




Speech By
Jarrod Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

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 BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (3.36 pm): In speaking to the Police Powers and Responsibilities (Jack's Law) Amendment Bill 2022 I wish to be associated with the remarks made by the honourable member for Bonney in his contribution. His steadfast determination to see these laws come to this chamber should be acknowledged by all members of the House. I note that without the tireless effort of the member for Bonney, as the local member of Jack's community, and without the support of other parliamentarians going back many years now this law would not be debated today.

We are aware that over 240 weapons were found just through the Gold Coast trial alone. That shows me that the trial has been a success because if you find and take off individuals 240 weapons—knives and other weapons, and some of the other weapons I saw included axes and all sorts of things—

Mr O'Connor: Machetes.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the member for Bonney—that is preventing possible deaths in our communities. Through this legislation, the trial is being extended to areas such as I represent on the Sunshine Coast—that is, the safe night precincts of both Maroochydore and Caloundra. That is great news for young people on the Sunshine Coast.

I also wish to associate myself with remarks by the member for Bonney with respect to the Beasley family, who are in the gallery today. I am a parent. I have three children. I cannot begin to understand what they have gone through in terms of losing a son and what many Queensland families have gone through with respect to knife crime. Today is my son's 13th birthday. While I mention that, I reflect on the fact that the Beasleys and others in my electorate will never celebrate certain birthdays with their families because of knife crime and the culture that is now developing with many young people.

It is on that note that, as I have in this parliament before, I speak about a 16-year-old lad from my electorate, Balin Stewart. Balin was born on 8 September 2005 and tragically passed away on 20 January 2022. Just before midnight on 20 January 2022, 16-year-old Balin Stewart was fatally stabbed outside his home in Buddina. That happened in the middle of my electorate, around the corner from my office. Balin was a hugely popular 16-year-old lad from the Sunshine Coast. He had hundreds of friends. He was stabbed to death out the front of his home in a suburban street. He died in the arms of his father, Michael. Balin was killed in a knife attack because someone brought a knife to a fight.

What many people may not realise—I am beginning to understand it more often now because of my association with Michael and Kerri-Lyn Stewart—is that many times we are not talking about hunting knives, rigid pocketknives or serrated knives; we are talking about kitchen knives—steak knives or butter knives. I completely underestimated the culture in our communities until I started talking and listening to the education campaign of the Jack Beasley Foundation and the Balin Stewart Foundation—

how prevalent this is in our community with young people, whether they are an aggressor and want to take a knife for deliberate purposes or they take a knife for fear of their own safety. The Jack Beasley Foundation and the Balin Stewart Foundation are trying to educate young kids that if you do not carry a knife with you, no-one will die. If you do not carry a knife with you, no-one will get stabbed. That is the message we need to send to young people. I reflect, as I did, with my 13-year-old boy. I have now talked to him about this and he said, 'Dad, you wouldn't believe how many people in schools bring knives around for whatever reason.' It is real and it is a real issue. That is why I completely support the extension of this law into areas such as the Sunshine Coast to better protect the young kids in my electorate.

After their son Balin passed away, Michael and Kerri-Lyn started the Balin Stewart Foundation. As I said, it is about educating young people about knife culture and crime. They have also started a campaign—#binthebladeforbalin. I completely support that. We recently did a walk raising money for the Balin Stewart Foundation. Through the foundation his parents have set up, there is the memorial chair at Buddina Beach where he loved going, just up from the Kawana Surf Club. Recently the foundation launched a petition to install a plaque there. The council bureaucracy about allowing a family to put a plaque on a chair is unbelievably ridiculous. We are talking about a small sandstone structure with a beautiful plaque to recognise a beautiful boy who passed away a year ago in Kawana.

The family have had to launch a petition to try to convince council to allow them to put a sandstone structure and a plaque next to a chair that they paid for. They paid for the park bench because they could not get the funds from council to do it. I call on the Sunshine Coast community to support the Balin Stewart Foundation petition, by parents Michael and Kerri-Lyn Stewart, to install the sandstone memorial and plaque. It gives people pause for reflection when they are walking past the popular Kawana beaches in Buddina. Families can walk past the chair and plaque with their young children, who might ask what it is about. That to me is part of an education process: 'That is a memorial chair and a plaque for young Balin Stewart, who was killed in a knife attack. If the offender had not had the knife, Balin would be with us today.' It is so unfortunate that we have to have legislation like Jack's Law, named after people who have passed away. This could very well be Balin's Law. That is the reality of the situation, because we have had Jack, Balin and many other Queenslanders pass away.

As the member for Bonney and the shadow minister, Dale Last, indicated, we absolutely support the extension of these laws but they should be permanent. The Griffith report conducted after the trial indicates that 242 weapons were taken off people, and that has prevented lives being lost in that community. We can extrapolate that in terms of the extension of these powers to the Sunshine Coast and all of the other safe night precincts. I wish the government had not reduced funding to the safe night precincts, particularly in Maroochydore and Caloundra. At the time, the police told us how concerned they were about safety in the communities when the government reduced funding for the safe night precincts. Now we have a level of support from the government for these safe night precincts, which is good. When you consider the 242 weapons located on people through this winding trial and extrapolate that across all of the other safe night precincts, in 12 months or two years these statistics will reflect what is happening in our community at the moment.

I thank the Beasleys for pursuing this in the name of their son. I thank Kerri-Lyn and Michael Stewart for pursuing education on behalf of their son, who last year was also lost to knife crime in my electorate. I congratulate the member for Bonney, the shadow minister and a former opposition leader, who also was speaking about this very issue before the 2020 election. It has been on the agenda for many years and it is good that the parliament is finally dealing with it. I say to the Labor members in this chamber: suspend any extension of the trial and make it permanent across our communities. Just end the trial and make it permanent. That is all we should be doing in this parliament today to protect young people and prevent any more of the tragedies we have seen over the last few years Queensland.