




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

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PENALTIES AND SENTENCES (QUEENSLAND SENTENCING ADVISORY COUNCIL) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (8.46 pm): After that contribution from the member for Morayfield, I am sure that the people of Queensland would be happy to know that the member thinks that they are ignorant. When the people of Queensland raise issues about judgements that have been given, it is because of public perception. The member for Morayfield has just called the Queensland public ignorant.

I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Penalties and Sentences (Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council) Amendment Bill 2016. This bill seeks to re-establish the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council—a bureaucracy created by the previous Labor government that adds no value and offers no additional research and support outside existing agencies. Let me be clear: this is another Labor government re-establishing another Labor bureaucracy for no good reason.

Under this bill, the functions of a re-established Sentencing Advisory Council would be to provide views on the giving or reviewing of a guideline judgement, but only if requested by the Court of Appeal; to provide advice to the Attorney-General on matters relating to sentencing, but only if requested by the Attorney-General; to provide information to the community on matters relating to sentencing to enhance community knowledge—because apparently they are all ignorant, according to the member for Morayfield—and understanding of sentencing matters, which is something that could be done easily by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General; to publish information relating to sentencing, which I am sure could be done through the department's website; to research matters relating to sentencing and publish the results of the research, which is something that I am sure the many legal officers in the department are capable of doing; and to obtain the community's views on sentencing and matters relating to sentencing, which is something that this government should already be doing prior to introducing any sentencing reforms.

In fact, when considering the functions of this \$1.8 million per annum bureaucracy, Queenslanders could be forgiven for wondering whether this new body serves any real purpose that could not be performed by existing departmental bodies. That is why the former LNP government dissolved Queensland's previous Sentencing Advisory Council in 2012 under the Criminal Law Amendment Act. At that time, the main focus of the council's work had been to provide advice to the Attorney-General on sentencing matters. In reality, that was a function that was already performed by the Queensland Law Reform Commission, meaning that the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council was duplicating the commission's functions.

Dissolving the council was the most logical way to enable a more efficient use of public resources by the rationalisation of law review functions across government. As this Labor government spends millions of dollars of taxpayers' money on an unnecessary bureaucracy that adds no value to the justice system, we also see them moving sneaky amendments through this bill that water down the former LNP government's tough-on-crime legislation. Already under this Labor government we are seeing our

police resources slashed as Taskforce Maxima struggles to keep our streets safe with no support from George Street. In fact, the *Gold Coast Bulletin* reported today that we have seen concerning reports that 'the budget for Queensland's bikie gang fighters has been slashed by a third as the state government refuses to guarantee more resources.' According to these reports, Taskforce Maxima staff are concerned about staff transfers from the Gold Coast, with full-time-equivalent staff dropping from 104 in 2014-15 to 95 in 2015-16. As the Leader of the Opposition said today, we are seeing officers sent out on the streets to fight crime with their hands tied behind their backs. Today this Labor government and this Attorney-General are moving amendments that stop tough criminal gang measures introduced by the former LNP government from coming into effect.

Our measures included licensing changes which were aimed at preventing bikies from gaining licensed work in construction, workplace health and safety or as an electrician. These changes were due to come into force on 1 July this year, adding another enforcement measure to stop bikies from ruling our streets and doing so under the guise of legitimate businesses. This is a far cry from the Premier's statement of less than two months ago when she said that this government would empower police to bring down individuals in criminal organisations, be they child sex predators, drug traffickers, boiler room fraudsters or outlaw motorcycle gangs. The Premier said she wanted more convictions not less and wanted criminals locked up and serving time for the crimes they commit.

The Attorney-General's amendments today tell a very different story. In my electorate of Mudgeeraba residents are growing increasingly concerned that the effective laws which have been keeping their families safe are being progressively watered down by this government. Before the LNP came to government my electorate was home to the Nomads bikie gang clubhouse at Carrara which, thanks to the actions of the LNP, was closed down and its occupants forced out of my electorate by police. A lot of people think that the Mudgeeraba electorate is a sleepy hollow where there is not any crime. I can tell them that we have had three Taskforce Maxima raids in my electorate over the last 18 months. In fact, during the election campaign in 2015 I was sitting in my back yard having a cup of tea at seven o'clock in the morning with PolAir circling around my home. I could not work out what was going on. I sent one of my family members down the street to find that six doors down from my house, in the biggest house in the street, was a Hells Angels outlaw motorcycle gang member who was raided by Taskforce Maxima and had \$1 million worth of methamphetamine, shotgun, flak jacket, et cetera. About four months later in the sleepy hollow of Berrigans Road in Mudgeeraba there was another raid by Taskforce Maxima on outlaw motorcycle gangs. In San Fernando Drive in Worongary there was another one. There was millions of dollars worth of methamphetamine being cooked out on acreage blocks because it cannot be detected as easily as the methamphetamine lab that I found in Merrimac in 2006 when I was doorknocking.

We had a problem with bikies on the Gold Coast. Every Saturday and Sunday the Nomads would sit on the verandah of Wallaby Bob's Hotel. They would line their bikes up and sit on the verandah in their colours and terrorise young families. That was one of the only places in Mudgeeraba where you could take your kids to have a counter meal if you were a low socioeconomic family. We do not have that element in my electorate anymore. My residents are concerned at the watering down of the legislation. Tonight we are seeing another example of that.

Mr Walker: It is the start of it.

Ms BATES: I take that interjection from the shadow Attorney-General. It is the start of it. We all know the bikies are waiting over the border in Tweed Heads revving their motorbikes up waiting to come back to places like Mudgeeraba. My residents' fears are being confirmed by the latest attempt by this government to stop our laws from coming into force.

As the shadow minister for the prevention of family and domestic violence I thank the member for Broadwater tonight for her very passionate speech. She mentioned the fundraiser that we attended, along with the member for Southport, for the Robina Community Legal Centre. This is a community legal centre that has accreditation but no funding from the state government. They are turning away victims of domestic violence from Robina. In my area, since both the former LNP government and this government has raised, quite rightly, the issue of domestic violence in the media arena, police tell me that there has been a 96 per cent increase in reporting of DVs in the Mudgeeraba police district alone. They are talking about reports from 13-year-olds up to 83-year-old women. The amount of \$1.8 million would easily fund the Robina Community Legal Centre. For the Attorney-General to say that the sixth largest city in Australia has enough community legal centres in Southport, which serves the northern end of the Gold Coast but not the southern end of the Gold Coast, is quite ridiculous.

In her contribution the member for Bulimba asked why George Brandis and the federal government were not doing anything? There was an announcement of \$30 million by the federal Attorney-General to fund community legal centres such as Robina. I would like to see the Labor government here in Queensland match that funding so that the Robina Community Legal Centre can

continue its good work. We have \$1.8 million going to something that we abolished, that we do not believe will do what it needs to do. There are amendments tonight that will only open the floodgates for bikies to return to the Gold Coast. On behalf of my community on Mudgeeraba I will not be supporting these amendments or this bill.