




Speech By
Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 23 October 2019

SUMMARY OFFENCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (4.22 pm): The Palaszczuk Labor government is weak on crime. It does not matter whether it is bikie crime, robbery and burglary in the suburbs of our cities and towns, hooliganism or indeed illegal protesters: the Queensland community knows that it cannot trust this lefty government and its poor policy decisions; a police minister emasculated by a cabinet and a party room that does not believe in deterrents and appropriate punishment, that does not believe the police can be trusted and that only pays lip-service to the themes of law and order; a government that removed the toughest bikie laws in the land—laws that they actually voted for when in opposition, laws that empowered police to break the back of bikie gangs, laws that allowed the police and the CCC to hunt down the purveyors of misery in the form of methamphetamines and other illicit drugs by holding coercive hearings, and laws that disrupted the culture of outlaw bikie gangs by taking away their symbols and shutting their clubhouses.

Steps were taken by the LNP government that not only gave police the laws they needed but also provided them with the resources and the authority to enforce those laws. In Queensland under the LNP coppers knew that they had a government that backed them up. It included increasing the non-parole period for murder of a police officer from 20 to 25 years and the introduction of the 'one punch can kill' laws to ensure cowardly acts causing death and serious harm were properly prosecuted and punished. The LNP backed up our police and our community with more resources such as a police helicopter that for years the Bligh Labor government fought against.

Mr RYAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I was being very generous to the member. The point of order is on relevance. The bill is very specific about dangerous attachment devices. The member has been going for over a minute and a half on nothing relevant to that at all.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Weir): Member for Clayfield, I understand that this issue does have implications around police and policing, but I would encourage you to come back to the offences that are in this bill.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I will do so. Perhaps if I put some context around the clauses for the minister—I am developing, if you like, the argument around the provision of penalties and how penalties are determined and how they take effect. As part of the policy consideration under the long title of the bill, which refers to the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act, I think it is important that we set some parameters, if you like, around the debate that I am going to have, because I will be coming very quickly to the provisions of the legislation.

I will give some details in relation to the attitude taken by government in formulating policy and the policy in relation to this legislation because, quite frankly, the public in and around Brisbane are sick and tired of the protesters who have been gluing themselves to roads and other things, disrupting them—that is, the public—going about their normal lawful business. The policy behind it is important and the resources behind the policy are important as well. It is also important to look at history and put that into context.

What did we do in dealing with breaches of the law, in dealing with people who broke the law? We backed our police and our community with 1,100 more officers over four years. Unlike the Bligh Labor government, of which the current minister was a member, we made arrangements for a police helicopter to be brought into the state. It was a policy that we took to the last election and a policy that we still pursue. Recent events in Townsville—and I referred to hooliganism in our suburbs in our cities—show the need for that more than ever.

We funded our police with a better digital wireless network—\$600 million went into a digital wireless network so that they could have secure communications so that people such as protesters could not listen to their scanners and hear when the police were turning up, coming to break them up—something that had been ignored by the Bligh Labor government for years and years. What else did we do? We put in place a rapid action group for the Gold Coast and later extended that to the north.

Mr HARPER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. This is straying right away from the intent of the bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is a little bit, but it does deal with penalties. I am going to allow a little bit of latitude.

Mr NICHOLLS: The government's policy failure and lack of action has simply—and this is the point—served to embolden all those who want to thumb their noses at the current law regarding assembly and protest here in Queensland. These protesters thumb their noses at this government because the government has a demonstrated record of incompetence when it comes to law and order in this state, and Queenslanders know it. They know intrinsically almost without having to be told that a Labor lefty government with an emasculated police minister is not going to protect them and is not going to take the steps necessary to ensure that they can go about their daily business without interference from a bunch of stupid idiots who seek only to gain publicity for themselves. I am not talking about the government; I am talking about the protesters who are out there today.

Queenslanders simply want to know that their kids are safe, that action is being taken to stop drugs being peddled, that they can go shopping without getting caught up in a bikie war, that their cars will not get pinched, that their homes will not be broken into and that they can get to and from work without needless and unlawful protest. In the regions and on farms and in abattoirs, they want to know that protesters will not breach hard-won privacy and property rights which are the very foundations of our modern democratic society, the society in fact that gives people the ability to lawfully protest.

When this bill passes it will be a small step in addressing the previous failures of the Palaszczuk government's policy inaction, but why has it taken so long? We can legitimately ask what has spurred this government into action, when the writing has been on the wall for months. I first called out the stupidity of the protesters this amendment is directed towards following the first act of stupidity on 17 June. I called on the government to recover the costs of the emergency services personnel who were deployed to deal with this offender and his compatriot at the time.

On 20 June I wrote a letter to the minister and Police Commissioner outlining the disruption that was being caused to people in my electorate—the people who could not get to work—and the concerns people had in relation to what would happen if there had been a real emergency. Not a pretend climate emergency, but a real emergency that required the police, fire brigade or ambulance to turn up somewhere to save lives and protect property. I wrote that letter on 20 June. I received a response from the new Police Commissioner on 15 July, and I received a very short response from the minister on 25 July. For the sake of completeness, I table all three of those documents.

Tabled paper: Letters, dated 20 June 2019, from the member for Clayfield, Mr Tim Nicholls MP, to the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services, Hon. Mark Ryan, and the Police Commissioner, Queensland Police Service, Ms K Carroll APM, regarding protest activity [1927](#).

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 15 July 2019, from the Police Commissioner, Queensland Police Service, Ms K Carroll APM, to the member for Clayfield, Mr Tim Nicholls MP, regarding protest activity [1928](#).

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 25 July 2019, from the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services, Hon. Mark Ryan, to the member for Clayfield, Mr Tim Nicholls MP, regarding recent protest activity [1929](#).

No action was taken. Emboldened, a week later the protesters struck again. No action was taken. In early July another series of protests occurred, and again no action was taken. On 15 July the Premier stood up and issued her sternest warning yet. She said, 'Please take no further action. Please stop illegally protesting.' Wasn't that effective! We had the week of protests here in Brisbane and finally there was some action. Is that action effective? I would say not. In fact, just yesterday protesters outside of this place were declaring how they could still cause huge disruption and get around the proposed legislation. The time has come to say—and I say it here today—that this law will not work. It is too little and it is too late. The protesters will get around this law. They will thumb their noses at this government, as they have done for the past four months. This government refuses to put the interests of the broader public ahead of those of a noisy minority.

The idea of legitimate protest is something we should—and I believe we do—all support. Legislation in Queensland, including the Peaceful Assembly Act, reflects the expectations of Queenslanders; that is, causing disruption—which does occur—by marching or assembling after notification of the march is acceptable, and indeed it is accepted. While disruptive—and it is disruptive—it is not unnecessarily so. What is now happening is that the protest is the disruption itself. It is not the assembly or the protest that is the aim of these ratbags: it is the disruption as an end in itself. In effect, the means has become the end. Previously, the end was a gathering, a public meeting, a show of dissent or difference. I am all for that. I am happy to stand out the front there, and I have done it many times with my friends from the ETU and the CFMMEU. They have occasionally asked me to take some far more athletic steps than I would do off the front of the porte cochere, and they are perfectly entitled to and I welcome that, but this is not what we are talking about. This is disruption as an end in itself, not a means to an end of genuine dissent, disagreement or expressing a different point of view.

I believe that, in addition to what we see here today and the amendments moved by my friend the member for Toowoomba North, stronger, faster and bigger financial penalties need to be considered. The cost to the people of Queensland, starting with the cost of emergency personnel and the loss to business and the economy, are large. The loss to protesters should be commensurate. As has been said, we will support this legislation. I urge members to support the amendments moved by the member for Toowoomba North so that this legislation can be effective. I call on the Palaszczuk government to finally grow a spine, take serious action and take on the crims in Queensland.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Weir): Member for Clayfield, that last sentence about 'growing a spine' is apparently unparliamentary and I ask that you withdraw.

Mr NICHOLLS: In the dignity of parliament, I withdraw.