



City of Gold Coast

Tabled by Cr Paul Taylor
4-10-16 11-25am

Office of the Mayor

Ms Emily Booth

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Our Ref: MS#58279584

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Mr Mark Furner MP
Member for Ferny Grove
Chair
Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Furner

In late August this year I wrote to Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk MP and other Members of Parliament to express my very serious concern about repeal of the Vicious Lawless Association Disestablishment Act (VLAD) and proposed "softer" laws to replace this legislation.

On my understanding of the Serious and Organised Crime Legislation Amendment Bill, I am afraid City of Gold Coast will again be plunged into the climate of fear that accompanied the crime wave unleashed by outlaw motorbike gangs over the past decade.

I note that in introducing this Bill, Attorney-General Yvette D'Ath said it would provide "... a return to traditional criminal law approaches and well-proven methods of crime detection, investigation and prosecution." Well, I'm sorry, but sad experience proves beyond argument that previous approaches simply could not remove the threat posed by outlaw motorcycle gangs to the Gold Coast.

No reasonable person can assess the level of criminal activity engaged in by motorbike gang members compared to the rest of society and not conclude that they simply despise the values the rest of our community holds dear.

Nor can any reasonable person fail to recognise that this criminal element is a grave and violent threat to ordinary citizens wanting to go about their daily business.

Time and again we see innocent people caught up in vicious assaults that wreck lives. Media continually report murders, other deaths and maimings caused by vicious thugs who deliberately intimidate others with their gang colours and their anti-social thundering machines.

The trail of devastation caused to thousands of families by the drugs peddled by these gang members is horrendous. How many more young lives are to be wasted by addiction peddled

by motorbike gang members? Make no mistake, drug running is a core activity associated with most of these clubs. The evidence is irrefutable.

This is why they thumb their noses at decency and humanity to live their lives outside the law. They scorn our society. Why should we let them pretend once more to be honourable citizens?

Few people living outside this city can appreciate what it was like on the Gold Coast when bikies roamed without fear of the law. We were a city under siege. But the VLAD law stopped them dead in their tracks. Nothing else had worked but that did.

Now, since the government has signalled its intention to weaken the provisions there has been a marked return of these outlaws to the Coast. The signs are there - and growing. Crime statistics associated with traditional bikie activities are on the rise. Nor is it simply petty crime: violent assaults have increased markedly.

As Mayor of this city I see the signs and I can feel their impetus building. Their stand-over tactics are an affront to decency but they tap into streams of underhand cash because their threats are so serious most business people targeted cannot see an alternative to paying for "protection".

I know some people have real concerns about the social justice aspect of banning people from wearing certain clothes. But the prominent display of their colours is integral to the gang menace. There is a psychology behind it and it works.

Similarly, I know there are concerns about the severity of sentencing introduced under VLAD. But it worked. Tough sentencing was crucial to enable the Queensland Police Service to gather additional evidence to rein-in the activities of these organised criminals. And that is what they are; the evidence is overwhelming.

The harsh sentencing introduced by VLAD applied vital pressure to associates of these gangs. If you like, the weak link in the chain of their criminality. Faced with the prospect of lengthy time behind bars, those on the fringes supplied the evidence previously unavailable to judges and juries that enabled accurate assessment of the perpetrators of criminal activities.

The watering-down of the consorting offence undermines the effectiveness of this provision. It will materially assist outlaw motorcycle clubs to go about their criminal activities and recruit new members with far greater ease than under the VLAD regime.

It is also of deep concern that tighter scrutiny of tattoo parlours, tow truck operations and security service suppliers is to be wound back. The links between many of these businesses and outlaw motorcycle gangs is sufficiently strong to warrant maintenance of very strict controls on who can participate in these commercial enterprises.

And as for repealing harsher sentencing provisions, I can understand some community concern but the fact is that longer sentences work. They give judges the vital ingredient to



back-up the difficult and often gut-wrenching challenges faced by frontline police officers in protecting the community

So, let's look at the big picture. As we prepare to showcase our beloved Sunshine State to the world with the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games™ we have our government potentially sabotaging our image and reputation by allowing criminal elements to undermine law and order.

The Rio Olympics just concluded surely demonstrated the disastrous publicity associated with crime during the event.

Sadly, despite the expenditure of many billions of dollars and the goodwill of an entire nation, the reputation of Brazil and its capital went backwards because of highly-publicised criminal activity during the Games. Can we really risk the global admiration Queensland enjoys being sullied by any similar scandal tainting the Commonwealth Games?

The eyes of the world will be on south-east Queensland in a little over 18 months. If we are to adequately guard against terrorism please do not tie our hands behind our backs by letting criminal gangs roam loose to do their dirty work.

I ask our state Parliamentarians to be strong and resist their pathetic media campaign that they are good guys. They are not.

Yours sincerely



**TOM TATE
MAYOR**

