



Speech by

**Dr Bruce Flegg**

**MEMBER FOR MOGGILL**

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## **CRIMINAL CODE (ORGANISED CRIMINAL GROUPS) AMENDMENT BILL**

**Dr FLEGG** (Moggill—Lib) (7.45 pm): This is one of the more common-sense bills that we have seen introduced into this House. Anyone here who cannot see the fact that Queensland is a growing and rapidly changing community, and along with it the types of activities that criminals participate in, does not have a lot of vision in this state. But they need go no further than a recent report released by the CMC which lays it out in black and white in front of this government, and that is the serious risk and threat particularly to young people in this state from the rise of cocaine and other drugs because of the potential and, in fact, expected participation of organised crime gangs in selling and profiteering from those drugs. When organised crime participates in narcotics rings, it does not stop there. One does not need to be very smart to look around the world to see the effect of organised crime narcotic rings in almost every part of the world. Sadly for those opposite who do not seem to understand it, Queensland is a place that is no different from anywhere elsewhere where these events happen.

We live in a world of rapidly changing technology. We live in a world where crime, and organised crime in particular, has thrived and flourished, whether you go to the Middle East, to parts of Latin America or to parts of Russia. We have seen these activities in Queensland. We have seen bikie gangs having shoot-outs on the Gold Coast. There is one thing I can guarantee those opposite in relation to crime, and that is if you make yourself a soft target you are going to be the target. If you make yourself easy, if you roll over and you are a pushover for organised crime, you will be the destination of choice for organised crime. Tonight this government is on notice. The CMC put the government on notice. The opposition is now putting the government on notice. This is a serious issue. This is already here in Queensland. This approach of sticking your head in the sand and pretending that nobody in Queensland would be involved in organised crime has enormous potential threats. Anyone who kids themselves that there is no organised crime in this state is simply fooling themselves. We have already seen this government deny its own enforcement agencies telephone interception powers and leave Queensland the most vulnerable state in this country—the only state where its law enforcement agencies operate with their hands tied behind their back because the tools of modern law enforcement are denied to them in this state.

Here we have a common-sense measure introduced by the shadow minister which would help this state ensure that it does not become an attractive haven for organised crime. I was quite amazed to hear what came out of the mouth of the Attorney-General. I say to the Attorney-General that he is going to see more and more front-page headlines about organised crime in this state, particularly in places like the Gold Coast. This night in this parliament this government will reject a common-sense measure that would have allowed law enforcement agencies a stronger hand. I listened to what the Attorney-General said and I could not believe my ears. He said, 'Somebody might get caught innocently participating in organised crime.'

**Mr Shine** interjected.

**Dr FLEGG:** Mr Attorney-General, I think it is pretty difficult to be innocently involved in organised crime. I am not sure who wrote the Attorney-General's speech but I would be looking for a new speech

writer because his other quote—which should be noted in *Hansard*—is, 'If we make it illegal it might go underground.' There is no need to go underground if criminal gang activities are quite legal and no-one can touch them.

Quite frankly, if a person was down the coast watching bikies gun each other down in a turf war over narcotics and they were a resident of the Gold Coast they would be quite happy to see them go underground. These are amazing statements to hear from the Attorney-General. This is a beauty. The Attorney-General capped it off when he said, 'These laws would be used against animal rights people. These laws would be used against environmental groups.'

The definition of an organised criminal gang is a group of three or more persons who have as one of their objectives obtaining material benefit from the commission of an offence for which an offender is liable to imprisonment for a term of four years or more. We heard some nonsense about imprisonment from the Premier today. People do not go to prison in Queensland for four or more years unless they have done something pretty wrong. I would say to the Attorney-General that I do not know of any criminal offence that environmental groups might commit that has a prison sentence of four years or more. This is an absolutely ridiculous argument. I do not know of any offence that animal welfare groups might commit that has a penalty of four years imprisonment or more.

In terms of the argument that the Attorney-General made that there may be an issue of guilt by association, which I will give more respect to, I would say to the Attorney-General that that is the idea. We want to make it an offence for people to associate with and support organised crime. Although I accept that there is a little more common sense in that argument, the reality is that the aim—and I think that the vast majority of Queenslanders would be right there with us—is to make it an offence to be associated with and give succour to organised crime.

This parliament, the federal parliament and the other state parliaments have passed similar measures relating to giving tacit support to terrorism. There is a strong analogy here. There is not a lot of difference between members of an organised narcotics gang gunning each other down along with innocent bystanders and a terrorist organisation. The very sad reality is that unless we take a hard line innocent people suffer. They suffer from the peddling of narcotics. They suffer from other criminal activities. Organised criminals are not pure. They do not decide that they will just dabble in narcotics. They get involved in all sorts of protection rackets and other activities that threaten and endanger people in this state.

The reality is that we should pass legislation in this state that protects the rights of ordinary Queenslanders and makes it an offence to be a member of a criminal gang, whether it is peddling narcotics, whether it is in the illegal sex trade or in some sort of protection or standover racket or the whole gamut of things done by organised criminals. It is something that Queenslanders and people of common sense would be cheering us on to do.

This is a changing world. Queensland is not immune from this. We have seen it in Britain. We have seen it in Russia. We have seen it in Latin America. Foxtel has an excellent program about criminal gangs and their operation in America. This government wants to make it easy for them. We on this side want to make it an offence to be a member of a criminal gang or support a criminal gang. I support this bill wholeheartedly.