

Lawyers back Games boost to police powers

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GOLD Coast legal eagles have given the extra powers handed to police for the Commonwealth Games the thumbs up, with a caveat.

"I would be deeply concerned if they were used for any other purpose than the proper safety of people at sporting events," former Queensland Law Society president Bill Potts said.

Mr Potts stated other lawyers had said it was important the laws were only for the duration of the Games and weren't expanded to cover other areas.

Under the laws police will be able to use X-ray trucks – commonly used in Europe to counter people smuggling – search people, vehicles and buildings without a warrant, and deploy firearms and explosives detection dogs.

The powers extend beyond key Games venues and into public transport, pedestrian routes and wider areas where spectators might gather, potentially including more than 100km of local roads where events such as the triathlon,

marathon and road cycling events will draw crowds.

Mr Potts said there always needed to be a balance between freedom of movement and public safety.

"We live in a dangerous world and in dangerous times and people could take the opportunity at the Common-

wealth Games to make a political or religious point which could threaten the safety of others," he said.

Mr Potts said the government had learned its lesson from legislation it put in place for the G20 economic summit where, at one stage, it would have been illegal to walk the streets of West End with an orange or egg in your hand.

"But fortunately the government backed away from the harsher elements of that law and learned lessons from G20," he said.

Ross Lee, of the Robina Community Legal Centre, said he hoped the laws would not impact the region's disadvantaged. He said the laws could be like the anti-bikie VLAD laws, which were widely applicable and could have been used against groups such as knitting clubs.