




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

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**POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND OTHER LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (8.43 pm): I rise tonight to speak in support of the Police Powers and Responsibilities and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013. This bill further delivers on our commitment to strengthen front-line policing and implements an out-of-control events scheme in order for police to respond effectively to increasingly common Facebook parties or open house parties.

Like the member for Nanango, I have been enjoying a little bit of dialogue with some constituents on Facebook. Today one constituent particularly said, 'Why do we need to introduce these laws? Isn't the existing Criminal Code sufficient to deal with this?' My response was, 'There are certainly provisions within the current Criminal Code, but some laws were written before social media existed so amendments are required to keep pace with the changes and make sure that we have the powers the police need to take effective action in these changing times.'

The Newman government is committed to making Queensland the safest place in Australia to live and raise a family. Our tough stance on law and order has been unwavering. We make no apologies for introducing some of the toughest laws in Australia in respect of serious crime, sexual offenders and criminal motorcycle gangs.

It is interesting that this morning on *Today*, Peter Gleeson, the editor of the *Sunday Mail*, former editor of the *Gold Coast Bulletin* and the *Townsville Bulletin* and former chief of staff of many years experience on Gold Coast, had a little bit to say. I was really surprised and encouraged by his support because he is one of those battle hardened journalists who can tend to be a bit cynical. I would not say that he has ever done our side of politics any great favours. This was his response to the question that Lisa Wilkinson raised with him. Lisa Wilkinson said—

Queensland Premier Campbell Newman's bikie crackdown could have backfired just a little.

Here is what Peter Gleeson, the editor of the *Sunday Mail*, had to say—

No I don't Lisa. I think the Premier has shown a lot of courage in relation to cracking down on bikies. I think in 20-30 years time Queenslanders will thank the Premier for the way he's taken the lead on this. The bottom line is that the bikies themselves, their lawyers, and the judiciary have sold Queenslanders a pup on this. These guys are sophisticated criminal enterprises, the bikies. They peddle in drugs, they peddle in aggression, and they affect people's lives the wrong way. Newman and Blejje have shown courage. They should be applauded for what they've done. The reality is that Campbell Newman will win the next election. He might cop a little bit of bark off along the way. But he's making some very tough calls at the moment and I think Queensland will be a better place as a result and I think this is a legacy issue for Campbell Newman. I do think that he will want to be known as the Premier who disassembled the bikies.

Lisa Wilkinson's response to that was, 'I think you're right there.'

Mr Blejje: And you contrast that to the shadow police minister who does not support police officers.

Mr MOLHOEK: I am happy to take that interjection from the Attorney-General.

At one of my listening posts I set up on Saturday morning I had so many people from Keebra Park, one of the tougher suburbs in my electorate, come down just to say how pleased they were with how well the Gold Coast is tracking at the moment and what a great summer season we have had. Many of them came to me prior to the election saying that they were worried about drugs being dealt at the shops up the road. One lady came to see to me prior to the election. She was really concerned about a few households up the street where she lived where there was regular illegal activity. She came down again on Saturday just to say, 'Please pass on my thanks to the Premier for the reforms. It is great to see the police back out on the streets. It is great to see the Gold Coast back in control.'

In order to keep Queenslanders safe, though, it is imperative that our police officers are equipped with the best resources and powers to deal with crime and antisocial behaviour. Increasing the capacity of the Queensland Police force will mean increased safety for our kids—those in our community who are most at risk. The rise of the Facebook party has presented significant problems for our front-line police officers. Hundreds of intoxicated, often underage, teenagers descend on a property for an advertised party whether the host has intentionally or unintentionally invited them.

Like the member for Nanango, as a father of four boys, not three girls, we have had a few 18ths and 21sts at our home on the Gold Coast. As a parent, it is a bit of a challenge. We undertook all the measures members would expect. We contacted parents, we letterbox dropped the neighbourhood, we had a door list and I invited about 10 of my biggest mates over to provide a bit of security. We had other parents arranged at the end of the evening to ferry kids home who perhaps should not be making their own way home. Even with all those measures in place it was a challenge to keep other kids out who had heard about the party third- or second-hand through Facebook, other social media or text messages.

These reforms are important. Additional powers available to police responding to these out-of-control events will be required to satisfy set criteria including power to enter any place without warrant, power to direct any person to stop any conduct, power to direct any person to immediately leave a place and power to take any steps a police officer considers reasonably necessary. Unfortunately, these additional powers are now required by police officers confronted by scenes of chaos at out-of-control parties. The bill also provides for increased penalties for those found responsible for organising the events, including parents of children.

I love the fact that this is a part of this legislation, because there are far too many parents who are not taking responsibility for their children and somehow expect that it is the teachers, it is the schools, it is the police and it is the community organisers and community leaders in various organisations and charitable organisations and sporting clubs who should be taking responsibility. But it is completely reasonable that parents should be liable if they allow a child to organise an out-of-control event. We need to take personal responsibility for antisocial behaviour, and parents have a huge part to play in taking that responsibility in working with their children.

Offenders, and their parents, may face hefty fines or even jail time if they are found guilty under the out-of-control events scheme. The maximum penalty will be 110 penalty units—up to \$12,100—or a year's imprisonment, and the sentence increases to 165 penalty units or three years imprisonment, if the organiser has no lawful authority to use the place for an event. Organisers of Facebook parties and out-of-control events are not just wasting police resources and encouraging senseless violence and property damage; many of these events are undertaken for profit. The community has had enough of alcohol and drug fuelled violence stemming from these suburban parties, and the people responsible need to be held accountable.

We have seen some great outcomes for Queenslanders as a result of the Newman government's law and order reforms. As I mentioned earlier, over the Christmas summer period we have seen a significant lift in tourist visitors and confidence has returned—tourism of course is one of our four pillars. The Minister for Tourism needs to be congratulated on her work and the special theme park campaign that has been run. I know that that has been a contributor but also a major contributor has been the fact that families feel safe to return to the Gold Coast. Just before Christmas the *Gold Coast Bulletin* reported that crime statistics on the Gold Coast in some areas had fallen by as much as 60 per cent across the city as a direct consequence of the government's crackdown on criminal motorcycle gangs. As I talk to people around my electorate, it is easy to see the difference this has made. The perception of crime has drastically reduced, and it is having an impact on the Gold Coast.

This government makes no apologies for its tough policy on law and order. In fact, I would like to think this government will be remembered for its tough stance on law and order. I am proud to stand in this chamber as a member of the government that will not stand by while crime and antisocial behaviour infiltrates our communities and affects our livelihood and, more importantly, impacts significantly on the health and wellbeing of our kids. I support the Minister for Police and Community Safety and his excellent initiatives in this bill.