



Speech by


## Jason Costigan

MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

Hansard Tuesday, 27 November 2012

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### WEAPONS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr COSTIGAN** (Whitsunday—LNP) (7.52 pm): Tonight in the House I rise to speak in support of the Weapons and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. Put simply, this bill reflects an iron-clad commitment by the Newman LNP government to crack down on the unlawful use of firearms by bringing in mandatory minimum sentencing for serious firearms offences, which is something that people would say is long overdue. As a result, we will have the toughest gun laws in the land and I am sure the good people of Mackay—a great city that I partly represent as the member for Whitsunday—would particularly welcome that, especially those citizens who can remember Mackay's infamous bikie shootout in 1997, when the city found itself in lockdown.

I remember that day very well. At the time, I was continuing my new career in sports administration as the executive officer of the Mackay and District Rugby League. One Sunday afternoon in late August, we were holding our grand finals when all hell broke loose. I remember police officers—heaps of them—fleeing the grounds to protect our community as two rival bikie gangs started firing shotguns at Cremorne, just across the Pioneer River from the league's office inside the former Prince of Wales Hotel. Late that afternoon, the old Forgan Bridge was closed, and for good reason. Countless Mackayites will remember just how worried they were as shots rang out across our normally peaceful city. I can tell members for a fact that when I got back to my office, which overlooked the river, I kept my head down for good reason. For the record, I can say this about bikie gangs: it is not what they wear; it is what they do. In this case, they terrified the community, which is something Mackayites will not forget.

Needless to say, the people who remember what happened on that Sunday afternoon in August 1997 will welcome these measures. I commend the Minister for his stewardship of this bill. If the member for Mackay was fair dinkum, he would tell his Labor colleagues—all six of them—to support the bill, as I am sure he also remembers what happened more than 15 years ago. If the member for Mackay votes against this bill, let it be known that he is soft on crime and does not want to see a safer community.

I have to say that responsible gun owners will also welcome the good work of the minister, who has delivered on his commitment to cut down on red tape when it comes to weapons licensing. We had to do something. In my own electorate, particularly in the rural communities to the north of Mackay such as Bloomsbury, Gunyarra, Lethebrook and Strathdickie, there are many responsible gun owners. Many of those people work the land, many are sporting shooters and many are both, and they are fed up with what has been going on. People such as Oscar Lawrence, Jeffrey Ruddell, Ian Lade—and the list goes on and on, are decent, law-abiding blokes who love to shoot because that is their chosen sport. And guess what? They're pretty damn good at it!

Mr Ruddell is a prominent Whitsundays businessman who also has a canefarm at Strathdickie near Proserpine. Some time ago he contacted me, raising his concerns about the shocking amount of time it takes to process paperwork for weapons licensing. Mr Ruddell has been a responsible gun owner for a long time, yet he was bemoaning the fact that in October he was still waiting for his application for a new pistol licence to be processed, six months after his application first went in. Mr Ruddell needs that licence in his role as a primary producer, in addition to his love for shooting with the pistol club up the road in

Bowen, which is the historic North Queensland town named after our state's first governor and nowadays represented by my good friend and colleague the hard-working member for Burdekin.

We have already heard the minister and others walk us through the initiatives being undertaken in relation to red-tape reduction in the area of weapons licensing and I welcome this. It is a start. At the same time, we are ensuring we have the toughest gun laws in the Commonwealth. That is something to be proud of. I commend the bill to the House.