




Speech By
Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Record of Proceedings, 4 March 2014

MOTION: NEWMAN GOVERNMENT, ANTICRIME GANG LAWS

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (6.06 pm): I rise to support the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. The motion calls on the LNP government to take a step back, to acknowledge the overreach of this Premier and this Attorney-General and to work with the parliament and the public to make Queensland's anticriminal motorcycle gang laws workable. It is a sensible proposal in the best interests of Queenslanders. I acknowledge that while we placed on record our serious reservations, we did not oppose these laws when they were introduced, largely because of the so-called urgency that was applied to them by the Attorney-General to kick-start his publicity war on bikies. Since that time it has been made abundantly clear that these laws are not what they were purported to be and simply are not workable. Our motives are simple: establish laws that get the crooks and clamp down on crime but leave innocent Queenslanders alone. That is the fundamental issue here: freedoms we all should be able to enjoy. We want laws that target criminality, not laws that target what sort of clothes you wear. We want laws that target gang activity, not laws that target what sort of vehicle you drive. We want to preserve a legal system that punishes illegal activity, not laws that immediately brand you a criminal because of your Harley, tattoos and leather jacket.

Queenslanders have very real concerns about organised crime, including criminal motorcycle gangs. Labor shares those concerns and has a record of doing just that. We also join the many Queenslanders who believe that the Premier and his Attorney-General have rushed through laws that go beyond their intended targets. That is why the government should move urgently to fix this legislation to restore the balance that the public wants and that the legal fraternity supports. That is why the Labor opposition would repeal and replace the Premier's over-the-top anticriminal motorcycle gang laws.

We must target the criminal gangs, but leave decent and innocent Queenslanders alone. Regional Queensland has been hit hard by these laws. As we travel around the state, business owners are telling us about how their businesses are being affected. I am talking about businesses such as the countless pubs across Queensland where honest and decent people who happen to like riding a motorbike used congregate and have a beer, but no longer; such as tattoo shops people have shied away from because they do not want to get caught up in monitoring and surveillance exercises; such as the tradespeople who now have to go through the wringer in order to get licensed, a black cloud hanging over them when in most cases they have never had any contact with criminal elements; such as the many people who ride a motorcycle to and from work, yet have been stopped by police on more than one occasion. The laws even affect something as simple as the Sunday bike ride, which is a tradition in many regions where motorbike enthusiasts would get together and go for a safe, enjoyable and legal ride throughout country Queensland. Many small businesses, including cafes and hotels, used to survive on the business those bike rides would bring, but no longer.

When it comes to alcohol fuelled violence, the Premier is fond of saying that he does not want to penalise the majority for the sins of the few. Yet that principle does not seem to apply to the impact of these laws. That is all because the LNP government wants to look tough on crime, but is too

incompetent to produce laws that work. This government is good at producing distractions to take the focus off its policy disasters. Let us start with its economic management. Last week the Treasurer ignored the fact that every economic indicator bar one had worsened significantly since Labor was in government. Unemployment is at 6.1 per cent, which is well above the 5.5 per cent those opposite inherited and a world away from the four per cent the Premier promised.

This is an important one: what about the changes to our workers compensation scheme, which was the first victim of these laws, such as imposing a five per cent threshold on common law claims that will negatively impact upon thousands of people who get injured at work? Changes to workers compensation happened under the cover of these laws and the sideshow politics—

Mr STEVENS: I rise to a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! Member, please take your seat. What is the point of order?

Mr STEVENS: What relevance does the workers compensation act have to the motion before the House tonight?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Mulgrave, I ask you to return to the motion. You have largely spoken to the motion and you have begun to stray from it. I ask you to stay focused on the motion.

Mr PITT: Just because the member for Mermaid Beach likes to interject does not mean he is correct. These laws were brought in in the same week that we were to debate the important workers compensation laws. Of course, it was done as a smokescreen so that people were not focusing on laws that really impact on them. Sadly, these laws have impacted on a broader number of people than even the workers compensation laws did. The changes to workers compensation happened under the cover of these laws and the sideshow politics of the Attorney-General and this LNP government. These issues are just a few of the policy failures that the LNP is very happy we are not debating today and are a huge part of the reason these anticriminal motorcycle gang laws are here in the first place. What the LNP, especially those on the backbench, did not realise was that the Attorney-General sold them a pup. They have allowed him to establish laws that are not workable, that are not fair and that are not producing lower crime rates in key parts of the state.

There is a broader issue here than just being tough on crime. Ending the cycle of crime, violence and drugs that emanates from criminal organisations is a bipartisan aim, but it cannot come at the expense of the democratic principles our country was founded on. It is now March and these laws have been in place for four months. It is time to repeal and replace. In case the Attorney-General is not sure about our position, I will repeat it: it is time to repeal and replace. It is time to scrap them entirely and replace them with something that is targeted and may actually work. I say to the Attorney-General that bread-and-circus politics might work in his part of the world, but it does not wash with Queenslanders, as is evidenced by the Redcliffe by-election result. These laws are not workable. Fix them or we will fix them.