




Speech By
Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

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SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (8.41 pm): Those are the words of someone who protests too much. There is someone who knows that the laws that are being debated tonight are a serious weakening of the efforts of police and society against organised crime of all descriptions. We heard the ravings and rantings of someone who is deliberately ignoring or obscuring the facts and the realities.

The safety of Queenslanders and the protection of their property and their families is a fundamental responsibility and role of any government. It is a responsibility and role of government that the former Bligh Labor government failed to deliver. As I travel throughout the state, most recently in the far north of Queensland, Queenslanders tell me the things that are of concern to them. On jobs, Labor is failing. On the economy, Labor is failing. On health and education, Labor is failing. Most importantly, as we all know, on law and order, Labor is failing.

Anyone who was living and working on the Gold Coast in the lead-up to that fateful incident in September 2013 knows the level of fear and concern running through the community about the fact that criminal bikie gangs were running the town and that there was little that the police or anyone else could do about it. Business owners were being stood over and extorted. Drugs were being peddled through the nightclubs to our kids. People were living in fear. We only have to speak and listen to the people who were on the Gold Coast in 2013 to know that they were not going out to the restaurants. They were not going out to the nightclubs. Tourists were not going to the Gold Coast. They were afraid to go to the Gold Coast.

What will we see under this weak-on-crime Labor government? A return to that fear. It is already happening. We are hearing from senior members of the business community, from people in the Police Service—those who are out on the street—that this legislation will open the door and roll out the red carpet.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! I appreciate that this is a very heated debate, but there are so many interjections from members on my right that I can barely hear the member for Clayfield speak. Let us make sure that the member has an opportunity to be heard.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. The bikies will be back into bat. Under these soft-on-crime laws, they will be back at the crease, ready to hit out again.

In 2013, all of that activity was bubbling away—the extortion, the drug deliveries, the violence, the standover merchants, the standover tactics—under the surface with the occasional act of public violence, such as the shooting of Kathy Devitt, who, in April 2012, was caught in the crossfire of a dispute between two bikies in a Robina shopping centre. How were the laws working there? An innocent person in a shopping centre was caught in the crossfire between bikies. That was Labor's legacy on crime and law enforcement in Queensland.

For a new government at the time, that was when the alarm bells rang. We knew that there were issues on the Gold Coast. We had made election commitments that included resourcing and a new major crime squad, which has subsequently been disbanded by those opposite. Until that Robina

shooting, I do not think that people broadly realised how bad the situation was. The LNP government's resolve was so obviously sharpened with the incident at Broadbeach and subsequently at the Southport Police Station. On Friday, 27 September 2013, 50 Bandidos bikie gang members started a public brawl in a restaurant in Broadbeach in front of men, women and children who were out enjoying dinner with their families and friends. That was the legacy of the Labor government in this state.

Mrs D'Ath interjected.

Mr Hart interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister and the member for Burleigh, this is not a conversation between the two of you.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. That was the legacy that Labor left Queenslanders: bikies emboldened to take their brawls into a restaurant where people were simply wanting to have an enjoyable night out.

Mr Walker: A family event.

Mr NICHOLLS: A family event. Can any of us imagine what it would have been like to be out with your partner, maybe some kids, maybe mum and dad and all of a sudden you are subjected to the foul, intimidating violence of 50 bikies wanting to wreck the night simply so that they can have a gang war? It is clear from the footage and reports on the night that the criminal bikie gang members had no respect for the police or for the law. After the brawl was broken up, the remaining gang members then went down to the Southport Police Station and attempted to intimidate the police, demanding that they let their comrades out of the watch house. The bikies, who for years had run the Gold Coast, had crossed the line and the violence was more than just spilling onto the streets; it was in people's faces and a turf war was on.

The LNP was listening to the people of the Gold Coast. They were demanding strong action and we acted quickly and decisively. We did not need a committee and 24 months to do it. We did not need the interminable reviews of the Palaszczuk Labor government in order to know that people deserve to be safe and secure in their homes, in their businesses and when they were out enjoying themselves with simple family fun. Not for us the dithering and delays of the Labor government. There was swift, decisive action against criminal gangs.

The police and the Crime and Corruption Commission wanted more targeted resources and better laws. We granted those wishes as well. When it comes to community safety, it is vital that the government of the day listens to and acts on the advice of the law enforcement agencies that protect Queenslanders from harm day in and day out. That is what we did. We took the advice of the police, we took the advice of the CCC and we took the advice of the then solicitor-general, Walter Sofronoff. That was the situation that existed under our government. We listened and we acted. We also promised a three-year review clause, all in the space of a very short time.

It is a shame that time and time again we have seen the policies of the soft-on-crime Palaszczuk Labor government and how out of touch they are with the hopes and expectations of ordinary Queenslanders, whether that is in Far North Queensland, where we see the revolving door of crime, where we see 20 youths being charged for offences at the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre last week—

Mr Walker: Up on the roof wanting KFC—

Mr NICHOLLS: Up on the roof wanting KFC, as I said this morning—where we see hundreds and hundreds of offences, where we see offenders appearing more than 20 times as a result of this government's soft-on-crime attitude. The criminals know that they have nothing to fear from this government. They know that for all their talk and all their rhetoric, when it comes down to it they will go to jelly. They do not have the intestinal fortitude to drive the criminal gangs out of Queensland to protect Queenslanders.

There is no better example of this than the bill that we are debating tonight. It shows a government that is more concerned with pandering to special interest groups rather than the concerns of many Queenslanders. I refer again to Gold Coast residents who want a government that listens to the silent majority and keeps the laws that are working to keep them safer. That is what the people of Queensland are telling us. It is not just anecdotal evidence that steels our resolve to stand by the laws that we brought into this place; I refer to the crime statistics from 2014. There is no coincidence that they dramatically fell across the state. In 2014 crime significantly decreased across Queensland. Assaults reduced by 3.7 per cent; robbery reduced by 24.8 per cent; unlawful entry reduced by 17.4 per cent; and car theft reduced by 19.4 per cent. On the Gold Coast homicide reduced by 21 per cent; assaults reduced by two per cent; robbery reduced by 17 per cent; unlawful entry reduced by 27 per cent; and car theft reduced by almost 18 per cent. These are not just numbers and percentages; they show the

real impact of a tough approach to organised crime. It means that 700 fewer Queenslanders were assaulted; it means that 450 fewer businesses were robbed; it means that 7,000 fewer businesses and homes were broken into; it means that 2,200 fewer cars were stolen—

Mrs D'Ath interjected.

Mr Walker interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! I ask the member for Mansfield and the minister to please cease their conversations across the chamber.

Mr NICHOLLS: And it means that more drugs were off our streets and not being peddled to our kids. As a father with a 17-year-old who has just finished at schoolies, can I tell members what a relief that is as well. I heard the Premier talk about the survival of our laws in the High Court. She is disingenuous at best and misleading at worst. She knows, and her Attorney-General knows, that our anti-association laws were held valid by the High Court. It is the VLAD laws that she refers to disingenuously. Queenslanders will not forget they were sold out by political self-interest from a Premier who promised to govern in their interest but does the complete opposite. We will continue to remind them of that as well.