




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR ASPLEY

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SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms DAVIS** (Aspley—LNP) (8.08 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Serious and Organised Crime Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. It has taken two short years for this Palaszczuk government to prove to Queensland that it has no backbone on matters of public safety. At a time when existing laws should be built on, not weakened, Queenslanders should rightly demand the fullest protection of laws against serious and organised crime in all its forms.

The bill was introduced on 13 September this year and was referred to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee. The committee received and examined more than 280 submissions. The changes that this bill proposed were part of a closed-shop inquiry and the terms of reference were simply designed to repeal or replace the 2013 VLAD laws, not to actually review them. I agree with my LNP colleagues who sat on the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee and the view expressed that the recommendations of this inquiry should be disregarded because it was not a proper review of the law. I think it is important to continue to remind those opposite just exactly why the original laws were introduced.

We will never forget the distressing images splashed across our TV screens of the Broadbeach bikie brawl in 2013 and these vicious, lawless criminals fighting it out in front of innocent families. These criminal gangs then started a siege at Southport Police Station demanding that their mates, who had been arrested following the Broadbeach brawl, be let go. Could we rely on the previous Labor government's Criminal Organisation Act? No, we could not. Sadly, that legislation as introduced by the then attorney-general and now health minister was a complete failure. Not one declaration had ever been made and criminal gangs were given a free ride. This is why the LNP government took the steps needed to tackle serious and organised crime and criminal elements in this state.

What was the result at that time? Crime went down significantly. Across Queensland armed robberies were reduced by 24.8 per cent; unlawful entry dropped 17.4 per cent; theft reduced by 19.4 per cent; and more importantly, police were able to catch more drug offenders and get the drugs off our streets. As the mother of a daughter who got caught up in substance abuse, methamphetamines, I will do everything and support any piece of legislation that goes towards getting drugs off our streets. Under the VLAD laws the Gold Coast in particular, one of our major tourist destinations, could breathe again. When the Attorney-General claims VLAD laws caused unnecessary drain on police resources, she is choosing to ignore the fact that in 2013 crime dropped significantly. We on this side of the House remain committed to having the toughest laws possible to dismantle and destroy any presence of serious and organised crime in Queensland. These multipurpose laws have proven effective to date to knock out and dismantle criminal gangs and serious criminal activity; there can be no denying this.

The bill before the House puts out the welcome mat for bikie gangs to re-establish themselves across Queensland. In contrast, the LNP sent a clear message to criminal motorcycle gangs: 'Pack up and get out of this state; you are not welcome here.' Already we have heard evidence from the CCC that criminal bikie gangs are out there recruiting again and starting to move back into the Gold Coast. Withdrawing the existing laws and replacing them with an inferior set of laws will cripple the police and

other agencies in their ability to tackle serious and organised crime in Queensland. What we are seeing now is a return to the bad old Labor days of being soft on criminals, soft on gangs, soft on anything that requires backbone and substance. Let us not forget that under the Bligh government police minister Judy Spence said there were no serious organised youth gangs in Queensland. 'Gangs? What gangs?' was the line from the minister at the time.

History shows that Labor has a poor record on tackling serious and organised crime in Queensland. First they opposed gang laws in 2007; then they brought in their own failed laws in 2009; then they voted against the VLAD laws; and now they come in here with weak laws. The Queensland public deserve to know what is really going on here. By weakening the provisions around bail we will likely see a decrease in people coming forward to report serious crime. People will feel threatened and may fear reprisal once the alleged offender is released on bail for matters involving serious and organised crime activity.

The issue of dealing with association by wiping out the previous tough laws and replacing them with a consorting model which focuses on arrests and police intervention after the fact is, as my colleague the shadow Attorney-General noted, the wrong way to go and should not be supported. It was the LNP who brought in tough laws that prevented criminal gangs from gathering in public spaces. They could no longer spread fear through the community by their show of force because, as a result of these strengthened laws, these unlawful groups were too afraid to associate. This bill dilutes police powers and, as the shadow Attorney-General pointed out, the QPS submitted to the task force that removing and reducing the existing suite of legislation will reduce the capability of police, increase the risk to public safety and have an impact on community confidence in police and, I imagine, a worse impact on this haphazard government.

Far from being a rebel, as a mother and grandmother I am deeply concerned at what the Palaszczuk Labor government is attempting to do here today. As the shadow Attorney-General has already noted, we acknowledge some value in a number of the amendments being proposed to the Drugs Misuse Act and the Criminal Code; however, given the significant and detrimental amendments that weaken existing laws I cannot support this bill in its current form. In closing, I know that every state and every jurisdiction in Australia faces organised crime and the traces of this are evident, but the fundamental difference in how we can protect Queenslanders lays in the various response capabilities of governments to prevent, resist or reject the infiltration of organised crime and to never let it again prevail due to weak laws. We should never make it easier for organised criminal groups to find the conditions in which they can operate lawlessly.