




Speech By  
**Verity Barton**

**MEMBER FOR BROADWATER**

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**PENALTIES AND SENTENCES (QUEENSLAND SENTENCING ADVISORY COUNCIL) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Miss BARTON** (Broadwater—LNP) (5.49 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate of the Penalties and Sentences (Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council) Amendment Bill. Mr Deputy Speaker Millar, at the outset I join my colleagues in congratulating you on your appointment to the temporary speakers panel. I know that it is a role you will execute with absolute aplomb.

I join my colleagues on this side of the House in opposing not only the bill that is before the House—the substantive bill that the committee actually had a chance to consider—but also the amendment, of which we did get about 24 hours notice. I read about it in the *Courier-Mail* this morning. It was certainly nice to get at least a couple of hours notice. I am sure that my good friend and colleague the shadow Attorney-General would agree with me that it was nice to get slightly more than 18 minutes notice this time. At the very least, in the Attorney-General's favour, she did not introduce an amendment with very little notice on the same day that the Premier said that 'consultation with committees was one of the most important things and that is why I am introducing a bill to amend the Constitution'.

As I said, I will be opposing this bill. I acknowledge the contribution of my fellow members of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee and thank the secretariat for the work they did. Unfortunately, I have moved on to a different committee. I am sure that the chair, the member for Ferny Grove, will very much miss the contribution I made to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee. In particular, I am fairly sure that the member for Ferny Grove will most miss my red pen. I know that is something he was particularly fond of.

What we have seen continuously from this government is an attempt to 'de-Newman-ise' everything in this state. What the government fails to realise is that more Queenslanders voted for us than voted for it. Clearly, its attempt to 'de-Newman-ise' everything is actually a slap in the face of the people of Queensland, who overwhelmingly in 2012 put their trust and faith in us and who again in 2015 voted for us more than they voted for the Labor Party. That is something the Labor Party never wants to acknowledge in this House, because it does not want to admit that it does not have a mandate from the people of Queensland to 'de-Newman-ise' the state of Queensland.

What those opposite do not want to admit is that they are very, very wrong about many of the things they seek to do. When they say that they are doing so with the support of and after consultation with Queenslanders, we know that, simply by the fact that they have not given Queenslanders an opportunity to comment on some of the very many significant reforms they have put through this House—such as how people vote in this state or whether we should weaken our stance on criminal motorcycle gangs and organised crime in this state—it is absolutely a slap in the face of the people of Queensland.

I have a number of issues with the Sentencing Advisory Council bill. First and foremost is the fact that, given that between 2010 and 2012 the former iteration of the Sentencing Advisory Council was not used once, it is absolutely a waste of \$1.8 million. I can think of much better things that this

Attorney-General could be doing with \$1.8 million a year. For example, the Attorney-General could make a contribution towards the Robina Community Legal Centre, because apparently a city the size of the Gold Coast—the sixth largest city in the country—does not need two funded community legal centres.

What we see time and time again is the Labor Party failing to use Queensland taxpayers' money in a sound and efficient way. This is another prime example of that. Perhaps that \$1.8 million per annum could be contributed to Legal Aid or the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. There could be other mechanisms within the Department of Justice and Attorney-General rather than having just another advisory body that has no power to actually change anything. Just occasionally, maybe it will be asked its opinion on something but it has no binding force on the Court of Appeal in the first place.

We have seen—it has been noted in the report of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee—that this is modelled on the Victorian Sentencing Advisory Council. What the non-government members address in their statement of reservation is the fact that, I think in its entire iteration, the Victorian Sentencing Advisory Council has been used maybe twice. When the model this is based on has been hardly ever used and the previous iteration of this exact same body was not used in a two-year period before its abolition, one really must wonder why we are wasting not only our time but also the \$1.8 million, which I think could be used in a much better way.

**Mr Stevens:** Health.

**Miss BARTON:** We could be using it to pay the nurses that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition today pointed out we are not even paying.

**Mr Crandon:** Additional police on the northern Gold Coast.

**Miss BARTON:** We could be using it to put extra police on the northern Gold Coast, as my good friend and neighbour the member for Coomera has pointed out. There are many things we could be using this \$1.8 million for.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I would like to hear the member, please.

**An honourable member:** Very interesting!

**Miss BARTON:** It is a great contribution, Mr Deputy Speaker. What we have seen time and time again is the Labor government in this state not only ignoring the wishes of the people of Queensland but also wasting \$1.8 million while slapping the faces of the people of Queensland by not even giving them what they want.

What really gets my goat about what we are discussing today is the Labor government again proving that it is weak on crime. What it is again doing is rolling out the red carpet to organised crime in this state. What we have seen is the organised crime and trade union royal commissions identify very serious concerns. What we do have is a government that is ruled and controlled by unions. The shadow Attorney-General himself said that this is a government of the unions by the unions for the unions. This is not a government that cares about the wants of the people of Queensland. If it did, it would be saying to the people of the Gold Coast, 'Absolutely we understand your concerns about organised crime.' We would not be rolling out the red carpet to organised crime, in particular criminal motorcycle gangs on the Gold Coast.

The shadow police minister and member for Everton touched on the experience we had on the Gold Coast before the very tough laws we introduced. He spoke about the fact that there were people on the Gold Coast who feared for their safety. He spoke about the fact that criminal motorcycle gangs in this state thought it was okay to rock up to the Southport Police Station and demand that people who had been arrested and were accused of committing crimes in this state be released. It is an absolute disgrace that we have in this state a government that simply wants to go weak at the knees when it comes to tackling organised crime, that wants to roll out the red carpet for organised crime in this state.


What I find particularly galling is that we have seen time and time again, particularly from the trade union royal commission, reports about corruption within the CFMEU. We have seen consistent reports of corruption within the union movement. The Labor government does not care, because what it cares about more is making sure organisations like the CFMEU pay their dues and contribute to election campaigns. That is what it is about for this Labor government. As I said, it is ruled by unions and for unions. It does not care about what the people of the Gold Coast want. It does not care about what the people on the north side of Brisbane want when it comes to making sure that the criminal motorcycle gang clubhouse that was there does not reopen.

We have seen time and time again evidence, ahead of not only this parliament but ahead of the trade union royal commission, about the absolute contempt the CFMEU has for not only the people of Queensland but also the people of Australia. This government absolutely ignores that. It does not seem

to care about corruption in union ranks. It cares about making sure the unions in this state have power. That is why all it ever does is meet with unions. That is why all it ever does is union bidding. It is only concerned about what its mates want—whether it is jobs for the boys, whether it is making sure that the CFMEU is given an opportunity in this state—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Broadwater, I know that you are on a roll, but could you please move that the debate be adjourned.

Debate, on motion of Miss Barton, adjourned.

 **Miss BARTON** (Broadwater—LNP) (7.38 pm), continuing: As I was saying before we adjourned for the 6 pm debate on the private member's motion and the dinner break—

**Mr Perrett:** You were on a roll.

**Miss BARTON:** I was on a roll. I expect my good colleagues on this side of the House to make sure that I get back my mojo. As I was saying, we have consistently said that, instead of being a government of the people for the people and by the people, this Palaszczuk Labor government is of the unions by the unions and for the unions. We have consistently seen that this Palaszczuk Labor government not only is asleep at the wheel but also does not care about what it is that the people of Queensland want. If it did care, it would take the opportunity to put things to them, for example, changing the way Queenslanders vote. Another example would be the government taking the opportunity to put to the people of Queensland the amendments that have been proposed and that are outside the long title of this bill.

They consistently talk about the fact that they are a government that wishes to consult with the people of Queensland. What I say is: hypocrisy, thy name is Labor. The actions of this government consistently show that they do not consult with the people of Queensland; they consult with the unions. Time and time again we have seen union thuggery in this state. This government does not give a damn. They do not. All they care about is making sure that they get their dues from union members and they get their election contributions from organisations like the CFMEU, the MUA, the ETU and the like.

Consistently we have seen grave problems with corruption amongst the CFMEU and their officials and in the construction industry. We saw from the trade union royal commission recommendations come forward about the way that we need to deal with this rampant union corruption. We have seen it consistently on the Gold Coast which is ordinarily a construction hub of Queensland. We are seeing it today with the Commonwealth Games—

**Mr Stevens:** Carrara.

**Miss BARTON:** At Carrara. I take the interjection of the member for Mermaid Beach. We have seen today continued interruption by the CFMEU—

**Mr Stevens:** Thuggery and extortion.

**Miss BARTON:** It is thuggery and extortion. Not only are they rolling out the red carpet to criminal motorcycle gangs and organised crime in Queensland by saying that they want to get rid of the toughest laws in this country that deal with organised crime, they are rolling out the red carpet to thuggish unions. They are rolling out the red carpet to thuggish unions because that is what they do. That is what Labor does. All they do is listen to the unions and do exactly what the—

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. Nowhere in the legislation before the House or indeed in the amendment that has been foreshadowed by the Attorney-General is there any mention of trade unions or any other sort of industrial organisation. I ask you to please direct the member for Broadwater to come back to the substance of the bill and the very narrow substance of the amendment.

**Mr STEVENS:** On the point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, quite clearly the member was drawing a nexus between the CFMEU and the behaviour at Carrara and the changes in the amendment that have been foisted on this House at a very late stage. What the member is saying is totally relevant and she should continue.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Crawford): Member for Broadwater, if you can stay relevant to the bill and all other members do the same we can get out of here at an early hour.

**Miss BARTON:** By the government delaying the introduction of this measure they are saying to organised crime that they are welcome in Queensland again. That is what they are saying. When we look at organised crime in Queensland, we see that there are the criminal motorcycle gangs. The Gold Coast experienced the scourge of those. The shadow police minister and I mentioned the riot in Broadwater. The member for Mermaid Beach well knows the impact the criminal motorcycle gangs have had on the Gold Coast.

It is not just organised crime in criminal motorcycle gangs. We have seen organised crime in the union movement. We have seen such findings come from the trade union royal commission. They said that there are significant wrongdoings in the union movement. I read in the papers the other day that in an attempt to truly stamp out the wrongdoings of individual members of the union that looks after the construction sector they said that instead of making the union pay the fine—which, of course, is not a deterrent for a union with coffers the size of those of the CFMEU—they wanted to start fining the individual members. That is to be a true deterrent.

What we know is that this government does not care about prosecuting people who commit wrongdoings against the good people of the Gold Coast when it comes to making sure that the venues for the Commonwealth Games are built. As the member for Burleigh said, they are soft on the crime. We have consistently seen that.

That is why the good people of my electorate of Broadwater consistently tell me that they do not want the VLAD laws weakened or reduced in any way, shape or form. They absolutely know that the measures that we put in place when we were in government were wholly and solely focused on making sure that the people of Queensland were safe. That is why we took tough action when it needed to be taken.

The actions that we took are so respected that the South Australian Labor government is looking at doing exactly what we did. What we said is that we did not want members of organised crime gangs, whether it is criminal motorcycle gangs or others, being able to associate so they can commit their crimes. They could be criminal motorcycle gangs, drug rings, paedophile rings or members of organisations that might be perpetrating criminal acts, like unions.

This government does not want to stop people from committing the crime in the first place. They say, 'These are things that we are going to do.' They want to copy what New South Wales is doing. The problem is that New South Wales realise that their laws do not stop people from colluding and committing crimes in the first place. They simply say that once they have committed a crime they can no longer get together.

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The member for Broadwater is very clearly ranging into discussing laws that are not before the House—laws in relation to criminal association and those sorts of matters. They are not laws that are before the House at the moment. The matters that are before the House are the Sentencing Advisory Council and the particular matter that relates to the postponement of the application of one particular element.

**Mr WALKER:** I rise on the point of order. The government cannot have it both ways. They cannot say that this is a bill about the Sentencing Advisory Council and we should not be talking about the wider ranging debate that they have brought on us by adding this amendment at the last moment. The member for Broadwater is absolutely entitled to talk about those things that are triggered by the late addition of this provision to the main bill.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I think we can give a degree of latitude, but there is clearly a line. Member for Broadwater, can you keep your comments to the bill where you can.

**Miss BARTON:** What we have seen through the amendment that has been tabled by the Attorney today and was foreshadowed not in this House but in the *Courier-Mail* is evidence of this government weakening its stance against criminal actions, particularly within the construction industry. One of the things that we were very clear about when we were in government, and which was widely respected particularly by the broader Gold Coast community and across Queensland, was that we were not going to tolerate illegal action, particularly not in the construction industry.

We wanted to make sure that people who were engaging in those industries, like the construction industry, and needed licences were of good character. It not only goes to the people we give licences to and making sure that we do not give them to people who should not receive them but also goes to the integrity of the system. In terms of those people who are of good character and have those licences it is about making sure that they are not associated with criminal elements of organisations like the CFMEU. It is about making sure that they are not associated with elements of criminal motorcycle gangs. It is about sending a message to the people of Queensland that we as a state will not tolerate criminal activity and criminal organisations. The message that the Labor government is sending is that they will tolerate it. They will roll out the red carpet.

The thing that galls me the most is that whilst they are sending a message that we will be soft on crime, we will tolerate criminal activity within organisations like the CFMEU and we will tolerate organisations like criminal motorcycle gangs and roll the red carpet out for them we are wasting \$1.8 million on an advisory council that in its previous iteration between 2010 and 2012 did nothing. In my contribution before the 6 pm motion and dinner I talked about some of the things that we could be

spending that \$1.8 million on. A prime example is the Robina Community Legal Centre. The Attorney-General has said that the sixth largest city in Australia does not have any need for two community legal centres. The Attorney-General should go and see the work that the Robina Community Legal Centre does on a Thursday night. I know that that is a much better way to spend \$1.8 million.

Here is a novel idea. They could put it into legal aid. They could put it into the department of public prosecution. They could use it in another way in the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. Instead, they are using \$1.8 million not to employ extra nurses or employ extra doctors, but to set up an advisory council that has no power and will simply say if requested, 'This is what we think you should do.'

What I think they should do is send a message to the Queensland community: (1) that they care about what they think, because they clearly do not—that is why all they ever do is listen to the union movement; (2) that they do not want to be soft on crime; and (3) that they believe in spending money in the right way. The problem is that we know that Labor does not know how to spend money in the right way. That is why when we came into government in 2012 the incoming Treasury briefing said that it was unsustainable because Labor do not know how to spend money.

As I said, there are much better ways that they could be spending the \$1.8 million per annum that is proposed for the Sentencing Advisory Council. They could use it to make sure that the police on the Gold Coast have the opportunity to tackle the criminal organisations that they are now about to give free rein to. There is a novel idea. As I say, they could use it to fund community legal centres. They could use it to support community legal centres that work with women who have been victims of domestic and family violence. They could use it to support community legal centres in rural and regional Queensland. There is a novel idea. That is a much better way to spend \$1.8 million.

Instead, what we see is a government that is run by unions, for unions, of unions. Government members do not care about the people of Queensland. They do not care about the fact that they are rolling out the red carpet to organised crime not only in this state more broadly but particularly within the construction industry. What we have seen is the government slap the people of Queensland across the face and say that they do not care about what they want. They do not care about consulting with Queenslanders. If they did, this amendment would have gone to the committee and the people of Queensland would have had an opportunity to have a say. At least we were given more than 18 minutes notice. At least I had the opportunity to read about it in the *Courier-Mail* rather than when the Attorney-General launched the debate today, but it is still an absolute disgrace and it is a waste of \$1.8 million.