




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

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

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (6.51 pm): I rise to speak in support of the two bills before the House being dealt with in this cognate debate. I join others in this House in expressing the deep regret and sorrow we have for all of those people mentioned in this House who have been victims of terrible stabbing crimes involving knives and have lost their lives. In particular I mention Brett and Belinda Beasley and their family. Their son Jack was the victim of a terrible knife attack in 2019. I could not think of a more appropriate title for this bill than Jack's Law.

I mix in a fairly wide circle. In my electorate of McConnel I have some of the biggest safe night precincts and transport stations in Queensland. A lot of people go through these stations and safe night precincts. All I can say is how much I welcome the two-year extension of the trial of scanning for handheld weapons in this bill. These are fundamentally new laws. I think we have moved in the right direction. The trial will be extended to the 15 safe night precincts and transport stations where a lot of incidents occur. It also gives senior police officers the authority to scan for knives if there are other incidents that have happened in six months.

I think we need to have a look at how this works. Yes, we can say that it has been successful. As I said, I move in a large circle of friends and family and I do not know anyone who walks around carrying a weapon. Police officers have found knives, axes and knuckledusters. I do not know anybody who walks around with those. We can only assume when people are in these safe night precincts—the biggest one being Fortitude Valley; the others in my electorate being the city and Petrie Terrace/Caxton Street—and have these weapons that they want to use them at the some point. If people do not carry them they cannot injure somebody, whether they are retaliating, whether they have been provoked or whether they are picking the fight or whatever may happen. If they have them on their body they must think that at some stage they are going to use them, whether it is to protect themselves or whatever. I have no idea.

I have lived in inner-city Brisbane all my life. I live in Fortitude Valley now and I have lived in New Farm. I grew up in Spring Hill when Spring Hill was not the Spring Hill of today. It was a very difficult area to grow up in in the 1960s. I did not think that I needed to walk around with a concealed weapon for my protection. I would never have thought about it.

If these laws remove one weapon from somebody they are laws that this House is justified to pass. As other members in this House have said, hundreds of these weapons have been found and confiscated. To think that someone goes out for a good night out in a safe night precinct—whether on the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast or wherever—and they are walking around with an axe, something is desperately wrong with their thinking. They should not have the right to walk around like that.

I know the committee recommended that these bills be passed. That is right. The two-year extension to have a look at how they work, see whether the protections we have put in are enough and make sure we are not targeting certain people, because often these things can go that way, is appropriate. Madam Deputy Speaker, I know you are a very proud Torres Strait Islander woman. You would not want First Nations people, migrant groups or other young people from other areas to be the target of a lot of this wandering. The trial will hopefully look at those things and determine whether or not what we intended as legislators in this parliament is actually working. The review of exactly what has happened, the reporting, the authorising that needs to be done and the protections where there is evidence and an area is declared a wandering area is a step in right direction.

In my electorate I have some fantastic service providers. In particular, I pay tribute to ChaplainWatch. I know this will make their job easier. ChaplainWatch is now not just in Brisbane; it has extended to the Sunshine Coast, Rockhampton, Bundaberg and Gladstone. It is funded to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars by the Queensland government to carry out this very important work. I pay tribute to Lance Mergard, the founder and senior chaplain at ChaplainWatch; Jesse Webb, the CEO; and Ross Howe, the president and chair. They do an amazing job. I know that these laws will be welcomed by them. They can go and assist young people with the knowledge that if there is any suspicion then wandering can take place. It puts them in a much safer environment.

At the end of the day, it does happen a lot in our safe night precincts. We want to go out for a good time. We do not want to go out and be injured. I am looking forward to meeting Brett and Belinda Beasley tomorrow. I have an appointment with them. I want to talk with them about how we can educate young people better in that space. My heart goes out to them and all the other families whose loved ones have been the victims of terrible weapons crimes. They were out for a good night and they ended up getting stabbed and losing their life. I could not think of anything more horrific.

Anything we can do to give police those powers we should do, but then we need to have a look at them properly. Are they really working the way we want? I want to hear from ChaplainWatch after the two-year trial about whether there are ways we can make the system better. Are there things that they think we can improve? Although I know an amendment will be moved, I will not be supporting it because I think what we have done here, the way we travelling and the committee's recommendation are the right way to go.

At the end of the day, this is all about keeping the public safe all over Queensland. This is all about sending the strong message: do not carry these weapons. They will be found and they will be confiscated. Go out, have a good time and enjoy yourself, but leave your weapons at home because if we find them, we will take action. You will be caught and you will be dealt with. That is what these laws are really all about.

I thank the committee and the minister for their work. I think this is a step in the right direction. I will certainly be welcoming them in my electorate of McConnel, which has one of the biggest safe night precincts in the state. I know that organisations like ChaplainWatch will welcome them as well. I commend the bills to the House.