



## **ALHR MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Bikie Laws Repeal: A Win for Human Rights**

Australian Lawyers for Human Rights (ALHR) welcomes the announcement by Premier Newman that the Queensland government intends to repeal the bikie laws.

This morning ALHR spokesperson, Benedict Coyne stated: “The government is obviously under pressure. Its propaganda war against bikies as a justification for passing such repugnant and undemocratic laws is clearly not working.

“ALHR is significantly concerned about the breaches of human rights occurring in the Queensland community as innocent people are unjustly caught up by these laws.

“While ALHR welcomes the Premier’s announcement, unless these laws are repealed immediately, unnecessary and egregious breaches of human rights and the democratic rule of law will continue to occur. This is not acceptable, especially for a so-called civilised democracy.

The laws breach numerous fundamental and legally binding obligations Australia owes to the international community, including the following articles of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR):

- Article 25 - guarantees the opportunity to take part in public affairs including the opportunity to comment on such drastic legislation which was denied to the community by the Newman government.
- Article 14 - guarantees the right to equality before the law.
- Article 19 – guarantees the right to freedom of expression.
- Article 22 – guarantees the right to freedom of association.

“The laws have radically extended the power of executive government at the expense of the courts and our human rights and civil liberties. Their continued existence, coupled with the Premier’s inappropriate criticisms of the judiciary are damaging Queensland’s reputation and standing in the world.

“The longer the Premier waits before acting the more apparent it will become that the laws are unworkable and unjust.

“ALHR calls for the repeal of these laws at the next sitting of Parliament.

ALHR has maintained that the laws were poorly thought out and enacted undemocratically, without any community consultation or consideration via the parliamentary committee system.

Mr Coyne said “When these laws were enacted, ALHR along with many other members of civil society advised that various provisions would be found to be invalid, unnecessary and ultimately ineffective in tackling the serious problem of organised crime. Tough-on-crime sloganeering and ill-thought quick fix solutions that demolish democracy and undermine civil liberties have never worked historically.

“All the research shows that mandatory detention is not a deterrent, nor does it assist rehabilitation. Solitary confinement and punishing people merely for whom they associate with have no place in a respectable democracy” claimed Mr Coyne.

“These laws are what you would expect from an authoritarian regime, not a civilised western democracy. Despite the battering the rule of law has taken in recent times, we remain hopeful that democracy will ultimately prevail and that the Newman government will listen to reason, to its constituents and to the international community and repeal these laws at the first opportunity” concluded Mr Coyne.

“However, there is the possibility that the Premier’s comments are simply a manoeuvre to derail mounting community pressure. Australian Lawyers for Human Rights believes that the community cannot afford complacency while fundamental breaches of civil liberties remain on the statute book.

**Media Contact:**

Benedict Coyne (ALHR Qld Convenor & National Committee Member)

**M:** 0434915713 **T:** 07 3016 0374 **E:** [alhrmedia@gmail.com](mailto:alhrmedia@gmail.com)

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ALHR (Australian Lawyers for Human Rights) is a network of Australian lawyers active in practising and promoting awareness of international human rights standards in Australia. ALHR has a national membership of nearly 3000 people, with active National, State and Territory committees.