



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR ALBERT

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SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Albert—LNP) (5.30 pm): I too rise to make a contribution to the Serious and Organised Crime Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. Friday, 27 September 2013 will always be remembered as a black stain in the annals of the Gold Coast. News feeds around the world were electrified by images of open gang warfare on the Gold Coast. It was a night when mums and dads, sons and daughters were sitting down to enjoy an evening meal at a Broadbeach restaurant in the spring open air. A seemingly peaceful evening was shattered by a complete lack of consideration for the safety of the general public when 50 Bandidos members started a public brawl inside a restaurant.

I heard a harrowing story from one of my local constituents who was present that night. She was not in the restaurant, but she was in the mall. She was there with her young daughter and also her in-laws who had recently come over for a holiday from Canada. She said she was absolutely horrified that this would go on in this country. Her in-laws were horrified and they were concerned about the safety of their daughter-in-law living in this country with the absolute disrespect these individuals showed for our laws. These images of complete disregard for law and order—taunting police officers and families placed in harm's way—were televised around the world. There was sheer embarrassment that the family friendly reputation of the Gold Coast was tarnished for years. It took an uncompromising approach from the former LNP government to say enough is enough. Under the LNP laws, Queensland had the strongest criminal gang laws in the country. They sent a clear message to those who do not share our views, 'If you do not wish to conform to the laws that keep our streets safe, your time for open disorder is over.'

Labor's attempts to water down these tough laws have certainly been met with anger by a passionate community, especially on the Gold Coast. There were over 282 submissions from individuals to this bill. These include crime rate statistics. Reading the statement of reservation from opposition members highlights that in 2014 the LNP's tough on crime approach to criminal gangs and crime as a whole made significant inroads in decreasing crime rates on the Gold Coast. Homicide rates were reduced by 21.4 per cent, assaults reduced by almost two per cent, robberies reduced by 17.2 per cent, unlawful entries reduced by 27 per cent and car theft reduced by almost 18 per cent. Whilst drug offences increased by 29.4 per cent, this was because more drugs were being taken off the street. If I compare this to the pleas for additional police resources for the northern Gold Coast that I have made in speeches in this chamber on numerous occasions—my latest speech about that was on 14 September—I can say that we do not want police cuts. In one such speech I stated—

... we need more police in my area. If we look at the statistics for the Gold Coast over the last 12 months, we see that homicide rates have increased by 27.3 per cent; assaults are up 47.4 per cent; robberies, 13.9 per cent; unlawful entry, 20 per cent; and unlawful use of motor vehicles, 20 per cent. We only need to look at our local newspapers to see headlines such as 'Gold Coast in the grip of a new crime wave and police say tourists and new residents to blame'.

It only took this soft-on-crime Labor government 12 months to present a welcome mat to all those undesirables in criminal gangs. The last people we need in the tourism capital of Australia are these individuals. I would also like to remind the new police minister that my pleas for those additional police for my region have not changed. We do need those extra 30 officers to equal other regions throughout Queensland.

As the Mayor of the Gold Coast, Mr Tom Tate, stated in a passionate plea to the committee, these individuals peddle vast quantities of drugs. I will never forget when I was doorknocking in my electorate many years ago I came across a single father who was trying his best to protect his daughter from methamphetamines. It destroyed his daughter's life. This is the real toll of the drugs that organised crime syndicates are peddling in our state. His daughter was a beautiful 16-year-old and drugs destroyed her life. He spent years and years doing all he could to get her back on the straight and narrow. He has since left my electorate and moved elsewhere but after all the conversations I have had with him I do wish him well and wish him all the best with his daughter. He was certainly making massive inroads with his daughter in getting her on the straight and narrow. These criminal organisations are peddling these tablets of death, and we cannot forget that.

One other section of the bill that I found very concerning is the relaxation of the provision that will potentially allow criminal gang members to obtain a weapons licence. I think that is absolutely ridiculous. I spoke to a few of my constituents about this and they said, 'You have to be kidding! You can't be serious!', but, no, this government is willing to give these individuals the instruments of death. There are a lot of illegal firearms around and they are continuously seized from these individuals. They are not nice people. They are not the type of people one would find in a local church group—

Mr Stevens: A kindergarten.

Mr BOOTHMAN:—or in a local kindergarten. These individuals are paramount to all that is wrong with our society especially considering what they peddle. It concerns me greatly that watering down these laws, which the Labor Party is attempting to do in this place today, is going to place my constituents and the Gold Coast as a whole in more danger. We are a tourism capital. We rely on having a family friendly environment. We rely on international tourism and on domestic tourists coming to the Gold Coast. However, if they see that these criminal gangs are starting to run amok again, openly rioting on our streets and openly having brawls, that is going to send a message to the rest of the world and the rest of Australia: don't come to the Gold Coast; don't come to any tourism destinations in this state because it's not safe.

That concludes the contribution I would like to make on this matter, but I would just plead with you—especially the crossbenchers—to please think about what you are doing. Do not let this legislation go through. My constituents have suffered enough, especially when it comes to illegal drug use. It is in our schools, it is in our society and these guys are the pedlars of death.