been calling for up-to-date police powers to compete with technological advances in communication. Recent

activities in the WA Corruption and Crime Commission have revealed the importance of telecommunication interception powers which have been key to exposing high-level corruption by state Labor party ministers and members of parliament, including a former Labor Premier. In Queensland we have our own recent history where, had our law enforcement officers had the appropriate powers of interception, there could have been incontrovertible evidence—certainty, not hearsay, politics or spin.

What would have been the result if the Shepherdson inquiry had had the evidence these sorts of powers may have produced? Would there still be a shroud of confusion over a former Premier's dealings with one of his ministers if these sort of intercept powers had been available to Queensland, as they would have been in any other state? I remind the House again that the QPS and the CMC have asked the state government to remove the legislative shackles that prevent them from executing their duties in investigating and gathering evidence against highly organised illegal activity. They need the legal constraints to greater technical capacity removed.

I also refer the House to the 25 July 2006 position of the Queensland government and remind the House that the minister for police and corrective services said that telephone intercept powers for Queensland police would greatly assist the police in their fight against crime. The coalition agrees. I congratulate the coalition leader on his initiative and question the competence that would have people saying that their police force needs these powers—must have them—in order to do their job comprehensively and then simply stop—down tools, no more work, not introduce the legislation to allow the police force in Queensland to do its job. I quote from Minister Spence's ministerial media statement on Tuesday, 5 July 2006 headlined 'Spence calls on Quinn's Liberals to lobby Canberra for phone taps'. It states—

Police Minister Judy Spence has called on Bob Quinn's Liberals to support the Beattie Government and lobby their federal counterparts for police phone tapping powers in Queensland.

Speaking at the National Crimestoppers Conference, Ms Spence said telephone intercept powers for Queensland police would greatly assist them in their fight against crime.

She said Mr Quinn and the Liberal Party now needed to stand up for Queenslanders if they were serious about reducing illicit drug crime.

If those opposite are serious about reducing illicit drug crime, they should listen to their own police minister and support this bill, because you cannot effectively police in this day and age without these sorts of powers.

The minister has used stalling techniques by arguing the need for legislating to incorporate a PIM. While the acronym seems to mean 'Public Interest Monitor', other states have taken the view that this is the purpose of Westminster traditions of parliament and the Queensland Labor government's PIM caveat is for 'Political Interest Motive'. This is not about Canberra or about the Liberal Party; this is about giving Queensland police and anticorruption agencies the wherewithal to do their job here in Queensland so our state does not become the place of choice for crooks and cronies to do their business. This is about giving Queensland's law enforcement agencies the same sorts of powers as all of the other states in Australia. If the Bligh Labor government is serious about transparent and accountable government and investigating and prosecuting organised crime, it has a responsibility to give Queensland law enforcement officers the legislative powers they need to do their job. This bill is about greater transparency and accountability in government. This is about giving our state police and corruption commission the capacity to deal with today's issues with 2007 powers, and I support this bill wholeheartedly.

We see here one government in Australia holding out because it does not want its police force or its corruption watchdog to have the sort of powers that uncovered corruption in Western Australia. If the government's excuses were so relevant, why would every other state in Australia sign up to this initiative? Are the government's Labor counterparts in the other states—all of them—so lame that every one of them signed up to something that is wrong? This issue is important. This state needs the protection that these powers will give the CMC and the police, yet the government is stalling; it is blocking their introduction. The problem lies with the government. It should deliver the powers that law enforcement agencies need.