

CRIMINAL LAW CONSOLIDATION (LOOTING) AMENDMENT BILL

24 February 2011

Adjourned debate on second reading. - (Continued from 28 October 2010.)

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (11:19): I rise today to speak to the Criminal Law Consolidation (Looting) Amendment Bill. This bill certainly becomes relevant in light of the recent tragedy in Christchurch, New Zealand, and other tragedies we have seen throughout Australia.

Sometimes, too many rogue elements of society take advantage of a terrible situation and start looting homes and businesses for their own benefit. They take advantage of tragedies that happen to people. This bill increases the penalties for looting after a disaster with heavier fines. I think it is entirely appropriate, in light of the problems that we have had throughout Australia in recent times. We have had flooding in several states. We have had flooding in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria—and we have even seen flooding in some areas of South Australia—and throughout Tasmania.

Over time, as we saw with the Victorian bushfires several years ago, some criminal elements took advantage of people's misfortune and the sad loss of life that went with those bushfires by in looting buildings and establishments. It is one of the worst signs of society when this happens, when people are already grieving the loss of life, loss of homes, loss of businesses, and you get these criminal elements that think they can get away with just going through buildings and taking advantage of other people's misfortune.

This sort of activity flies in the face of what happened in Brisbane, when we saw that most people got on board. Volunteers got on board to assist people they did not even know. You had people from up the street, even neighbours of people, who had not met before and who pitched in and helped people clean up their homes.

A major program was undertaken by the Brisbane City Council, I believe, and it rounded up thousands of volunteers to go through the city to help clean up. In fact, my brother, who lives in Brisbane, had a call for tip trucks to help clean up. He went in and did a day or two of assisting there, and it was very good of him to do so, along with the many thousands of volunteers in the clean-up effort, cleaning up the debris after these floods and making it better for everyone involved.

However, sadly, we do have this criminal element in society who think they can just take advantage of this. It seems that, as time goes on and as the years go by, some people think they can do what they like and they are not accountable to anyone. Too many times these types of people take the law to the absolute maximum. They appeal laws and think they have the right to do what they want.

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson: They appeal, do they?

Mr PEDERICK: They need to be made accountable. Well, I recently had a case in my electorate where someone had been acting quite improperly with regard to living in a Housing SA property, even after eviction, even after they had been told they were evicted. When you get to the bottom of the story, it is absolutely incredulous to think that, even though everything stacks up and the problems they have caused the neighbours, this can happen. We have seen people install their own

security cameras to protect themselves because we have these vagrants taking advantage of an appeal process, even after it has been laid down that they need to be evicted. I think things certainly need to be tightened up there. If the member for Croydon, the former attorney-general, does not think so, he has the right to make a comment.

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: Point of order. This is a—

Mr Pengilly interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. M.J. ATKINSON: This is a bill about looting, and the member for Hammond is now talking about Residential Tenancies Tribunal appeals, and I fail to see that it is cognate.

The SPEAKER: I agree with the member for Croydon on this; however, I am sure that member for Hammond will get back to the point fairly quickly, and it must be relevant in his eyes.

Mr PEDERICK: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank you for your guidance. I do want to get back to the point of the bill. We do need to make looters more accountable. We do have to put some things in place, perhaps some incentives, that, hopefully, stop people taking these actions. I certainly support the bill and commend it to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mrs Geraghty.