

Power up for Games

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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 like 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.

"In ordinary circumstances



Police were out in force during the G20 in 2014.

I don't believe people should be subject to unnecessary and unwarranted searches or delays from police," he said.

"But we live in a dangerous world and in dangerous times and people could take the opportunity at the Commonwealth Games to make a political or religious point which could threaten the safety of others."

He said the government had learned its lesson from legislation it put in place for the 2014 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 on 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 group like knitting clubs.

"I would like to know what operational guidelines police have for enforcing that law," he said.