




Speech By
Rob Molhoek

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL (NO. 2)

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (8.13 pm): Tonight it is my pleasure to rise to speak in favour of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill (No. 2). I commend the Attorney-General for his commitment to getting tougher on crime in Queensland. I am proud to be part of an LNP government that, over the past 12 months, has introduced a number of measures to clamp down on crime. I am particularly pleased with the measures we undertook last year in regard to sexual offences against children. Tonight, it is my pleasure to speak in favour of this legislation on a number of levels. I particularly want to speak about the ninth objective of the bill, which specifically states that young people and children who create ‘works of art’ or undertake graffiti illegally will be subject to graffiti removal orders. Over the past 10 years in my electorate of Southport, as a Gold Coast city councillor on many occasions I received phone calls from constituents, businesses and other people within the community complaining about the amount of graffiti that was appearing within the community. It has been a longstanding issue that has caused enormous frustration for us as a society. I do not think it reflects all that well on us as a community. It is incredibly sad to drive around parts of the state and parts of our local communities and see the amount of graffiti that has been put out there.

From my experience as a city councillor, I know that one of the most effective ways to deal with graffiti is through proper graffiti management programs. I know that for the local police dealing with graffiti has been an incredible source of frustration, as they have had to photograph the tags and the so-called ‘works of art’ and then track the offenders, only to be frustrated by the fact that the previous legal system provided them with no real recourse against those offenders. Only just last week, one young person said to me that he felt that under the previous government the graffiti management laws were a joke, because when someone offended by going into the community and vandalising a front fence or the side of the building, and the police went through all the frustration of tracking them down and identifying them through a fairly significant program of photographing and tracking the tags and building up an evidence base, many of the offenders got away with a bit of a gentle slap on the wrist. That is not good enough. This LNP government is committed to bringing in tougher laws on crime and actually giving real heart and real encouragement to our police and other community members and councillors who are trying to clean up our communities in this regard. I am sure that the council and the police within my electorate, and down at the Gold Coast generally, will be absolutely delighted to know that this government is getting tough on graffiti.

I am particularly pleased that in objective No. 9 of the bill we talk about inserting a new mandatory community based order called a graffiti removal order to apply to any child aged 12 to 16 years who is convicted of a graffiti offence under the Criminal Code. It is important that people take responsibility for their actions and that the government provides the police with the legislative framework to take that sort of action. As a young child, I remember hearing the old saying that if you do the crime you do the time. In my home, as young people we were taught that if we did something wrong against someone, we needed to make amends. Therefore, I believe this is an excellent objective. It is fantastic that we will have the powers to say to young people who create offences—while they are young; in their early years—that if they get caught and we can identify them as the

vandal or the source of the damage, we can insist that they play an active role in cleaning up some of the graffiti.

My family attends METRO Church on the Gold Coast. Over many years, we have run some very successful graffiti clean-up programs where members of the church and members of the community have gone out on weekends to clean up businesses, homes, fences and public property as a bit of a drive to improve things. Over many years we have involved some of the offenders in transformations on the Gold Coast. Those young people may have come through a drug rehab program. They came with a sense of remorse about their past and their past behaviours. They have actively participated in some of the graffiti removal programs. Not only has it been a redemptive thing for them but also it has helped them appreciate the problems and the challenges that they create. It is so easy to put the graffiti on. It is so easy to make that mess, stand back and think what a great job you have done, but it is a whole other story when you have to clean it up. Therefore, I absolutely commend the Attorney-General for this initiative within the legislation, because it is a really important step forward in better managing graffiti across the state.

I commend the bill because of the new measures that we are undertaking in respect of those who would seek to peddle drugs to our kids. What an absolutely abhorrent practice that is. These tougher measures are so important. I am absolutely proud to part of a government that is getting tough on crime, particularly in regard to drug trafficking.

I know as a young person growing up on the Gold Coast that many of my friends got involved in drugs. When I talk to them today—and I have run into many of them at high school reunions and other events in recent years—they all utter the words, 'If only I had not been exposed to drugs. If only I had not gone down that path.' Even more abhorrent is when adults, who should know better, actually go out of their way to prey on our kids. I think that is one of the most disgraceful forms of crime. It is not just a crime on society but right up there with some of the worst crimes we can think of.

When we talk about bad crimes we usually think about murders and assaults and often downplay the seriousness of peddling drugs. Yet so many young people who get involved in drugs end up going down a fairly slippery slope that leads to all sorts of addictions. It destroys their lives and it destroys relationships. It often leads to petty crime and then later in life to more significant and serious crimes.

To be sending that message at this point in time and for us to be taking a much tougher stance on crime is something that I am incredibly proud of. I am pleased to stand here as a member of this parliament and commend the Attorney-General on this new legislation. It is with great pleasure that I commend this bill to the House tonight.