




Speech By
Hon. Jarrod Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Record of Proceedings, 21 November 2013

**CRIMINAL LAW (CRIMINAL ORGANISATIONS DISRUPTION) AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

Second Reading

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (12.26 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

On Tuesday I introduced the Criminal Law (Criminal Organisations Disruption) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013. These amendments are important for two reasons: first, they complement and strengthen the effectiveness of the important new laws the government introduced and passed in October to tackle organised crime in Queensland; secondly, the amendments make sure Queenslanders can be confident that when they are engaging or dealing with a licensed person working in a range of occupations they are not dealing with a participant in a criminal organisation. These amendments tackle the hard issues that sadly the opposition failed to address whilst in government. When the opposition was in power the best they could do was sit on their hands, fiddle here, tinker there, while the rest of Australia understood the problems being faced in relation to criminal motorcycle gangs.

Across Australia it has been no secret that criminal organisations have sought to infiltrate a range of industries and businesses. For example, liquor licensed premises, particularly those providing entertainment that tends to be patronised by young people, and the security industry have been attractive to organised crime, including criminal motorcycle gangs. Whether they are seeking access to these industries in an attempt to legitimise their ill-gotten gains or as a way of accessing young Queenslanders, this government is determined to stop these criminal organisations in their tracks. The opposition never took it upon themselves to do the hard work and to make the hard decisions that were needed. This bill makes those hard decisions and the right decisions to go toe-to-toe with criminal motorcycle gangs in Queensland and to show that they have no place in Queensland. This government continues to be unapologetic about its determination to free Queensland of the scourge of criminal organisations. Part of this is preventing participants in criminal organisations from disguising themselves and their activities as legitimate businesses.

I thank the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee for its consideration of the bill. The committee tabled its report this morning. The committee has made two recommendations about the bill. The first recommendation is that the bill be passed. I thank the committee for this recommendation as we participate in this debate. By comprehensively addressing the problem of criminal motorcycle gangs, we make Queensland a better place for honest Queenslanders to earn a living and enjoy our great state. However, the committee has requested clarification on some points, including a second recommendation to further address fundamental legislative principle issues not

identified in the explanatory notes. The committee has asked me to do this through my second reading speech. For the committee's purposes I will address the committee's request for clarification and address the issues raised in recommendation 2 through my summing-up speech at the conclusion of the debate.

This bill is important for Queensland. Firstly, it clarifies some provisions in the previous bill but, secondly, it adds new provisions, particularly the provision with respect to the Police Commissioner giving information of criminal histories for those criminal motorcycle gang members. It also amends the Bail Act with respect to clarifying the intention of the legislature with respect to the Bail Act. We make no apologies in terms of going after—and going after hard—criminal motorcycle gangs. We have seen over the last few weeks the direct positive impact these laws that were passed a few weeks ago by this House are having on ridding the state of Queensland of criminal motorcycle gang members. The intelligence shows they are running scared. They may be travelling interstate but we are now working with our interstate counterparts to address the problem at a national level, which has not been done for many, many years in this state.

The bill also directs the transport department to share information, particularly photo ID licence information, with ASIO. One of the failures of the Labor government over the last 12 years in this state has been its failure to share information in relation to going after criminal motorcycle gang members. In 18 months we have been able to debate and pass laws that will share information with Australia's crime fighting body, ASIO. Members would have thought, knowing the issue of criminal motorcycle gang members over the years, that the former Labor government would have attempted to address these issues. I have said on many occasions in this place that the Labor Party's answer to criminal motorcycle gang members is a piece of legislation that has not been effectively used. No organisations have been declared criminal organisations.

Mr Rickuss: Hear no evil, see no evil.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the member for Lockyer. That was their answer. They still hold that up as the great answer to ridding the state of Queensland of criminal motorcycle gang members, despite the fact that no organisations have been declared under the Labor Party legislation. Our legislation is having a direct consequential effect on criminal motorcycle gang members. They are throwing their patches in to their well resourced lawyers. My message to criminal motorcycle gang members, through these amendments that we are debating, is that you can run but you cannot hide. They can throw in their patches and leather jackets to their lawyers but they will not be able to get away with the criminal activity that they are conducting. We know that criminal motorcycle gang members participate in all forms of criminal activity in the state.

At a glossy level, at a high, bird's-eye view level, it may appear to Queenslanders that criminal motorcycle gang members are not participating in crime with the public face that we saw with the Broadbeach incident some weeks ago. However, the message that we clearly show through the intelligence operations of the CMC and the Queensland Police Force is that criminal motorcycle gang members are involved in all forms of criminal activity, including burglary and car theft. All the law and order issues facing the state in terms of drug offences and synthetic drug offences can be, to some important extent, associated with criminal motorcycle gang members.

On the Sunshine Coast only a few days ago, one of the heads of the Bandidos was arrested for car stealing at about 3.40 am at Cotton Tree. Criminal motorcycle gang members are engrained. They do not have '1%' or the number '13' tattooed on their foreheads for no reason. They are loud and proud, obnoxiously showing Queenslanders that they are criminals participating in criminal motorcycle gang activities. That is why Queenslanders have been so responsive to and so supportive of this government's tough stance on criminal motorcycle gang members.

The honourable police minister has confirmed that crime has decreased on the Gold Coast in the past four weeks since our legislation was introduced. That is a testament to the laws that this parliament passed some weeks ago. I look forward to the day that I will go to the Gold Coast and talk to the businesses that are thanking the government for these laws. The chamber of commerce has publicly stated that businesses are feeling somewhat more secure and safe in their business environments. We want to ensure that the tourists who go to the Gold Coast and all areas of Queensland feel that they can have a cup of coffee or a nice dinner without feeling the threat of fear and intimidation used by criminal motorcycle gang members.

The bill amends the Bail Act because different definitions are being used by different levels of the judiciary. The magistrates have taken a particular interpretation of the legislation and the Supreme Court has taken a different interpretation to the Chief Magistrate. This clarifies that the intention of the legislature in the original legislation is to ensure that criminal motorcycle gang members cannot simply

throw in the towel by throwing in their colours and say to Queenslanders that they are no longer a criminal participating in the activity because their lawyers have, in safe custody, their leather jackets which have their patches on them.

I make a very serious point with respect to law-abiding citizens. We have seen the civil libertarians in this state and those opposed to these tough reforms, at all levels, including the opposition, attempt to say these laws are targeting motorcycle riders in this state. Nothing could be further from the truth. I know the honourable police minister and the Police Commissioner have met with the motorcycle association. As I understand it, they have devised a plan. One of their recommendations was that if there were going to be charity rides for law-abiding motorcycle riders, they would simply notify the police and the police would work with them, as the police have done for many years.

What the police and the government will not tolerate is criminal motorcycle gang members, such as those from the Rebels, the Bandidos, the Black Uhlans and all the others, trying to infiltrate charity rides, such as those for Christmas and other rides. We know those criminal motorcycle gang members do try to infiltrate the teddy rides. We will continue to support absolutely rides for charity by motorcyclists who do it because they love riding a motorcycle. As I have said in this place and publicly, my father has been riding a motorbike his whole life. He drives trucks and rides motorbikes. Like all Queenslanders who ride their bikes on weekends, he will not be impacted by these laws because he is not committing any offences. Such people are not associated with or participants in criminal organisations, as are some of the others who certainly do commit crimes.

The other thing that I want to address at the start of this debate is the publicity stunts run by the PR machines of criminal motorcycle gang members. A few weeks ago I was flabbergasted to read various articles about those PR machines and the spin doctors who work for criminal motorcycle gang members. I think a few Rebels members have said that they are not criminals; they are just a bunch of people who ride bikes. They are not. Now they have been declared criminal organisations. They participate in car thefts, drug and other offences that impact on the lives of Queenslanders in their homes and businesses and on the streets in our communities. That is who we are dealing with. We are dealing with criminal organisations and criminal participants who assault people, assault police officers, assault businesses, use fear, intimidation and threats and extort people.

In the past few weeks I have had reports from my own area of the Sunshine Coast about businesses that, over the past few years, have been too scared to come forward with information about criminal organisation gangs because they were worried about what those organisations would do to them if they did so. Now that they believe that the police force and the government are very much targeting criminal organisations, they feel a little easier about coming forward with relevant information. We have set up the Crime Stoppers hotline for people to do in criminal motorcycle gang members and offer information that may assist in successful prosecutions. That has been going well. As I understand it, we have had over 500 calls.

I thank Queenslanders. I thank all members from the LNP side of parliament for talking to their constituents about this. As we travel around in our respective electorates across the state, the overwhelming feedback that LNP members are getting from their constituents is, 'Keep going; keep targeting criminal motorcycle gang members'. They are not wanted in the state of Queensland. Their activities are not wanted in the state of Queensland. The more we can target the criminal motorcycle gang members, the more we can focus on good law-abiding citizens who want to have a ride on a Sunday or gather in groups and ride their motorcycles without the infiltration of criminal motorcycle gang members. Therefore, I thank all honourable members on the government side for talking to their constituents about these laws.

Mr Rickuss: Attorney, some say it is only a small percentage of crime that motorcycle gangs are involved in. Can you give a response on that?

Mr BLEIJIE: Absolutely. I take the interjection from the member for Lockyer, who asks about criminal motorcycle gang members saying they only participate in a small percentage of crime. That is the reported crime. We know that, as Queenslanders would understand and the constituents of the member for Lockyer would understand, the underlying issue with criminal motorcycle gang members is, of course, that burglary, car thefts, stealing and assaults on the street are mostly biker related. I thank the member for Lockyer and all the other LNP members in this House for supporting these tough reforms and for selling these tough reforms in our communities. Certainly the Queensland community understands that this government is not going to stand around and let criminal motorcycle gang members take over our streets and our communities.

That might have been the Labor Party's objective. That is certainly not going to be our objective. These laws are tough and we have acknowledged that. We have also said that for the first period of policing there will be a level of inconvenience just as there is a level of inconvenience when we go to an airport and we are screened for bomb residue on our clothes and suitcases. It may not mean when I go through the scanners and do the testing that I am a terrorist, but it may very well be that the person behind me is. When I or other members of parliament get stopped for random breath tests we may not be a drunk and endangering the lives of Queenslanders, but the person behind us might be. That is one of the sacrifices we make as a society and as participants in a society for the general good of the community.

Honourable members on this side of the House have been selling the message that this government is tough on law and order when it comes to dealing with criminal motorcycle gang members. I contrast that to the actions of the Labor Party and the Leader of the Opposition. I very much look forward to the Leader of the Opposition's contribution to this debate.

Queenslanders really do not know where the opposition is on any of these matters. One minute the opposition is calling for tough reforms and then they say they are too tough. Then they call on us to stop doing anything or restructure the CMC. Then they announce a policy to split the CMC and restructure the CMC and split up all the positions in the CMC. Then they go on the different ABC programs that I have watched over the last few weeks and talk about these tough laws and how the legislature should not have to amend laws. For the last 150 years in Queensland the legislature has been amending laws.

If all the laws were right and if our forefathers got it right then we would not have parliaments. If all the laws were in place to deal with the modern issues of society then we would not have parliament. There would be no need for parliamentarians to come in here and continually amend laws. As society is changing so must parliament change. Parliament, the legislature, must adapt the laws to deal with the changing demographics and the modern criminals—the modern criminals who are part of the underworld and criminal organisations and make money out of the misery and financial losses of Queenslanders.

I am very keen to see where the opposition sits on this. Do they continue to support these tough reforms as they did in the parliament a few weeks ago? After supporting and voting on the laws they have bagged them for the last three weeks. Are they going to support these new measures today or are they going to oppose them? If they are going to oppose them that will be very interesting. We will make sure Queenslanders know that the opposition are on the side of criminal motorcycle gangs, paedophile rings and criminal cartels in this state.

We will let anyone who wants to listen know that the opposition has no interest in dealing with criminal motorcycle gangs. We will let everyone know that the opposition's only response to this issue over the last 14 years it was in government was to have a piece of legislation that did not actually declare any criminal organisation a criminal organisation.

The opposition leader flip-flops on this issue. In the last year and a half she has come into this place and said that this government is too tough and does not look at the civil liberties of individuals. Then she calls on the government to act decisively when it comes to criminal gangs and bikie gangs in Queensland. When we act those opposite talk about how bad the laws are and then actually vote for the laws. After voting for the laws they bag the laws that we have put in place to protect their constituents and protect Queenslanders. So we have seen an abundance of flip-flopping.

The opposition leader's contribution is a test. The test for the opposition leader is to tell Queenslanders what the position of the Labor Party is with respect to criminal organisations. Are they going to continue to support criminal gangs and criminal organisations in Queensland and back up the civil liberties of these criminals or are they on the side of Queenslanders?

We on this side of the House are on the side of Queenslanders. We always will be. We will bring whatever legislation is necessary into this House to make sure that we are protecting Queenslanders, some of the most vulnerable in our state, from these vicious lawless associates. I commend the bill to the House.