




Speech by
Bill Byrne

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Hansard Tuesday, 5 June 2012

MOTION: ORGANISED CRIME

 **Mr BYRNE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (6.17 pm): I rise to support the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. It is amazing how the worm turns, isn't it? The government now suggests that in two months they are able to bring forward a move by the Police Commissioner against rebel bikies down the coast. The LNP have expressed strong opposition to this act since the bill was introduced and debated in 2009. My colleagues have already reflected on the various comments made by LNP figures over the last couple of years. Yet here we are today with the act being used precisely by the Police Commissioner in the manner intended. What a great thing that is, and full credit and support go to the Queensland Police Service and the Police Commissioner and their independence.

I must question the LNP's adverse commentary over the last few months. I, like many constituents, pose a simple question: if the act is so flawed, where is the urgent bill addressing those unstated deficiencies? The government would rather prosecute urgent bills on cost of living and industrial relations because these populist and ideological agendas meet their need. Surely, if Labor's legislation was so terrible in addressing the issue of organised crime and bikie gangs, then a bill would have been introduced with much more pressing urgency for the community's sake and for the immediate wellbeing of the state. Yet we have had nothing from the LNP other than veiled and critical comments about the present act.

I can tell this House that the community has not the slightest interest in the discussion about the contents of this act or any other. They want us to help them. They want this problem removed from society. I have never been able to reconcile the Premier's attributed comments that sought to suggest bikie colours were akin to football fans wearing team jerseys. It must have been a throwaway comment that is probably regretted now. Nobody can provide a perfect opinion or point of view every time a microphone is thrust in their face—I can understand the situation—but I hope that the Premier has a slightly different view today.

I have a real problem with 'one per centers'—whether it is the top one per cent of the wealthy accruing disproportionate and increasing levels of wealth and influence or, as in this case, the '1%' patch that motorcycle gang members wear. This is the one per cent supposedly outside the law. Incredibly, the media and even the Police Service have become comfortable using the term 'outlaw motorcycle gang'. How ridiculous that respected members of our community would give credence to these grubs in such a fashion! If they are genuine outlaws, arrest them on sight and lock them up. The reality is that they roam the streets as free men, so they are really inlaws, aren't they? And we in this House should refer to them as 'inlaw motorcycle gangs'.

Mr Choat interjected.

Mr BYRNE: Is your mind working? 'Inlaw motorcycle gangs'.

I have spoken to many senior and experienced police officers in recent months. They know what needs to be done within the present laws to rid our streets of this scourge, and I say let them do it. The opposition certainly agrees that the lives and existence of these gangs must be dramatically interdicted, and we support the efforts of Hydra and other police officers in prosecuting that aim. We wish to cooperate with the government to that end if it is at all possible.

Too often the political debate about law and order has been corrupted and reduced to the lowest common denominator. Harsher sentences and a bidding war over constables and toys attract political attention. In reality, the debate needs to be more sophisticated and partially move in the direction of discussing some police capabilities. Certainly, greater emphasis on police intelligence gathering and analytical capacities represents a sensible discussion that needs to be embraced. Again, senior officers on the ground remain gravely concerned about the intelligence capacity, and virtually every policeman I speak to makes mention of it to some degree.

I conclude by simply saying that our communities have had enough of bikie gangs and their influence, and the community is sick of empty rhetoric that leads to the issuing of press releases suggesting some level of toughness on crime. This House should embrace the removal of the scourge and their influence from society as a priority. I congratulate the Police Commissioner and the Queensland Police Service for the use of the Criminal Organisation Act.