



# The Coalition's Policy to Tackle Crime

August 2013

## Key Points

The Coalition will help make our streets and communities safer through tough and effective steps to assist in fighting and preventing crime.

Fighting crime is traditionally the role of State Governments and police forces but a Federal Coalition government will work to support them at a national level.

We respect and appreciate the work done by the men and women of our Federal, State and Territory police and crime fighting agencies, many of whom take big risks to protect our communities.

Through cooperation and consultation with the States, an elected Coalition government will work to ensure those on the street fighting crime have the tools they need to get on with the job and keep our streets safe.

If elected, a Coalition government will:

- establish Local Anti-Gang Squads to tackle organised crime and outlaw bkie gangs at the local level using national tools, resources and intelligence;
- reduce the number illegal guns and drugs flooding onto our streets through a \$100 million boost to customs screening;
- send people to jail for a minimum of five years if they are caught bringing illegal firearms into Australia;
- work to see those caught with an illegal gun go to jail for up to 14 years by actively driving nationally consistent penalties for serious firearm offences;
- give police a greater say by bringing law-makers and law-enforcers together around the same table for the very first time;
- provide \$50 million for CCTV to deter criminal activity and give police assistance to find criminals; and
- pursue a zero tolerance approach to corruption in Customs agencies and those protecting our borders.

The Coalition will implement the policies necessary to make our communities safer, to tackle organised crime and to ensure our borders are secure.



# Introduction

Strong and prosperous communities are central to the Coalition's plan to build a better Australia.

All members of the community are entitled to feel safe and secure.

Fighting and preventing criminal activity is a key priority for the Coalition, since only safe communities can become strong and prosperous.

Too many lives are blighted by violent crime and we are committed to making our communities safer places for everyone.

Crime inflicts significant social and economic costs on the community, families and individuals. Organised crime is a serious economic threat. The Australian Crime Commission recently noted that organised crime costs the Australian economy \$15 billion a year and that:

*"In the two years since the publication of the last Organised Crime in Australia assessment, organised crime has become more pervasive, more powerful and more complex. Such is the risk posed by organised crime that governments around the world, including the Australian Government, have recognised for some time that organised crime has implications for national security."*<sup>1</sup>

The Coalition strongly believes that the use of firearms to settle disputes can never be allowed to be part of Australian culture.

The Coalition has chosen to shine a spotlight on organised crime, which is a serious form of criminality, creating widespread fear in communities.

Tackling gun crime is part of a wider approach to combating serious and organised crime and a key element to bringing a sense of order back to our communities.

Each community faces different crime problems and the Coalition is dedicated to working together with our State and Territory counterparts to coordinate resources and attack crime problems through different targeted strategies.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Crime Commission (2013) *Organised Crime in Australia* 2013, p. 4.



# The Plan

## 1. Stop Illegal Guns and Drugs at the Border

Strong borders are an essential step in reducing crime in Australia.

Labor has made funding cuts to customs and border protection agencies that have significantly increased the chances of drugs and guns slipping into Australia without detection.

Incredibly, less than one in 12 parcels sent to Australia from overseas are ever screened for illegal weapons or drugs.

Things have become so serious that an illegal pistol sent from overseas was discovered by Australia Post employees at a post office box in a Sydney suburb.

The Coalition will boost our border security so police and crime agencies stand a chance in their fight against guns and drugs.

### *a. More money for more inspections*

The Coalition will provide a \$100 million funding boost to customs and border protection agencies to increase the rate of cargo, consignment and package screenings at our borders.

This will increase sevenfold the chance of illegal guns and drugs being detected before flowing into Australia.

Our commitment will reverse the \$58 million of cuts made by Labor that dramatically reduced cargo inspections at our ports and airports. In addition, we will provide a \$42 million further boost.

Cargo, consignments and packages are an obvious means by which criminals can endeavour to ship illegal firearms and narcotics to Australia. Without the resources to screen cargo, consignments and packages, there are far greater changes that illegal firearms and drugs can escape without detection and end up on our streets.

The cuts ordered by the Rudd-Gillard Labor Government mean 4.7 million fewer cargo, consignment and package inspections occur at our ports and airports each year.

There are now 4.7 million more opportunities for illegal guns and drugs to enter Australia every year due to the Rudd-Gillard Labor Government.



The Coalition's \$100 million boost to cargo inspections will mean seven times as many screenings and see far fewer guns and illegal drugs enter Australia. This will mean safer streets, safer communities and more secure borders.

### *b. Reducing criminal influence at ports and airports*

The Coalition will make sure that people with a relevant criminal history can never receive a security clearance to work at port and airport entry points.

Under Labor, people with a relevant criminal history are able to get a security clearance to work on ports and in airports where cargo comes into the country. On some occasions, these people have been found acting corruptly to help criminals and make smuggling operations easier.

The Coalition will ensure that the criteria for issuing people with security clearance to work on Australia's wharves are upgraded and tightened. Tough laws will apply that will make sure applicants with a relevant criminal history are never given a Maritime Security Identification Card or an Australian Security Identification Card.

The Coalition strongly believes that stopping criminals from smuggling guns and drugs at our ports and airports is a vital step toward suppressing organised and violent crime.

### *c. Tracking airside and waterfront movements*

It is important that police and criminal intelligence agencies are told when vehicles associated with suspected or known criminals and gangs approach our ports or airports.

This knowledge can help them monitor suspicious activity or deploy additional resources if necessary.

Automatic numberplate recognition systems (ANPR) are one such way to effectively monitor vehicle approaches to airports and ports.

If elected, the Coalition will commission an urgent scoping study for the roll out of ANPR to be operated by CrimTrac, for the approaches to airside and waterfronts. This will enable law enforcement and criminal intelligence agencies to identify people and organisations whose attendance at these locations may be unauthorised or suspicious.



#### *d. Zero tolerance for corruption*

The Coalition will stamp out corruption within our law and border enforcement agencies, in particular the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service.

We will take a tough zero tolerance approach to ensure corruption is not allowed to flourish as it has done under Rudd-Gillard Government, which has taken its eye off the ball.

All frontline and operational Customs officers will operate under rules appropriate to a law-enforcement agency, which includes a police-style disciplinary regime and routine integrity testing.

The Coalition will task the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity with enforcing these rules, and conducting investigations into Federal agencies that are susceptible to infiltration by organised criminal syndicates and corrupt individuals who seek to smuggle illegal drugs and firearms through our borders.

## **2. Fighting Organised Crime**

Organised crime and outlaw bkie gangs are a massive cost to our community in many different ways.

Tackling organised crime requires significant commitment due to the sophisticated and extensive nature of these criminals' operations.

#### *a. Local anti-gang squads*

The Coalition will establish Local Anti-Gang Squads to fight organised crime at the local level with the support and backing of national tools, resources and intelligence.

Labor's recent announcement of an anti-gangs taskforce is an inefficient way to deal with the national problem of organised crime. While organised crime does not recognise State and Territory borders, it manifests itself in different ways across Australia and involves a multiplicity of groups with diverse criminal interests.

We will redirect \$64 million to the Coalition's Local Anti-Gang Squads initiative that will build a series of smaller, better targeted and regionally based anti-gang taskforces. They will work in partnership and consultation with State and Territory law enforcement agencies, while reporting to the Commonwealth's central criminal intelligence and law enforcement agencies.



Australia already has national law enforcement and criminal intelligence bodies deeply invested in fighting organised crime. However, dealing with organised crime is not necessarily amenable to a 'one size fits all' model.

The simple facts are that a local approach to dealing with organised crime will be more effective if it can tap into national support, resources and intelligence.

Commonwealth resources and money should be committed in a way that best supports the entirety of Australian law enforcement and respects the priorities and work of State and Territory agencies.

The Coalition will fund these taskforces so they have access to the full suite of federal intelligence and operational resources available from the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Crime Commission, Customs, CrimTrac, the ATO and Centrelink. They will also collect and act upon intelligence from local law enforcement.

The taskforces will share the benefit of new unexplained wealth legislation in order to disrupt criminal organisations and seize their assets. They will set ambitious targets to seize assets and disrupt criminal organisations.

### ***b. More international cooperation***

The Coalition will examine new modes of cooperation with our law enforcement partners in Asia.

The Australian Crime Commission has noted that organised crime increasingly needs to be tackled through international cooperation by law enforcement agencies:

*"Globalisation has been embraced and exploited by organised crime, which capitalises on the way in which globalisation has greatly facilitated international communication, cross-border links, commerce and trade. Although organised crime now seems to have no borders or geographical constraints, combating organised crime and illicit trade has remained in many ways constrained by jurisdictional, legislative and State borders – a fact that is not lost on sophisticated criminals."*<sup>2</sup>

We will explore the secondment and placement of detectives from such countries as China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Lebanon with the Australian Crime Commission and reciprocal placements of Australian detectives with foreign criminal intelligence agencies.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Crime Commission (2013) *Organised Crime in Australia* 2013, p. 4.





It is intended that these exchanges will identify the links that organised crime groups in Australia have with foreign individuals and groups and enable police to strike at their operations from both ends.

### 3. Tougher Penalties and Powers – A Crackdown on Gun Crime

Penalties imposed on those who are involved with illegal firearms are not currently effective in deterring their use.

Light sentencing sends the wrong message to the community and criminals.

Asking police and crime agencies to put their lives on the line to tackle illegal guns is unfair when those who are caught are given a slap on the wrist.

A Coalition government will make sure that those who are caught doing the wrong thing get higher penalties that better fit the crime.

#### *a. Minimum mandatory sentence of five years for illegal gun trafficking*

The Coalition will facilitate the introduction of uniform minimum mandatory five year jail terms for illegal firearm trafficking because light sentencing is sending the wrong message to criminals.

Often criminals receive only a fraction of the maximum state penalty for illegal firearm trafficking which is frustrating law enforcement agencies' efforts to tackle violent gun crime.

In November 2012 the Queensland Government introduced mandatory sentences relating to guns, including a five year mandatory sentence for trafficking of illegal firearms.

Police officers are putting themselves at risk to serve members of the public and they need the public's backing, especially from the courts and the judiciary.

#### *b. Higher maximum and mandatory penalties to combat illegal gun possession*

The Coalition will encourage the States and Territories to adopt a higher maximum penalty of 14 years imprisonment to allow greater discretion in serious firearm possession offences. Current penalties range from a maximum of 14 years imprisonment in NSW and as low as a maximum of two years in Tasmania, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory.





New York City has a mandatory three and a half year sentence for possessing an illegal firearm and in Britain there is a minimum five year sentence. These mandatory sentences have been cited as one of the main reasons gun crime has been reduced in both jurisdictions.

The Coalition will also encourage the States to enact mandatory minimum terms for the illegal possession of firearms – as Queensland has done – if those firearms are used in the commission of serious offences.

### *c. Additional search powers for firearms*

The Coalition strongly supports stronger powers for police to search for illegal firearms, and in government would take the lead on introducing relevant laws to this effect.

The States and Territories are currently considering introducing laws giving police the legal authority to search a person who is subject to a firearm prohibition order, as well as any vehicle or premises they are in, for the presence of a firearm without the need to demonstrate reasonable suspicion.

A joint working party has been established to consider this and develop recommendations to be considered by police ministers at their next standing council meeting in 2013.

## **4. Protecting Our Communities From Crime**

The Coalition believes that empowered communities are more important than empowered governments. While we don't want government to do less for people, we certainly want people to have the capacity to do more for themselves because that's the way that stronger communities are built.

A community that invests its own time and money in its local hospital or school will have more social capital and a stronger social fabric than one which doesn't.

### *a. Ensuring the proceeds of crime are dedicated to fighting crime*

The Coalition will ensure that all proceeds of crime revenue go to community crime prevention initiatives, particularly those initiatives that assist law enforcement agencies to disrupt criminal activity.

It was the Howard Government that significantly strengthened proceeds of crime legislation that allowed authorities to freeze and confiscate criminal assets and to apply the proceeds to law enforcement activities and community crime prevention.

The Rudd-Gillard Government put a stop to this sensible and appropriate approach.



In the 2012-13 Budget, the Rudd-Gillard Government halted distribution of the 'confiscated assets account' and used the funds to prop up its Budget.

The Coalition will ensure proceeds of crime money is used to fight crime, not prop up the government's Budget for political reasons.

We will strengthen unexplained wealth legislation to strike at the heart of organised crime by taking away the profits and assets of criminal syndicates and thereby undermine their business model.

We will ensure the Australian Crime Commission and other relevant law enforcement agencies have appropriate powers to investigate unexplained wealth.

The Coalition will immediately move to implement the recommendations made by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement to strengthen unexplained wealth legislation and arrangements, including those which have not been actioned by the Rudd-Gillard Government. These recommendations include mandatory freezing orders and increased surveillance and investigatory powers.

### ***b. Safer streets – protecting communities from crime***

The Coalition's *Plan for Safer Streets* will boost the efforts of local communities to address crime and anti-social behaviour by helping them to install CCTV and better lighting, funded from a pool of \$50 million to help deliver effective solutions to local crime problems.

The money will come from proceeds of crime so that the crimes of yesterday will help to prevent tomorrow's crimes.

Recent studies indicate that CCTV footage can be extremely helpful in solving crime: in the United Kingdom, a study found that almost 70 per cent of murders are solved using images captured by CCTV. Another study found that in London six crimes a day are solved using CCTV and that detectives consider the technology as valuable as DNA in solving crimes.

The Coalition will establish a voluntary national register of CCTV locations accessible through law enforcement agencies' computer mapping services to enable them quickly to identify likely sources of evidence. Those businesses who wish to register their locations will be able to display notices that their CCTV is registered with police, which may have additional deterrent effects.

The Coalition's *Plan for Safer Streets* will help protect communities from crime.



### *c. Giving police a greater say*

The Coalition will establish a new 'Standing Council on Law, Crime and Community Safety' that brings together lawmakers and law-enforcers.

We will work with the States and Territories in developing a national focus on fighting crime, particularly organised crime, recognising that state borders should never be an impediment to catching criminals and protecting law abiding Australians.

The Council will target priority areas encompassing:

- border security arrangements within Australia;
- a national approach to organised crime gangs;
- co-ordination of community crime prevention; and
- new ways to ensure cyber-safety, especially for children, and best practice approaches to the harmonisation of laws about working with children.

An incoming Coalition government would invite its COAG partners to merge the two existing Attorneys-General and police ministers councils into one new Standing Council on Law, Crime and Community Safety.

Importantly, State and Territory police commissioners, as well as the heads of Commonwealth agencies, such as the Australian Crime Commission and ASIO, would attend this council.

The new Standing Council will report to the Prime Minister within 12 months on the priority areas.



# The Choice

Australians have a choice between the Coalition who will fight to secure our borders and a Labor government which has simply lost control.

The Rudd-Gillard Government's approach to justice and policing has put Australians at risk.

Labor's waste and mismanagement has meant cuts in areas of government activity critical to the security of families and communities – including less funding and resources for measures to help our communities tackle crime.

For example, under Labor:

- \$58 million taken directly from criminals under Proceeds of Crime laws was used to help prop up Labor's Budget, rather than put back into fighting crime;
- the Rudd-Gillard Government has cut more than \$250 million from funding for the Australian Federal Police (AFP) over the past four years at a time when gun violence and criminal gangs are plaguing our streets;
- since Labor came to office they have cut over 100 staff from the Australian Crime Commission; this is almost 30 per cent of their workforce which has had a serious impact on the agency's ability to do its job;
- Labor has failed to continue to meet the costs of seconding the majority of State, Territory and Federal Police to the Australian Crime Commission. This has led to a reduction in seconded State, Territory and AFP personnel; and
- Labor has cut funding to the already stretched Australian Customs and Border Protection Service by \$58 million for Customs Cargo inspections, meaning that only 8.4 per cent of air cargo consignments are inspected – a huge drop from the 60 per cent that was inspected under the Howard Government.

The Coalition will make our streets and communities safer by taking tougher measures to curb illegal guns and drugs, and to stop organised crime.

The choice is clear – the Coalition will take real action whereas Labor will continue their half-hearted approach which has allowed handguns to arrive in the mail from overseas and simply be picked up at the post office.



## Cost

The Coalition's Policy to Tackle Crime will invest \$150 million to make our streets and communities safer.





Hope.  
Reward.  
Opportunity.



**THE NATIONALS** *for Regional Australia*

For further details of the Coalition's Plan go to  
[www.realsolutions.org.au](http://www.realsolutions.org.au)