




Speech By  
**Samuel O'Connor**

**MEMBER FOR BONNEY**

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Record of Proceedings, 30 November 2021

**POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND OTHER LEGISLATION  
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (5.35 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution in support of these sensible but, in many cases, overdue changes. I firstly commend the exceptional work of the member for Ninderry for standing up for his Sunshine Coast community, the advocacy that he has undertaken and his excellent contribution earlier. I am a proud Gold Coaster, but our city undoubtedly has an issue with knife crime so I want to focus my contribution in particular on the aspects of these amendments seeking to address that issue. Over the past five years knife carrying has steadily been increasing. We have had five deadly stabbings on the Gold Coast in the past couple of years, with many more close incidents that very nearly could have been fatal, including multiple occasions at the Coomera and Helensvale train stations. There was even a hunting knife used in front of my local Baskin-Robbins, which is a popular tourist spot in Labrador, and knives regularly appear in the middle of Southport and Surfers Paradise.

The one incident that I have raised many times in this House before is the tragic story of 17-year-old Jack Beasley from Parkwood. Just before Christmas in 2019, in our peak tourism season, at around eight o'clock at night in the middle of Surfers Paradise he was stabbed to death—allegedly murdered. I want to put on record my thanks to the member for Nanango for everything she did for the Beasleys. She came to the coast many times to meet with Brett and Belinda. In fact, on one occasion the Prime Minister was in town and I think she could have rescheduled but she decided to keep that important meeting with the Beasleys that we had. Her support, both personally as a mother with a daughter the same age as Jack and in her role as then opposition leader, was very much appreciated, as was her beautiful contribution on his death. I look forward to seeing her back on the Gold Coast on the anniversary of Jack's death on 12 December for the second annual Walk for Jack where we will also be joined by the opposition leader, the member for Broadwater, who represents the Hornets club where Jack played, the member for Surfers Paradise and the member for Theodore, who I have not checked is coming but it is in his electorate so I will make sure that he is there.

Jacko's death devastated my community and they mobilised to do something about it. Our advocacy has been channelled through the Jack Beasley Foundation which led to the knife wandering trial within the Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach safe night precincts. That started in April and the data has so far been nothing short of startling. It is a sad indictment of the scale of this issue on the Gold Coast, which is the tourist capital of our nation, but it also thankfully gives us some idea about the types of people these expanded banning notices will include in these changes. As of 28 November the trial has seen around 2,500 people wanted, with 58 weapons found, leading to 42 Weapons Act offences identified by offenders with an average age of 23, with many other offences picked up through the random wandering, including, the police tell me, many drug offences.

I also pay tribute to some of the exemplary officers involved in Jack's case. On the last sitting of parliament, the Queensland Homicide Victims' Support Group awards acknowledged those detectives by giving them the Damian Leeding Compassion in Policing Award. Making that even more special was

the fact that Damian's mum, Julie Waters, made the presentation. I put on record my sincere thanks to detective senior constables Ash Shepherd, Natalie Harrison and Shane Fry for their exemplary service and going above and beyond to show empathy towards Belinda, Brett and Mitch as they dealt with the unimaginable loss of their son and brother throughout what has been a lengthy court process and the investigation that came before it.

The changes before us will expand police banning notices by empowering police to exclude persons in possession of a knife in contravention of section 51 of the Weapons Act for a period of no longer than one month. They are in direct response to knife incidents in the safe night precincts and the fact that police are increasingly concerned with the disregard shown by some offenders. Queenslanders should be able to head out at night and expect to remain safe. As the Beasleys' local member of parliament, I have been proud to advocate for wanding laws. Earlier this year we supported the amendments enacting the trial of the handheld scanners for locating knives. Based on the data I just outlined, I have every confidence that the Griffith University review will recommend that they be continued and expanded.

Laws are just one aspect of this. To achieve real change we need to educate people, particularly young people, about the consequences of using knives. I commend the Queensland Police Service for their 'I live my life ... without a knife' campaign. I thank the member for Logan for his support and his earlier comments. He is right that a lot of young people take a knife with them because they think they need it for their own safety, but the reality is that it makes them far less safe. I was very proud to be at the Gold Coast launch of this program with the Beasleys and I look forward to it being rolled out in some of our local schools. I will continue to do all I can to help the Beasleys and the foundation in their vital work to make sure that no family or community has to go through what they have gone through.

To wrap up, these laws are a start but we need so much more to reduce crime in our state. I do not oppose the bill.