




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

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SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (4.48 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Serious and Organised Crime Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. Here we have it: after almost two years of positioning and denying and reviewing, we have this Labor government proving once and for all that it is soft on crime. We have this Labor government throwing down the welcome mat for organised crime and criminal gangs in Queensland. We have this Labor government putting residents of the Gold Coast and my electorate at risk as they go about their daily lives. We must never forget that it was Robina Town Centre, in my electorate of Mudgeeraba, that was the site of a violent public shooting in broad daylight by a criminal gang member in 2012. This was a callous move by a violent criminal and a blatant display of disregard for the soft-on-crime laws we had seen for too long under successive Labor governments.

As we all predicted, with this government we see a retreat to the bad old days of crime under Labor. Innocent shoppers at a popular and crowded shopping centre were put at risk and someone was shot because of a culture that had been allowed to manifest for far too long. Of course, as other members have said, one Friday evening three years ago, 50 Bandidos bikie gang members stormed our food and entertainment precinct at Broadbeach, in front of men, women and children who were out enjoying dinner with their family and friends. Terrified onlookers were forced to either flee or watch on as a brazen public brawl unfolded in front of them, with our police working diligently to restore order at a popular night-life destination and arrest 18 perpetrators. However, it was not over there. We then saw the remaining gang members, outraged that law enforcement officers would ever dare step in to protect the public, march over to the Southport Courthouse and attempt to intimidate police, demanding their bikie mates be let out of the watch house. That night demonstrated that criminal gangs had no respect for the police, no respect for law and order and no regard for the community. They thought they could operate however they wanted, menace wherever they wanted and threaten, intimidate and endanger whomever they wanted, because for so long they had gotten away with it under Labor.

However, the LNP government knew something had to be done. We knew it was time to act. We knew that, to keep the community safe, swift strong action needed to be taken. What we did that day was draw a line in the sand and declare that enough was enough. We wanted to protect our community and make sure that they could enjoy a night out, go to a local restaurant, have a meal and not have to worry that the place would be stormed by criminal gangs. We wanted to protect our hardworking men and women in blue, who do such important work, day in and day out, to protect members of our communities across our state. We understood that those men and women deserve the backing of their government and that we needed to back them with laws they could enforce and the resources they needed to do so. We knew this was the only way to stamp out organised crime and we acted decisively.

Most of those opposite were not members of this House when those horrific events took place, but I was and many of my Gold Coast colleagues were here with me. We remember our constituents' shock at how this was allowed to happen. We remember the phone calls we received from our residents

who wanted us to do something to help them, because they did not feel safe in our streets anymore. What we gave them were laws that worked. We gave them laws that were backed by their police and upheld by the High Court of Australia. We gave them laws that were adopted by other states, including South Australia under a Labor government. We gave them laws that saw the crime rate reduced, criminal gang members charged and imprisoned, and bikie gangs fleeing Queensland. We gave them laws that saw the Nomad outlaw motorcycle gang clubhouse in my electorate of Mudgeeraba shut down and suburbs such as Carrara no longer meeting places for violent gang members. We do not see the Nomads lined up on the verandah at Wallaby Bob's every Saturday and Sunday, intimidating people. At the time of the last election, there was a raid on a Hell's Angels outlaw motorcycle gang premises that netted \$1 million worth of methamphetamine, six doors down from my home in Reedy Creek. That is what governments should do and it is how we kept our residents safe.

In the first year of these laws being in force, we saw a reduction of more than 10 per cent in reported crime. At the 2015 state election all 10 electorates on the Gold Coast, which was hit harder than anywhere by the criminal gang violence, put their trust in the LNP. Unfortunately for those voters who voted to keep themselves and their families safe from crime, a Labor government took office in Queensland. What we saw then was a blatant disregard for the will of the Gold Coast and the will of those who supported our laws and could see the difference they had made. We quickly saw an out-of-touch Labor government setting up a task force review to advise it on how to best repeal and replace the LNP laws. It was a blatantly closed-shop review with a pre-determined outcome.

During the election campaign, Gold Coasters and Mudgeeraba residents could see through the Premier's rhetoric about being tough on crime, because they had heard it all before from Labor premiers and attorneys-general of the past who had failed to keep them safe. Sadly, their fears were confirmed when we saw the Attorney-General crack under pressure during estimates and admit that there is a clear intention to repeal and replace the legislation by either amendment or new legislation.

Despite inaccurate claims by the Attorney-General and others opposite that our tough laws only focused on criminal bikie gangs, we then had the Police Commissioner confirm that those claims were wrong and that the laws apply to other forms of organised crime. As we now know, the first conviction under the VLAD laws was not of a criminal motorcycle gang member, but of someone on drug related offences. That is why even the president of the police union has publicly supported the laws, arguing before the election that they are strong and appropriate laws. He said—

These laws are good, they work and finally criminals are avoiding Queensland at all costs and the Gold Coast is once again a family-friendly Mecca, thanks to our lobbying for this legislation and the great work of police.

As he and the Gold Coast police know, you can have hardworking police on the beat, but you need to provide tough legislation to back them up.

Amongst the strongest supporters of the LNP's criminal gang laws has been an elected representative of the entire city, my very good friend Mayor Tom Tate. More than anyone's, the mayor's submission to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee, which was supported and tabled by Councillor Paul Taylor during the committee's consideration of this bill, is telling of the sentiments of Gold Coasters. He said—

On my understanding of the Serious and Organised Crime Legislation Amendment Bill, I am afraid City of Gold Coast will again be plunged into the climate of fear that accompanied the crime wave unleashed by outlaw motorbike gangs over the past decade.

...

No reasonable person can assess the level of criminal activity engaged in by motorbike gang members compared to the rest of society and not conclude that they simply despise the values the rest of our community holds dear.

Nor can any reasonable person fail to recognise that this criminal element is a grave and violent threat to ordinary citizens wanting to go about their daily business.

Time and again we see innocent people caught up in vicious assaults that wreck lives.

The trail of devastation caused to thousands of families by the drugs peddled by these gang members is horrendous. How many more young lives are to be wasted by addiction peddled by motorbike gang members?

The mayor's words echo the concerns being expressed across our city and yet here we stand today, debating laws introduced by this Labor government that will shamelessly water down our laws that work.

Today I would like to go on the record as saying that I am absolutely appalled that the member for Ferny Grove, as Chair of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee, so publicly disparaged and called into question another good friend of mine, Councillor Paul Taylor. Councillor Taylor is a respected city councillor who represents the division that was shaken by the Broadbeach brawl more than three years ago. He would have been remiss if he did not express his concerns about this bill, which so many of his constituents are outraged by. Shame on the member for Ferny Grove for his treatment of the councillor, who was a guest testifying before his committee and who was shamelessly targeted by an out-of-touch chair.

On this side of the House, we know what a difference the LNP's legislation made to the people of the Gold Coast and to people in my electorate of Mudgeeraba. Whilst those opposite can debate these laws, it is we on this side of the House who represented the Gold Coast community. When we speak in this House about this legislation, it is not a far-off concern affecting a different community; it is a very real issue affecting the safety of our neighbours, our families, our friends and our constituents. That is why I will be opposing this bill today.