



Speech By
Christian Rowan

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

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MOTION: BORDER PROTECTION

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (6.08 pm): I rise to speak in support of the LNP's motion on border protection as moved by the shadow minister for police and emergency services, the member for Everton. All of us support sensible immigration and the valuable benefits of multiculturalism. Operation Sovereign Borders is one of the most compassionate public policies that the Australian government has ever implemented. How can any Australian forget the failed Rudd-Gillard-Rudd years when Labor lost control of our borders with some 1,200 people losing their lives trying to come to Australia on leaky boats. During that time 50,000 illegal immigrants arrived on some 800 boats and today Australia is still dealing with the significant legacy of those failed Labor years.

The Turnbull government is strengthening Australia's borders and helping the economy through efficient border control processes. During the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd years Australia, and Queensland via its jurisdictional association with the Commonwealth, paid billions of dollars as a result of approximately 50,000 uncontrolled illegal arrivals. One of the greatest outcomes of the Australian government's border protection policies is the restoration of integrity to our refugee and humanitarian program. This means that Australia can now offer an additional 12,000 places to resettle people displaced by conflicts in Syria and Iraq.

The Australian Border Force plays a vital role in protecting Australia's borders from those intending to commit immigration fraud, those who threaten our national interests or criminal gangs who participate via the illegal drugs trade or firearms trafficking. It is vital to prevent biosecurity risks related to animal and plant species and infectious diseases, particularly entering Australia via Cape York. Like the federal Labor Party, the Queensland state Labor government is soft on crime, soft on criminal gangs, weak on law and order, and is a supporter of union thuggery and criminality.

Operation Sovereign Borders was established to ensure a whole-of-government effort to combat maritime people smuggling. It is a central part of the current policy pursued by the federal government and represents an intensified effort aimed at deterring illegal maritime arrivals. Under Operation Sovereign Borders, it is the policy and practice of the Australian government to intercept any vessel that is seeking to enter Australia without authorisation and remove it to beyond our territorial waters when safe to do so.

To understand the importance of border control, a little bit of history is needed. The original island detention centre was opened by the Howard government in 2001 and closed in 2004. At that time, only one detainee was inside the centre. That the boats were stopped is a great legacy of the Howard government. After that, under Labor some 50,000 boat arrivals occurred, leading to detention centres being reopened. Today, 13 of the 17 detention centres on the mainland have been closed and what the LNP—

Mr SPEAKER: One moment, member for Moggill. Pause the clock. Members, it is a bit disrespectful to have private conversations in here. You have ample opportunity and time to have conversations outside. I would urge you to do so, otherwise I will have to warn someone and then we will see what happens.

Dr ROWAN: What the LNP is most proud of is that the issue of children in detention centres is well and truly being addressed. Today we are told that there are approximately 14,000 people waiting in Indonesia to catch a leaky boat bound for Australia. The people smugglers say that they are waiting for a change of federal government to restart their illegal trade. We hear about those in our country who protest against Operation Sovereign Borders and that Australia should do more on the humanitarian front.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Southport is having a private conversation. You are warned under standing order 253A. Your partner in the conversation is also warned. Let that be a notice to all members. On behalf of all members, I apologise for their conversations.

Dr ROWAN: We hear people say that Australia should do more on the humanitarian front, but there is absolutely nothing humanitarian about encouraging desperate people to pay a criminal syndicate to put them on an unseaworthy boat and take the dangerous journey to Australia. That is the reason that we must never allow our borders to become a soft target for people smugglers. We have to remember that protecting our borders is not just about people smugglers. The Australian Border Force works in partnership with a range of intelligence, law enforcement and other agencies. Australia's mission, in collaboration with Queensland, is to protect our borders and manage the movement of people and goods across them. Australia must be safe and Queensland must be safe.

Various federal Labor members and Labor candidates are unclear on their position, particularly Labor's candidate for the federal seat of Melbourne. Labor is deeply divided on border protection. I call upon all members of this House to support the LNP's motion. It is in Queensland's interests and it is in the nation's interests to do so. A failure by any member of this House to support this motion would be a dereliction of their duty as an elected representative of this parliament. This is about leadership—true leadership—and I wonder whether the Labor members on the other side will show that leadership tonight by supporting the motion. I call on the Katter's Australian Party and the Independent members of the crossbenches to support this motion. This motion is fair, it is reasonable, it is balanced and it is the right thing to do. Protecting our borders is important for national security, as well as for health and trade reasons and crime prevention. I commend the motion to the House.