

Police Powers and Responsibilities (Jack's Law) Amendment Bill 2022

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Committee Secretary
Community Support and Services Committee
via email: cssc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary

CITY OF GOLD COAST SUBMISSION – POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES (JACK'S LAW) AMENDMENT BILL 2022

It is my pleasure to provide this submission on behalf of the City of Gold Coast (City). We pride ourselves on being a safe and liveable city and are committed to working closely with the State Government, Queensland Police Service (QPS) and local services to ensure everyone can experience the Gold Coast free from fear of crime. I provide the below background for the Committee's consideration.

Background

The City appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission in support of the *Police Powers and Responsibilities (Jack's Law) Amendment Bill 2022* (the Bill) being considered by the Queensland Parliament's Community Support Services Committee.

The City is supportive of the current trial of metal detection scanners ('wandering') implemented by the QPS in the Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach Safe Night Precincts (SNPs). The City provides support for the trial through our Safety Camera Network. Additionally, the City has supported the QPS "Life without a knife" campaign which complements the wandering trial through an education and awareness campaign about knife related violence.

To support safety more broadly, the City is supportive of the Bill to extend the trial to all SNPs in addition to public transport stations and on public transport vehicles. It is acknowledged these additional measures are anticipated to further enhance community safety outcomes.

Gold Coast local context and existing community safety initiatives

The Gold Coast is a rapidly growing city, home to over 630,000 residents and over 76,000 registered businesses. As a leading tourism destination, more than 10 million visitors are hosted annually. From a reputational and social wellbeing perspective, maintaining a safe city is critical for our residents, visitors and economy.

The City has an important role in the joint effort to keep our community safe and as such community safety is a key priority. Perceptions of safety are managed through the City's Community Safety Program and strategic partnerships with internal and external stakeholders including QPS. Community safety initiatives include the City's Safety Camera Network, which includes over 800 CCTV cameras installed in public spaces. The cameras are strategically placed in areas where anti-social behaviour, alcohol-fuelled violence and criminal activity are most likely to occur, with approximately 8,000 incidents captured annually. The cameras are monitored 24 hours per day, 365 days per year and incidents are communicated directly to QPS.

Within the entertainment precincts, the City's CCTV cameras capture a variety of incidents and antisocial behaviours. CCTV operators monitor situations to mitigate potential risk to community safety and work with QPS and emergency services to enable a rapid response. Since commencement of the wandering trial, the Safety Camera Network has actively monitored over 900 instances of wandering in the Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach SNPs.

Supporting data

In the last 12 months, the QPS Online Crime Map communicates there were 1,679 offences against the person, including assaults and 404 *Weapons Act* offences in the suburbs inclusive of an entertainment precinct or urban village. This included:

Location	Offences against the person including assault	<i>Weapons Act</i> offence
Surfers Paradise	627	225
Southport	577	103
Broadbeach	166	49
Burleigh	121	6
Coolangatta	96	9
Palm Beach	89	12
Nobby Beach	3	0

This data indicates an ongoing need to implement community safety measures such as the wandering trial in these key locations.

In 2021, the City conducted a community safety survey with 3,316 responses. This was triple the average response seen across the past 20 citywide surveys and highlights that safety is a high priority to residents. Key statistics indicate that:

- 61.8% feel safe on the Gold Coast;
- 72.7% feel safe in their neighbourhood;
- 83.6% feel safe on the Gold Coast during the day;
- 39.2% felt safe at night on the Gold Coast;
- 48.94% did not feel safe travelling on public transport at night versus 64.38% persons feeling safe on public transport during the day;
- 70% of respondents feel CCTV increased their safety;
- drug and alcohol use is a top safety concern for respondents; and
- 750 respondents felt a visible police presence increased their feelings of safety.

It is evident from this survey that fewer respondents felt safe at night as well as on public transport at night on the Gold Coast. An extension of the wandering trial has the potential to improve feelings of safety at night, particularly in relation to public transport usage.



Observations of the trial to date and future considerations

The Gold Coast has two designated SNPs established under the *Liquor Act 1992*, to reduce late-night drug and alcohol related violence and promote safe drinking practices. These SNPs are located at Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach and are the locations involved in the wandering trial since its inception in May 2021. The City values the community safety outcomes achieved to date through the detection of over 200 weapons and the possible reduction in violence through the removal of these weapons in two of the Gold Coast's most highly visited areas.

The City's CBD in Southport and urban villages including Burleigh Heads, Nobby Beach and Palm Beach also attract a high number of persons with visitation anticipated to further increase once the Light Rail Stage 3 is established. It is anticipated the extension of the wandering trial to public transport stations and associated vehicles will achieve positive community safety outcomes.

Additionally, as the heavy rail connects to the light rail and bus network, persons can easily travel from other locations such as Ipswich, Brisbane and Logan to the Gold Coast. An extension of the trial to public transport will enhance the safety of public transport and likely prevent weapons from travelling to public places including in the Gold Coast.

The City's frontline workforce, including City Laws Officers who deal with breaches of local laws such as illegal camping, are also anticipated to benefit from the extension of the trial through a possible reduction in weapons. Likewise, the initiative will contribute to the safety of City cleaners and other personnel who work in public spaces.

Partnerships and engagement

To facilitate communication with key community safety partners including QPS, the City leads the Mayoral Safer Suburbs Forum. This interagency partnership addresses current and emerging safety issues and determines coordinated actions, including in relation to the wandering trial within the Gold Coast's two SNPs. QPS provide regular updates at the Forum including observations and data on the number of weapons seized. Most recently, Belinda and Brett Beasley updated Forum members on their continued efforts to reduce the incidence of violence in the community through the Jack Beasley Foundation, following the tragic loss of their son. The family's ongoing commitment to improving community safety on the Gold Coast was also recognised.

Results of the trial and other operational matters are regularly raised at other stakeholder meetings the City participates in, including transport compliance and security meetings. We are aware some stakeholders have raised feedback about the potential displacement of antisocial behaviours to areas outside of the Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach SNPs due to the wandering trial being active in these areas. Expansion of the legislation to include transport stations and public transport vehicles is anticipated to assist to address this.

Additionally, existing partnerships will continue to provide a platform for ongoing information sharing, planning and coordination of compliance activities between agencies.

Proposed authorisation threshold and mitigating risks of bias

In addition to the extension of the trial, the City is supportive of the additional considerations required to be undertaken by a QPS officer when exercising power to authorise the use of wandering. These measures appear to reduce the risk or perception of bias and protect human rights as required by the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* and the *Human Rights Act 2019*.



Impact of not proceeding with the extension of the trial and additional considerations

Should QPS not be afforded the extended powers, public safety has the potential to be negatively impacted through a reduction in the deterrence to enter SNPs or public transport routes with a weapon. The City considers it likely that perceptions of safety may also be negatively impacted, particularly for users of public transport. Additionally, extending the trial to all SNPs signifies the value of the current trial and its benefit to improving safety within other communities.

I note that section 36J of the Bill requires that details of the authorisation must be published on the QPS website within two months after the authority is made and this includes the offences known to the QPS officer who issued the authority. The City appreciates that publishing such information is for the purposes of transparency. To prevent a decrease in perceptions of safety, consideration may be given to mitigating the risk of inadvertent negative impacts including a reduction in feeling safe at these locations.

I understand the legislation extends the trial until April 2025. In consideration of the information contained in this briefing, the City is supportive of this extension and a further review following completion of the trial.

Should you require additional information please contact [REDACTED] **Manager Safe and Liveable Communities**, on [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]
DONNA GATES
ACTING MAYOR

