




Speech By  
**Steve Minnikin**

**MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH**

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Record of Proceedings, 29 November 2016

### **SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (5.48 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Serious and Organised Crime Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. My first point is simply this: if the current laws are so very, very bad—to quote those opposite—why is there a two-year transition period for most of Labor's laws come into effect? If there is such a pressing need to change the current legislation, why wait?

When the Palaszczuk Labor government was elected back in early 2015 two election commitments were undertaken, including a commission of inquiry. The Queensland Organised Crime Commission of Inquiry—or the QOCCI—reported on 30 October 2015. Commissioner Michael Byrne QC undertook the inquiry and it cost around \$3 million, which was half of the budget originally outlined. The QOCCI made 43 recommendations as part of a report which was full of political rhetoric about events after the infamous Broadbeach brawl back in September 2013 which precipitated the whole debate. It was interesting to note that the report also came under fire from Acting Police Commissioner Ross Barnett for saying that police had 'dropped the ball' in relation to child safety and exploitation issues. In addition, there was also criticism about the fact that there were no public submissions. So much for the notion of openness and transparency that we hear those on the other side of the chamber harp on about! There were no submissions.

The second commitment was the Taskforce on Organised Crime Legislation, established on 22 June 2015 and headed by former Supreme Court judge Alan Wilson SC. This task force included representatives from the Queensland Police Union of Employees, the commissioned officers union, Queensland Law Society, Bar Association of Queensland, Public Interest Monitor and relevant government departments. Of real interest was the fact that the Crime and Corruption Commission was not represented. As I am currently a member of the PCCC I will not comment any further on this fact. The task force made 60 recommendations. The terms of reference started by saying—

The Taskforce will note the Queensland Government's intention to repeal, and replace the 2013 legislation, whether by substantial amendment and/or new legislation ...

Let us cut to the chase right here, right now. It is the LNP's contention that the Palaszczuk Labor government review of the laws was not a proper review and the stated intention is clearly outlined in the terms of reference. Furthermore, it is also worth noting—this is an important point—that the LNP did have a sunset clause in the VLAD Act stating that a review of the legislation needed to commence by October of this year, three years after the commencement of the act.

The Palaszczuk government is a go-soft and do-nothing government which appears hell-bent on repealing or amending any decision made by the former LNP government between 2012 and 2015. Its desire to airbrush recent history is extraordinary, yet those opposite do not like to comment on previous Labor administration periods in government. They simply did not exist. Apparently all the ills of the world, particularly in Queensland, started in March 2012 and ended in January 2015. Nothing else matters. A competent, mature, confident government would acknowledge legislation that works and simply concentrate on those areas of public policy which were demonstrably not working.

Members opposite always like to cite evidence based facts. They love the evidence based facts. Let us try these statistics on for size, then. Back in 2014 crime significantly decreased across Queensland. Let us roll the tape: assaults reduced by 3.7 per cent; robbery reduced by nearly 25 per cent; unlawful entry reduced by 17.4 per cent; car theft reduced by 19.4 per cent; and drug offences increased by 23.7 per cent, meaning that more drugs were off our streets.

The LNP knew that enough was enough and that something had to be done, particularly after the Broadbeach incident. The bikies were proud of the fact that they controlled the streets on the Gold Coast. Additionally, we needed to protect our men and women in blue, who do so much across our state—day in, day out—protecting Queenslanders and their property. They deserve the backing of strong laws and better resources so they can get the upper hand in fighting Queensland's organised crime.

As a result, we introduced a suite of strong laws based on the successful antiracketeering legislation from the United States. These new laws were dubbed the toughest antibikie laws in Australia. The laws were so successful, with a more than 10 per cent reduction in reported crime in the first full year since the laws were introduced, that, as other members have commented, even the South Australian Labor government most recently sought to adopt the same tough-on-crime approach that this government now seeks, extraordinarily, to repeal. The Victorian Labor government also recently announced that it would introduce new offences that mirror the LNP's successful anti-association laws. What we see is South Australian and Victorian Labor prepared to stand up to organised crime gangs and implement strong laws to put them out of action and in turn protect local communities. Alas, here in Queensland instead we see this flip-flop government ready to repeal the laws—laws that were working—irrespective of their success and growing implementation across Australia.

The task force review set up to advise the government on how to best repeal and replace the LNP laws was nothing more than a closed-shop review with a predetermined outcome. After all, the Attorney-General herself cracked under the pressure of estimates questioning, admitting there was a clear intention to repeal and replace the legislation by 'either amendment or new legislation'. On 4 January 2015 QPU president Ian Leavers stated—

These laws—

our 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.

In addition, in August 2015 Police Commissioner Ian Stewart said on Steve Austin's 612 ABC radio program—

I have been on the public record as saying I think that they—

the laws—

were a good thing. We've had amazing success over the last few years; those laws have certainly had an impact.

Needless to say, there is overwhelming support for the LNP's initiative and much angst across the state about the consequences of repealing and softening legislation regarding organised crime.

I have several concerns with the government's Serious and Organised Crime Legislation Amendment Bill 2016, including but not limited to scrapping the VLAD laws; removing important police powers such as the ability to stop, search and detain a participant in a criminal organisation based on reasonable suspicion; removing the circumstances of aggravation for evading police; generally watering down a number of strong penalties; and removing the fit-and-proper-person test from certain industries that encourage criminal gang members to have an honest job. I have many, many other concerns, but in the interests of time I will leave it at that.

I continue to be proud of our strong response back in 2013 because, very simply, it got the job done. The simple fact is that many criminal gangs fled the state, crime reduced as a result and Queensland was a safer place to live, work and raise a family. I wonder why all of our members from the Gold Coast in particular were returned at the 2015 election. We brought in these broad-ranging laws to combat not just criminal motorcycle gangs but also other key crime areas. We did so because the laws that were there, after nearly two decades of Labor rule, clearly were not working.

We do not want more convictions; we want less crime. The reason there were not many convictions is that many of the criminal gangs, as I said, fled the state and crime dramatically reduced as a result. I know people who live on the Gold Coast in particular, and people felt much safer there as a result of the efficacy of our comprehensive suite of laws. Queensland was a safer place because of our laws.

I have mates who ride motorcycles, and some like dressing in their riding leathers. Good for them. In a robust democracy, they should always have that right. Some have tattoos and piercings. Good for them. What a vanilla and bland world it would be if we all looked and sounded like a cookie-cutter cut-out of each other. They all work hard, pay their taxes and enjoy the essential liberties and freedoms we sometimes take for granted which were forged in blood on battlefields since Federation. The essential distinction here is that they are not criminals. I stress again that our VLAD legislation was centred on many types of criminals.