




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR EVERTON

Record of Proceedings, 10 November 2016

SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (5.34 pm): I rise this evening to speak to the Serious and Organised Crime Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 and follow the contributions of my colleagues in their very well articulated cases about our position on this bill and this issue. I will be speaking against the bill. I will be speaking from the perspective of my shadow portfolio responsibilities and issues that relate to the law enforcement of this state.

The starting point for me is questioning why this government is changing the laws that have been working to keep Queenslanders safe. When we left government, Queensland was a safer place than when we began. That was because of more police, better resources and better laws to help them get their job done. We backed the police and, not surprisingly, the community was safer as a result. We not only backed them with resources but also gave them the legal framework that helped them improve their effectiveness.

The QPS online crime statistics describe this well. In 2014, crime significantly decreased across Queensland: assaults reduced by 3.7 per cent; robberies reduced by 24.8 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, which meant that more drugs were off our streets because we had more convictions as a result of the fact that we resourced our police more effectively. On the Gold Coast in 2014, again, crime significantly reduced: homicide reduced by 21.4 per cent; assaults reduced by almost two per cent; robberies reduced by 17.2 per cent; unlawful entry reduced by 27 per cent; car theft reduced by almost 18 per cent; and, again, drug offences increased by 29.4 per cent, meaning there were more drugs off our streets. This is important because Queenslanders did not just feel safer; they were safer. Everywhere I go—but particularly on the Gold Coast—residents, business owners and the cops on the street tell us how good these laws have been and that we need to fight to retain them.

We have to remember the context that originally led to the introduction of these laws. The criminal motorcycle gangs in particular on the Gold Coast claimed that they were running the city; that they were the one per cent above the law. We had the riot in the Broadbeach restaurant where law-abiding citizens with their families were trying to have a peaceful dinner only to be totally disrupted by a criminal motorcycle gang brawl. Then when they were arrested a posse of bikies went to the police station and demanded that their fellow gang members be released. We later had an innocent woman in a shopping centre being shot in a gunfight that took place in those shops. The people of the Gold Coast and the people of Queensland demanded that we do something, and the police told us that the current laws were not effective enough, that the current laws would simply work around the edges, that they would not prevent and disrupt the activities of criminal motorcycle gangs.

The shadow Attorney-General has already mentioned a letter that the mayor of the Gold Coast submitted to the committee. In that letter the mayor stated—

Few people living outside this city can appreciate what it was like on the Gold Coast when bikies roamed without fear of the law. We were a city under siege. But the VLAD law stopped them dead in their tracks. Nothing else had worked but that did.

Now what do we have? We have a government that intends to water down these laws. Again, I will quote Mayor Tom Tate. He said—

Now, since the government has signalled its intention to weaken the provisions there has been a marked return of these outlaws to the Coast. The signs are there—and growing.

If members spoke to the police on the beat, they would be told the same thing—that the bikies feel emboldened. They know that this Labor government is soft on crime and is not serious about dealing with organised crime gangs. On that last point, this was an issue that was also confirmed by the Crime and Corruption Commission in their submission to the Wilson task force in December 2015. In their letter, Chairman Alan MacSporran said—

It is clear from the recent developments that several clubs (including three of the major clubs) have been actively recruiting new members on the Gold Coast. The timing of the recruitment activities suggests that, following the change of government in January 2015, it is perceived by clubs that there is a softening of the stance against OMCG activity.

If there was any doubt—and I do not think there was or is any doubt—that the LNP would retain the 10 seats on the Gold Coast, that doubt has been absolutely removed. We will also win the extra seat that no doubt will be created simply on this issue. The people of the Gold Coast have been happy with the laws and the effectiveness of the laws. They want no changes whatsoever.

Make no mistake: these laws are akin to rolling out the red carpet to bikie gangs in Queensland once again. The clubhouses, as the member for Currumbin has already mentioned, will reopen. The clubhouses that are the centre of criminal activity and drug distribution will open again. The new consorting laws will come into play only after the fact, meaning that crime has to be committed in order for the regime to kick in.

That was the big impact of our laws. Our laws were meant to be shock-and-awe tactics, and that is exactly what they were. 'Extraordinary laws for extraordinary circumstances', the *Courier-Mail* said. We were sending a clear message to the criminal motorcycle gangs to, 'Pack up. Get out of this state. You are not welcome here. You are not in control.' The lawyers who dealt with bikies said that they were absolutely petrified of the LNP laws. Now what do we have? We have the bikie gangs campaigning against the LNP in the federal government because of our tough laws. We are proud that they campaigned against us. We know that they do not want these laws remaining because they know how effective they have been. Our laws were all about—

Mr Bailey interjected.

Mr MANDER: Exactly right; I take that interjection from the minister. There were limited convictions because our laws were about preventing crime from happening, about stopping it, about deterring it. They cannot commit crimes if they are not here, and they were not; they left. Now they are coming back. The laws were working.

More convictions means more crimes. Our laws sent criminals interstate and overseas and the crime rates reduced accordingly. Now we are seeing how spectacularly Labor has mismanaged our prisons in Queensland and they want to put more pressure on that system with more convictions. Their laws are a smokescreen to look tough on crime when they are nothing of the kind. They are a weakening of the existing laws in so many ways.

The scrapping of the stop, search and detain powers are but another example of how these laws are being weakened. I believe it will lead to more dangerous situations for our hardworking men and women in blue because they will need to confront the criminal gangs head on with weakened powers. I wonder why these laws have a two-year phase-in period. It is because they want to kick the can down the road. Our laws work and members opposite know there is an election campaign coming up. They know the weakening of the laws will mean more crime which will show how weak their laws actually are.

This bill is nothing more than a political solution for a government that owes its very existence to the Independent member for Nicklin. This is not about protecting Queenslanders; it is about protecting the survival of their government. The parliament should not support laws that have no basis for their introduction and are not supported by the majority of Queenslanders. I urge members to stand up for Queenslanders—not criminal gangs—and oppose this bill tonight.