




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Record of Proceedings, 29 March 2023

**POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES (JACK'S LAW) AMENDMENT BILL;
POLICE SERVICE ADMINISTRATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
BILL (NO. 2)**

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (4.36 pm): I begin by acknowledging Brett and Belinda who are upstairs in the gallery with whom I met earlier. We commented on the bipartisan approach to this particular law, Jack's Law. It is great for people to see the parliament working together to bring in a law that will help save lives across this state. I know I gave the member for Bonney a fair old crack yesterday on a different bill, but I do acknowledge his advocacy on this matter—and I will get to that point in a minute. He has been a staunch supporter of this, so I say well done to him as well as to the previous speaker.

I have always pushed hard for measures that support a safer community and I always will. We saw what happened on the Gold Coast with the introduction of the wandering trial. It made a real difference, just as the Beasley family have made a real difference. To Jack's parents here today, Brett and Belinda—and I saw Mark Wheeler, the Assistant Commissioner of Police, earlier—I say well done on continuing to push for reforms that support community safety. Despite their grief, they have continued to advocate for measures that can prevent and disrupt knife crime.

I am so pleased that the legislation we are introducing will be called Jack's Law. It will always be Jack's Law. It will be Jack's legacy to his fellow Queenslanders. Out of the tragedy of Jack's death some good has come with the introduction of this law.

Many people would know that, as the member for Thuringowa, I had a former career of 30 years in health, mainly as a paramedic. I have seen the very worst effects of knife crimes firsthand and the devastating impacts they have had on our broad community. They are images you can never forget. Having worked very closely with police over many of those years in some of those instances and as an MP, I was approached last year by some security officers who were very concerned about youth in my community in Townsville carrying knives into shopping centres.

I knew I had to act. I had a conversation with Assistant Commissioner Mark Wheeler where I made representations. I table the letter that was sent in June last year to the police minister asking for an extension of the wandering trial to our community.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 30 June 2022, from the member for Thuringowa, Mr Aaron Harper MP, to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services, Hon. Mark Ryan [401](#).

I commend the minister for his work, because today it is happening. I make the point that you stand up for your community, and the member for Bonney has done that. I can see that there are some connections across the board.

Again, I thank the minister for ensuring our police have both the capability and the capacity to use these tools, particularly in our safe night precincts right across the state and in our community in Townsville. The expansion of these powers will include public transport hubs and associated infrastructure. That is also welcome, because we should continue to do all we can to make our community safer.

Wanding involves police using a handheld scanner to detect knives or other metal objects being carried on a person. The legislation will require the Police Commissioner to publicly publish details of wanding operations across the state such as the number of people who were required to submit to the use of handheld scanning; the number of knives or other weapons that were detected using the scanners—we know from the trial that hundreds of knives were detected on the Gold Coast; the number of times the power to search a person without warrant was exercised as a result of scanning; and the number and types of charges as a result of the scanning. The bill will extend and expand the initial trial of handheld metal detection scanners by police for another two years. I acknowledge the committee that held the public hearings and all of those who came before the public hearings to share their stories. They have also helped to get this law to the point it is today where we are debating it in the House.

I want to touch on the Police Service Administration and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2). I know that there is a contrast here with weapons licensing, particularly for permit to acquire. The electorate of Thuringowa borders the Kennedy electorate. I speak to a lot of primary producers pretty regularly. Recently a recent gun supplier who established a new business in Thuringowa raised concerns with me about delays in the permit-to-acquire process. Following further representations with the police minister—I thank him for his work in the space—I am pleased to see that this bill will include more resourcing and a restructure to form the newly commissioned Weapons Licensing group. A workforce boost consisting of an additional 50 personnel has been extended for an extra 12 months to assist with the backlog and reduce application processing times. In addition, work is continuing on the development and implementation of the new weapons licensing management system, which will streamline application and approval processes to support the introduction of the national firearms registry. The processing time for new licence applications is currently around 20 weeks and is forecast to reduce, given the additional staff who will be trained to issue permits. The QPS is committed to delivering a weapons licensing regime that supports both community safety and the interests of stakeholders.

We are here in this House today in order for a very serious law to be passed on the back of significant representations from the family. I say to them: I look forward to welcoming you in our community of Townsville to provide some education to the youth in our schools about the risks of knives. Whether it be knife crime or weapon safety, these bills are all about providing public safety in Townsville and in every other community across our state. I commend the bills to the House.