

THE LAW

# Wealth by stealth gets harder

New powers target criminal kingpins



**RICHES TO RAGS:** Taking the profit out of crime

**P**olice will be given powers to seize material and share information with other agencies under new laws introduced into the House of Representatives which target organised crime.

Introducing the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Unexplained Wealth and Other Measures Bill) 2014 to the House of Representatives, Justice Minister Michael Keenan said the bill aims to strengthen laws which are used to combat those living off the proceeds of crime.

“Serious and organised crime poses a significant threat to Australian communities,” he said.

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“They also provide an avenue to target the criminal kingpins who enjoy the proceeds of crime, without committing actual crimes themselves.”

The bill will amend existing search and seizure powers in the Proceeds of Crime Act to allow authorised officers to seize material relevant to unexplained wealth.

Other measures will boost the ability of investigators to share information with state and international authorities.

The bill also seeks to streamline the process for obtaining unexplained wealth orders. Under the proposed changes a court will not have discretion to refuse to make an order for suspected wealth of \$100,000 or more.

“Taking the profit out of crime undermines the entire business model of criminal groups and prevents illicit funds being reinvested to support further criminal activity,” Mr Keenan said. ■

OVERSEAS ADOPTIONS

## Red tape removal helps children

Parents adopting children from overseas may soon be able to ensure their child is granted Australian citizenship as soon as the adoption is finalised.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott has introduced the Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption Bill) 2014 into the House of Representatives, after pledging to make the process easier for those looking to adopt.

Under the current rules, depending on arrangements in place between the two countries, children need a passport from their home country and an Australian adoption visa in order to come to Australia.

This will be changed so children are granted citizenship once adoption arrangements are completed, ensuring they can travel on an Australian passport.

Mr Abbott said the government wants to make it easier for parents to adopt children from other countries.

“For too long, adoption had been in the too-hard basket. For too long, it has been too hard to adopt and for too long, this has been a policy no-go zone,” he said.

“It is red tape that impacts on children who legitimately need a safe and loving home and Australians who dream of providing that home.” ■

