




Speech By
Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (6.30 pm): Firstly, I would like to acknowledge Brett and Belinda Beasley, who are in the gallery, and all of their family. I can only imagine how difficult it is to listen to the debate on such a sensitive issue. I thank them and once again pass on to them our respects for their amazing stoicism, strength and courage in championing these laws and for their continued fight for strengthened laws to help to prevent tragedies such as they and their son, Jack Beasley, experienced. Unfortunately, many others have experience of or been threatened by similar incidents. I acknowledge that the legislation notes the tragic death of Raymond Harris, who died in September 2020 after being stabbed on Cavill Avenue, Surfers Paradise. While the death of Balin Stewart last year on the Sunshine Coast did not occur within a safe night precinct, it was as a result of a knife attack. Balin was stabbed and it is a tragedy that he is no longer with us.

It beggars belief that these types of crimes have been increasing in number and, apparently, in severity. As we have already acknowledged, the LNP supports these laws. We support Jack's Law and the measures to ensure the police have the legal tools to address this terrible scourge in our community as a result of people carrying weapons such as knives and, as has been mentioned, it is more extensive than that. Weapons can be screwdrivers and there are other things that people are carrying. It has become necessary to allow police to wand people with handheld scanners to see if they are carrying weapons. Under this legislation, that will happen in defined areas.

The legislation before the House will expand upon the trial that started on the Gold Coast. The trial will be extended to other safe night precincts, transport hubs and public transport because it has been recognised that this problem occurs beyond just a few areas. I strongly support the expansion of the laws to other safe night precincts and, certainly, our public transport nodes and public transport vehicles. There is a disagreement between the LNP and the government on the expansion of the trial. I respect the member who spoke before me, the member for Cooper. I respect that there are different views about whether the legislation should be trialled for another couple of years or made permanent.

I support my colleague the member for Burdekin and shadow minister for police who has put forward amendments to get rid of the sunset clause in the legislation because we believe there is adequate evidence that the trial significantly assisted with the confiscation of about 242 weapons, I believe, although there may have been more. The legislation also contains a deterrent so we will never know how many people chose not to take weapons into those areas because they now know that there is a real risk of being apprehended and having their weapons confiscated. Why do people have to carry such weapons? If people are not carrying them then they have nothing to fear from the law and from wandings. This is about providing a public safety benefit to our whole community as people will know that these measures are in place and that the police have the tools to do the job. That is why, through the amendment of the member for Burdekin, the LNP proposes to get rid of the sunset clause in the legislation and ensure the expansion continues.

The legislation does contain a review mechanism. I emphasise this for the benefit of members opposite who want to allow the sunset provisions to remain in the legislation. We are talking about a requirement for legislative provisions to be reviewed—that is in our amendments—but we do not want a sunset clause in the legislation. That is very important. It is not uncommon to have legislative review mechanisms without having a sunset clause in the legislation. It would be unfortunate to have uncertainty around whether or not these laws will be removed from the statute books in two years time because the government is determined to maintain a sunset clause, keeping things uncertain at this time.

I want to talk about the safe night precincts. I am a strong advocate of those precincts. When the LNP was in government we established a means of funding, resourcing and having a structure around the entertainment precincts where alcohol is consumed and people are out for a good time. We want people not only to have a good time in those precincts but also to be safe there and to get home safely. I am very disappointed that the state Labor government has removed dedicated funding for additional police in the safe night precincts. As we see Jack's Law being rolled out and the ongoing need for existing laws to be applied in these areas, we need police to enforce those laws. We need the police to ensure that it is not just black-letter law but that there is a real police presence to ensure the laws can be implemented.

It is really disturbing to hear about a lack of police resources and actual police numbers working the beat in our communities. The police are stretched thin so the removal of additional dedicated funding for police resources in our safe night precincts is a backward step. I really believe that it is a backward step. Often the precincts are hotspots where crimes occur when people are under the influence of liquor and other substances. Unfortunately, often victims of crime are not the ones who went out with the intention of committing a crime but they have fallen victim to other people's excesses. We need to ensure people are safe. Therefore, I urge the government to reverse their decision to remove the dedicated additional funding for police in our safe night precincts as these laws are rolled out.

From talking to local hospitality workers around safe night precincts, I know that they are very keen on these measures. Like the police, they are very keen to see what support will be provided to the police through additional training and resources so that they can do their job. Once again, I urge the government to put back the dedicated funds that they took away so that the police are able to do their job and can keep those areas as safe as possible. This work is never finished. It is ongoing. It is a backward step to remove those resources, particularly at a time when new laws need to be backed up with dedicated funding to ensure those areas are as safe as possible.

I want to talk about the Maroochydore bus station, which is the main public transport hub on the Sunshine Coast. A lot of incidents have occurred there. The police and other security teams are trying their best to keep it as safe as possible. The station is right near the safe night precinct. It will be incorporated in the trial to enable police to wand or scan people who may be carrying knives.

We need to see more police resources. Police are doing a tough job, and we need to ensure that their presence and these laws are not undermined by a lack of resources. We need to ensure there is training, sufficient police numbers and an awareness of how these laws are to be applied. There also needs to be public education about these laws. It will be of huge benefit if we resource the police in the job they are doing as well as ensure that all in our community are aware that carrying knives and weapons on our streets, on public transport or anywhere—even if they are not captured by the wandering laws and are outside these precincts—is not okay. There is no reason for people to be carrying weapons because it already goes to some sense of intent in terms of why they are carrying them. It is not for good. It is time that we stood up against this more effectively across our community.