




Speech By
Hon. Bill Byrne

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Record of Proceedings, 29 November 2016

SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. WS BYRNE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Economic Development) (8.31 pm): I thank the committee for its work and in particular the committee chair, the member for Ferny Grove. What a load of delusional nonsense we have heard from the opposition this evening in this debate. It is obvious that very few members of the opposition have actually read the bill—they certainly have not read the explanatory notes—because their contributions have been completely vacuous. The non-government members' statement of reservation was a cherrypicked omelette of comments selectively quoted and repeated in this debate by the opposition. What the report did prove is the incredible level of consultation and engagement that has led to the introduction of this signature bill in this House. The Attorney-General is to be congratulated on a body of work that represents the gold standard in consultation, transparency and intellectual rigour. It is a fantastic achievement. It is an entirely operationally focused piece of legislation. As usual in this House, it appears that no-one from the opposition has actually read the bill—just like an SDS and budget papers.

The government's approach to this topic is in stark contrast to what the history of those opposite really is. The Premier, the Attorney-General and the police minister have addressed the technical elements and gave specific opinions about the substance of this bill compared to those from the opposition who have addressed none—as we just saw from the last speaker, the member for Whitsunday, who did not speak about the bill at all. In the few minutes that I have I want to flag the LNP's schizophrenic approach. The truth is that the LNP's record on crime I would characterise as focused entirely on media spin, synthetic optics and being completely ineffectual in terms of what really matters. Let us talk about this soft-on-crime mantra. There are more police in Queensland than ever before due to the Palaszczuk Labor government, they have more resources—millions of dollars extra, well beyond anything those opposite across the chamber did—going into organised crime and drugs and there are more prisoners in Queensland than ever before, by the way. With regard to this nonsense that we are soft on crime, there are more prisoners—more people locked up—more police and more resources, but those opposite still run around saying that we are soft on crime. It is a complete nonsense.

Let us talk about the effect. In 2009 LNP members opposed Labor's organised crime bill, the COA. They were apparently concerned about the civil liberties of bikies at that point. They were apparently concerned for years about the civil liberties yet did absolutely nothing, but Campbell Newman persisted with equating colours with football jerseys. The LNP did absolutely nothing about bikies or organised crime while in opposition or while in government—up to a point. In 2012 I stood in this House and pleaded with the government of the day—Campbell Newman's government—to do something about bikies. About the same time I recall the member for Mermaid Beach—and he reflected on this earlier this evening—making his speech which aligned very closely with my perspective. Those sentiments were completely rejected in this chamber and I was assailed.

According to the LNP at that point, there was no trouble, no problem, nothing to see here. It did nothing until 2013 and the Broadbeach incident. What did we see then? We saw a rushed, draconian approach that did nothing but suppress the optics and turned the whole community against the VLAD laws. My recollection is that it was 4½ hours from the first reading to when it rammed the second reading debate on a substantive piece of legislation through this House on a Tuesday night. That is what we saw—4½ hours from first reading to second reading based on the optics of an event down the coast after being in denial for years and years. That is what we saw from those opposite—completely ineffectual, worried about the optics.

In this debate the shadow Attorney-General suggested a couple of things. One is that he suggested the bikies left. Other LNP members have also suggested this during the debate. That is totally false. What happened? The *Starship Enterprise* flew over and Scotty beamed them up, did he? The fact is they did not go anywhere; they stayed here, they took their colours off and they kept on doing what they were doing. Did the ice issue just disappear because those opposite were so successful in dealing with bikies? Absolute nonsense, factually incorrect, complete and utter drivel coming from those opposite! The shadow Attorney-General did say one thing that was correct: his perspective on drugs. I recall standing in this House and asking about the street price of ice after the ramming through of that legislation by the LNP during the last parliament. I was attacked for supporting the advertising of illicit drugs in Queensland, and Premier Newman led that assault. I found that rather ironic given that his bikie task force leader, retired Brigadier Bill Mellor, identified that the street price of drugs was a significant metric in terms of the success of the LNP laws—that is, the actual effect on organised crime, one would say. It is supply and demand after all! Of course, this data was all publicly available, but the LNP in government refused to allow the facts to pass its lips—much the same as what we have seen here this evening.

What did the LNP laws do? What was achieved? They drove bikies underground—there is no doubt about that—and bikies did not leave this state. They did not depart. They did not go to some magical place in heaven; they continued to exist and undertake their activities. The LNP suppressed the optics and proceeded to harass every person on a motorbike in this state. That sanctioned indiscriminate stop and search turned the community against every aspect of the LNP's efforts, and that happened virtually overnight.

The facts are overwhelming. Drugs are the centre of gravity in organised crime in this state, so what is really happening and what happened while the other mob was in power? Let us look at the first-year comparisons on crime, because much is said about statistics in here. Let us look at first-year comparisons—our first year and their first year. There were 30 per cent more robberies under their first year. There were 31 per cent more unlawful entries in their first year. There were 73 per cent more manslaughter charges in their first year. There were 52 per cent more driving causing death charges in their first year. There were 24 per cent more unlawful use of motor vehicles in their first year, and then they stopped publishing crime statistics. That is the truth about them.

What have we done? What are the ALP's efforts in government? In 2015-16 more than 300 arrests have been made and 1,200 charges laid through covert operations—over three times the number that occurred in 2014 during this apparent Valhalla period of the Liberal National Party. In 2015-16 amphetamines and ice with a street value of over \$2 million were removed from the streets through covert operations—10 times what was done by that mob when it was in government in 2013-14.

Let us look at what is going on nationally. In Queensland, during the term of the LNP government, drug offences went like this. I heard one of the members opposite saying, 'Drug offences? That means we were working harder.' It would be great if the members opposite were working harder and intercepting more drugs. The only problem is that the street price went down that way. They would never admit that. Drug offences were going that way and the street prices were going that way. There was no pressure on supply and demand. The statistics demonstrate quite unequivocally that, while this state and this country were subjected to an avalanche of ice coming in from overseas, what were the members opposite doing? They were running around worrying about a bunch of idiots wearing bikie gang colours. They did absolutely nothing about the issue.

All we have to do is look at the median street price of drugs. The ice border seizures went like that while the members opposite were talking about bikies and they are still going that way. While the members opposite were in charge, the median purity of ice went from 20 per cent to over 60 per cent. While they were in charge, ease of access for users went through the roof. What were the members opposite doing? They were running around worrying about some idiot with the word 'Rebels' on the back of his jacket while the state and the country was experiencing an avalanche of ice.

The other night I listened to a speech delivered by the senior magistrate for the domestic violence court on the Gold Coast. The senior magistrate spoke about the reasons domestic violence is such a problem on the Gold Coast. What was the first word that came out of his mouth? 'Ice.' Not only is ice at the centre of organised crime in this state but also it is feeding directly into domestic violence. What do we hear about the real issues that people are confronting? Nothing—not a thing from those opposite.

When the LNP was in government, ice use went up threefold. In 2005—and more so today—more than 10 per cent of Queenslanders and Australians had used ice. What do we hear from the members opposite about the effectiveness of their laws? Those laws have achieved absolutely nothing. As a government, the members opposite spent three years unconscious behind the wheel. Half of that time they talked about football jerseys. They had no idea about crime. They had no idea about what was really going on. They get up in this House and embarrass themselves.