




Speech By
Ray Stevens

MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

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PENALTIES AND SENTENCES (QUEENSLAND SENTENCING ADVISORY COUNCIL) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (8.09 pm): I rise to speak on the Penalties and Sentences (Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council) Amendment Bill. The current bill before the House is yet another example of this Palaszczuk Labor government creating bureaucracy over accomplishing a positive direction for the Queensland public. The Palaszczuk 'review and not do' Labor government is again rewinding policy for no reason other than petty political pride and jobs for the boys and girls who will be associated with the panel of 12 expending \$1.8 million per year in taxpayers' money while doing precisely nothing. What occurred during the Labor years of 2010-2012 will be repeated again, and I will talk about that a little bit later.

The main purpose of the bill is to establish a Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council, which is essentially a body to advise the Court of Appeal and Attorney-General on sentencing matters and guideline judgements if requested. As we know from what we have seen from the judiciary and the Attorney-General, we should be well aware. As soon as you go into the area of mandatory sentencing the judges will jump up and say, 'We know all about sentencing. Don't talk to us about mandatory sentencing,' yet we are putting in this \$1.8 million panel to give them some guidance on appropriate sentencing.

The Sentencing Advisory Council will be canvassing and providing information to the community to enhance their knowledge and understanding of sentencing matters, yet members on the opposite side of this chamber seem to have forgotten that these functions can be readily performed by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, the Queensland Law Reform Commission, which is an independent statutory body, or the legal profession and academics when required at lesser cost to the Queensland public compared with a full-time, paid advisory body that has no statutory authority. Surely at a cost of \$1.8 million per annum this is a budgetary cost that could be better spent, as other members have said, to assist vulnerable Queenslanders who struggle to access justice through increased Legal Aid and community legal centre funding.

Indeed, that was the reasoning behind the previous LNP government abolishing the QSAC body and referring advice on these matters to the Queensland Law Reform Commission, ensuring better fiscal responsibility and to safeguard all Queenslanders having access to justice. It should be noted that members of the committee made mention of the extreme infrequency that the previous body of this name, which was abolished in 2012, was utilised. In other words, they were getting money for jam, not doing anything.

Mr Costigan: Collecting dust.

Mr STEVENS: Indeed. Between 2010 and 2012 the QSAC did not provide any advice to the Court of Appeal in terms of guideline judgements. That is \$1.8 million per annum for no advice for two years. I think this is another great Labor Party deal. When do they stop looking after their Labor Party

mates? This is not to mention the exceptionally infrequent use of equivalent bodies in other jurisdictions. Viewed in this manner, the creation of another bureaucracy that offers no additional value, no additional research and no additional support outside the pre-existing agencies is not only unwarranted but also nonsensical.

In the spirit of bipartisan support for my Labor Party friends on the other side I have brought with me a copy of the *Queensland Parliamentary Record* to see if we can find 12 members to collect the \$1.8 million a year of taxpayers' funds. Here are some great suggestions for you! It seems that they have forgotten to give a job to one Reginald John Mickel. Just because Judy Spence and Robbie Schwarten could not stand a bar of him, he has not picked up a job. He would be perfect for the advisory panel. I can think of another one: Paul Lucas. Paul is a former attorney-general who has not done anything at all. You could give Paul a bit of a guernsey down there in the run-on side. I have Jason O'Brien from Cook; he has not been seen for a while. He would be a perfect member for the advisory council. He is full of experience. Now I have a cracker for you. You have to put some females on there, and I reckon I have a special for you in Lily van Litsenburg. She is absolutely the doyenne of legal advice, and we can put Lily on this council that is getting \$1.8 million. I will even go further. There is one of my very good Labor Party mates that they have forgotten, and he is the absolute Lord Denning of the Labor Party: Peter Lawlor. You should put Peter on this advisory council; he would accept part of that \$1.8 million they are going to distribute amongst their Labor Party friends.

That is what I think of this ridiculous sentencing council which will provide nothing—no advice—at a cost to taxpayers of \$1.8 million a year. Furthermore, there is an amendment before the House in the spirit of Fitzgerald, I cannot understand why he is not out there criticising this Labor government. I can think of a couple of reasons, but it would not be fair to Tony Fitzgerald. We have not heard about him and he is not commenting now that there is a Labor government in power. He was very keen to comment when the Newman government was in power.

We are turning back the VLAD laws that were put in place, and it is funny that it has taken 15 months for this Attorney-General to wake up about three weeks or four weeks before it is due to become law and say, 'We have to roll this over and "de-Newman-ise" it. This will stop people with criminal associations working in the CFMEU and other unions.' I was involved with these bikie gangs before they became popular and well publicised. There was a clubhouse behind Pacific Fair. I could see all the rotten criminal bikies hanging around the Broadbeach and Nobby Beach areas intimidating people left, right and centre. It was bad for the tourism industry and very bad for the family image of the Gold Coast. Police minister Byrne knows that I made nine speeches in this parliament about the problems with criminal motorcycle gang members. Then we had the terrible incidents that we are all aware of in Broadbeach and the shootings at Robina and Broadbeach. I am well aware of the bikies. Some of these other members in Stretton and other areas up there might not have the problems, but we have the bikie problem on the Gold Coast. It is unfortunate that those opposite do not have any members on the Gold Coast to know about these matters, but if they want to come and visit I will show them around. The criminal bikies love operating on the Gold Coast because it is a beautiful place to live.

The problem with winding back any of these measures as proposed in the bill and the amendment here tonight is that it has nothing to do with the VLAD laws whatsoever. I find it absolutely humiliating for the Attorney-General to put forward this amendment. You may notice that it is becoming a real habit—I think 'hubris' is the word they use—when the Attorney-General gets away with things such as compulsory preferential voting with 18 minutes notice. We are getting into the same situation. This winding back of the VLAD laws tells me exactly why this government has procrastinated for so long in attacking the VLAD laws. Here in this House they voted for the VLAD laws. Now they are trying to take away the efficacy of those laws, and the police are telling them that they are great laws. It tells you that something is rotten in Denmark when they want to wind back those laws. It is politically wonderful for me on the Gold Coast, but they are winding back these laws to protect their mates who are involved with criminal units in the CFMEU and other unions.

The royal commission established that there were contacts there, and this legislation was put in place to finalise the royal commission results. That is where we get the association between this wind-back of VLAD laws and the CFMEU and the involvement with the outlaw criminal motorcycle gangs. They are the standover men: 'You pay up or we'll be around to see you,' and that is exactly what is happening at Carrara right at this moment. 'You pay up and meet our union demands or we're going to stop working. We've got the boys behind us to enforce it.' There is no doubt in my mind that no normal government would walk away from good laws to protect the community of the Gold Coast. This government is doing that because of its absolute connection to the union movement and, by default, outlaw criminal bikie gangs.