




Speech By
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Record of Proceedings, 21 November 2013

**CRIMINAL LAW (CRIMINAL ORGANISATIONS DISRUPTION) AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr CHOAT** (Ipswich West—LNP) (5.52 pm): I also rise to contribute to this extremely important debate on the Criminal Law (Criminal Organisations Disruption) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013. Recently, this House debated and passed legislation that draws a line in the sand regarding the activities of criminal gangs that have, sadly, entrenched themselves into communities across this state. The laws have already been passed and indeed the ones that we are debating today are harsh, and there is good reason for that.

Miss Barton: What do people want?

Mr CHOAT: I take that interjection from the member for Broadwater because that is the feeling of my community. We have seen laws professing to deal with this issue passed in this place before by the Bligh government, and what effect did they have? Perhaps that is a question that would be best answered by the people of the Gold Coast—people like the innocent woman gunned down last year while out shopping, people like the families terrorised in a Broadbeach restaurant while gang members engaged in a violent rampage around them or perhaps the families of the police officers at the local station put under siege by criminal gang members following that brawl. What would those people be saying? I could guess, but I know what my people are saying. The people of Ipswich West do not want to experience the acts of terror witnessed on the Gold Coast in our townships and suburbs. My people want a government that does whatever is necessary to rid our community of drug users, pushers and thugs. My people are smart and they understand that if we do not deal with this problem decisively it will spread like a cancerous scourge. We have all seen the footage on our televisions and the documentaries that show just how far this can go. We know about the links between criminal gangs and illegal drugs and, in turn, the links between drugs and crime on our streets. Put simply, these criminals do not get their millions from the sale of lemonade or, indeed, from changing locks. They get their filthy money through inflicting misery on our most vulnerable, whether through drug addiction, violence, stealing or even death. The crime associated with criminal gangs goes a lot further, including to murder and extortion. Perhaps there is not an area of crime it does not reach.

This information comes as no surprise to our community. Of that I am certain. I will say that out in the community there is an overwhelming sense of relief that finally we have a government that is prepared to change the system and make some tough and challenging decisions to ensure the rot stops. Some have labelled these laws extreme. I say that if the situation is not dealt with swiftly and with severity it will become extreme. We have seen what happens when criminal gangs grow unchecked. Could we see the Gold Coast or, indeed, any of our communities subjected to the bloody mayhem of the gang territories of South America?

The objectives of the bill are to protect our community and to combat the threat which criminal gangs pose to public safety and wellbeing. It also provides some regulation of some key industry areas. The bill amends a number of acts and regulations which relate to various laws and to a number of industries identified as significant with regard to the activities of participants in criminal gangs. Indeed, we have heard from the Attorney-General and other honourable members about the technical and legislative provisions contained in the bill. These are designed to ensure that the activities of criminal organisations and their participants are thwarted in their ability to both prosper and flourish. Importantly, it severely impairs the ability for criminals to launder and, indeed, make money under the pretence of running legitimate businesses. These punitive financial measures will hit these criminals where it hurts and this is the best opportunity to cut these organisations off at the knees.

There have been many revelations since September and some of them have been quite confronting in this area. Others have illustrated just how deep the infiltration of criminal gangs is. I remember somebody recently asking me at my local hardware how would I feel if my locksmith turned out to be a front for a criminal gang's operation? We have heard from the member for Broadwater about people having their cars towed et cetera, and this is something that we need to be very mindful of. This is the danger: these criminals are often wolves in sheep's clothing. Every day people have been unwittingly exposed to the activities of some of the worst criminals simply by getting a key cut or a vehicle towed. This is truly frightening.

This week many of our year 12s have been enjoying schoolies celebrations. I have had the pleasure of meeting so many of our local schoolies and also people from organisations like Red Frogs who do so much to keep them safe and to help them when they get into trouble. I have heard stories about the drugs concocted in the most crude and filthy environments with additives designed to save the crooks money. I am told that it costs the same amount of money to make high quality drugs as it does low quality ones. Drug criminals do not want to waste their efforts on perhaps the one-off drug users like schoolies experimenting; they want to provide higher quality drugs to regular users. So they cut corners for the batches brewed for schoolies and people like that by adding battery acid, rat poison and other substances which can provide the sensation of a high.

I was astonished to hear that they actually finely grind up glass so that when swallowed it will cut the insides of an unsuspecting young person, allowing substances like battery acid to better seep into the body to give the sensation of a 'high'. This year I am sure there is a lot less of that on the Gold Coast in particular.

I want to touch on the chorus from what might be called the intelligentsia—an interesting term, as you would be aware—the so-called social elitists, civil libertarians and general leftists, do-gooders—however you want to term them. What a bunch of out-of-touch imbeciles! They have no appreciation for anybody who has been the victim of a crime, and I can say that because I have not heard one of them speak up for those who have suffered at the hands of these criminal gangs. They bleat on about the rights of the criminals, and yet they will not lift a finger to protect our community.

I have heard a lot of comments which are trying to provoke fear: fear of people getting on their bikes to ride to work and being strip-searched on the corner or harassed and asked for photos of tattoos. What a lot of nonsense and rot! These are just scaremongering tactics of the intelligentsia, and it really makes me quite angry. We have some fantastic people in our community who do a lot of community work who happen to be interested in, and who ride, motorcycles. The Ulysses Club, for instance, now has two fantastic branches; of course our Lockyer branch, and also the new Ipswich branch.

I am very proud to say that I have a strong association with the Ulysses Club: I helped them fund raise. Last year I had the absolute pleasure of participating in their annual toy ride from Brassall through Ipswich to the showgrounds. Those of you who follow the local media such as the *Queensland Times* will know how that ended up, but certainly I can say that it was such a pleasure. I was a bit of an anomaly, I have to admit. Here we have about 800 nice big Harleys and my one little GPR 50cc scooter! It was a lot of fun; we gave out a lot of toys; and I really think that this is something we should all be proud of. In fact, I would encourage everyone to come out to Ipswich on 8 December and participate in that run. You do not have to preregister; you can do it on the day. If you would like to come out, please let me know and I would be happy to connect you with the right people.

The other night in this place I heard the Leader of the Opposition's reflections on the year that was, and I was chuffed to have made a mention in her speech. She said that I referred to myself as a 'Stalinist'. This really speaks volumes about the lightweight opposition that she leads. For the information of honourable members, the reference was made in my local media by a certain member of the Labor Party when referring to our tough criminal gang laws and locking up paedophiles.

Mrs Miller: Tell us about the racing pigeons!

Mr CHOAT: Oh, I am going to bring them up too. When asked by a journalist about that, I said I was not worried about being labelled a 'Stalinist' or 'draconian' if it meant doing what was required to protect my community. Let me reflect on the half-witted remarks by the Leader of the Opposition earlier during this debate. Oddly, she seems to have a fixation with pigeon racing—somehow trying to debase and ridicule pigeon fanciers in this place.

I will again remind honourable members of a great Labor man of this House, Mr Doug Sherrington MLA, member for Salisbury for many years and revered by all who knew him, including his fellow members of parliament and, of course, the members of his pigeon racing club. The late Mr Sherrington actually has a park named in his honour in the seat of Inala. He was a great man who the member for Inala insults with her juvenile statements, as she does the many hundreds of proud Queensland pigeon fanciers, including myself. What a disgrace this rail wrecking Leader of the Opposition is! She should know that Mr Sherrington's granddaughter was actually in this parliament today. What an absolute disgrace!

By discussing those issues I do not want to understate the importance of this bill in any way. You see, for me it is legislation like this that shows this government's courage of conviction. We make the tough decisions—something not seen in government in Queensland since 1998. This legislation will go further to ensure the government is able to seriously impair the ability of criminal gangs and their participants to commit crime, recruit members and avoid appropriate punishment. It ensures this most serious issue can be dealt with by the legal and corrective services systems. Queensland no longer represents low-hanging fruit for these criminals willing to take advantage of all and any situation they can to make a quick buck and who have no regard for those lives they ruin in the process.

I would really also like to thank the Attorney-General and his department, particularly those staff who came along to the hearings of our committee yesterday. I really thank you for your diligence, your openness and your frankness, and it really made the committee's job so much easier for us to come to the conclusions in our report. I would like to of course also thank my committee colleagues, not just for the work that we have done with regard to this bill, but also throughout the past year. It has been a pleasure to serve on the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee with you all. That does actually include the members of the opposition and crossbenchers, because I believe it really reflects just how good this system is and how it really does work and make a difference.

I do have a particular thought for our secretariat who this week, not unlike ourselves, have put in some absolutely sterling hours to get things done to support us in our work. The work they do cannot be underestimated, and I know that my fellow members have the same appreciation for all committee secretariats of this parliament.

I would also like to take the opportunity to say to my people in Ipswich West that we have made some really tough decisions this year, but do you know what? Our community is going to be so much better for it in the years to come. I am very proud to be your member. I will go in to bat for you every day, and I will make sure that people who want to impact on your daily lives and the safety and wellbeing of your family do not gain an inch under this government.

Fellow members, I am very, very proud to support this bill. I trust that when it is debated later on under the consideration in detail, that you will listen diligently and pay particular attention to how the opposition conduct themselves.