




Speech By
Jim McDonald

MEMBER FOR LOCKYER

Record of Proceedings, 30 March 2023

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

 **Mr McDONALD** (Lockyer—LNP) (4.04 pm): No person should have to bury a child. Whether it be through the tragedy of sickness or through the sudden taking of one through a tragic incident, no parent should have to bury a child. A few years ago, three days before Christmas, Brett and Belinda Beasley faced that certainty. I am sure their nightmares live on, although I am sure they have found ways to cope.

Through my years as a police officer, seeing some terrible things, I know that tragic circumstances can bring out the best and the worst in people. For the Beasleys it is a case of bringing out the absolute best. They harnessed their tragedy, their sadness and their anger towards something constructive—what became the Jack Beasley Foundation—and educated others on what can happen when somebody carries a weapon. They sent that powerful message right across the state. I cannot believe the strength and tenacity that Brett, Belinda and their supporters have shown through this tragedy. To harness that energy at a time of grief and put it towards something so positive shows the true character of a person. It is alright to be valiant at the time of triumph but to pick yourself up in times of adversity and grief shows the true character of a person. I, my community and my family congratulate them for the absolute resolve that they have shown.

I recognise my colleagues, Sam O'Connor, the member for Bonney, Deb Frecklington, the member for Nanango, as well as Mark Boothman, the member for Theodore, who have given some comfort to the Beasleys and who have assisted them and their community through this journey. The way in which they have been able to harness their community, whether it be the Rugby League club or the families in the community, and take their message across the state is a very wonderful legacy that I am sure their Jack would be proud of. It is something none of us should have to do. My prayers go to the Beasleys and their extended family and friends that they have had to play these cards they have been dealt. By heck, they are playing a wonderful round of cards.

We can change legislation in this place. We have seen a bill come to the House which has some very positive changes in it. I look forward to supporting the amendments that our shadow minister will be moving. The police face anguish in our society. In recent times we have spoken about youth crime and the tragedies and sadness that have occurred. I am very pleased to see that this Labor government reintroduced breach of bail so a youth offender committing offences whilst on bail can be dealt with just like an adult. That is a start. These laws today, which will be known as Jack's Law, are a great extension of the powers and the success that we saw with the safe night precinct on the Gold Coast at Surfers Paradise. It was a great trial. The trial worked. There was no better evidence than the 21,000 people searched and the 240-odd items located.

When I spoke with the Beasleys I shared with them that one of the great frustrations for police in today's environment is they have a very large range of powers, and when they reasonably suspect something they can exercise those powers to the extent they can be invasive. I would argue that the use of wands is a very non-invasive power. I do not think it is unrealistic to use that power across the state on any occasion. Why would somebody go out with a knife? If it is innocent, such as a chef with a knife or a saucepan on the way to work, there is no harm done. To not give non-invasive powers is a frustration for me, given the extent of the powers police have when they reasonably suspect something. The police have to work with the powers the legislature gives them. I welcome the extension of the powers into all of the other safe night precincts. I recognise that is a concentration of people. I also welcome that this legislation will apply to public transport settings, which is a great outcome.

Again, I stress that the trial should be extended with a review, as we have recommended, but without an end date. I do not think setting a date of 2025 is necessary given what I have outlined about the powers that police already have. I understand that there are those amongst us who have made submissions about the extension of the police powers, but I think they are putting that in the context of giving police powers when there is no reasonable suspicion. We are talking about non-invasive powers that use technologies of today, such as the technologies that are used in airports. Every time we go to an airport we go through those scanners without asking questions because we want to get on our plane. For crying out loud! Surely we can give police the powers to use a wand as a precaution for both their own safety and to make sure that people in our community are safe.

I commend Belinda on her very articulate statement when she said that life is not a video game and there is no reset button. Life is not a video game and there is no reason for anybody to carry a knife in a public place. There is no excuse for it. I believe firmly that police should have the full powers to use wands wherever they are given their non-invasive nature and the safety that they provide.

I commend the Beasleys for their efforts to extend this message right across schools. Today Brett offered to come to the three high schools in my electorate to give that message. I look forward to taking him up on that really wonderful offer. The Beasleys are truly honourable Queenslanders who have the best interests of all at heart. They should be commended for their wonderful efforts in their fight against knife crime. I look forward to doing whatever we can to extend these powers into the future.

In my remaining time I will touch on the other bill, particularly regarding the changes to the police disciplinary process as well as some operational changes and changes to the Weapons Act. I certainly welcome the changes that will put some time frames around the disciplinary system within the Police Service. For a long time many good police officers have been affected by delays in the process. In some cases, it has cost them their lives and in some cases it has cost them their marriages and impacted other aspects of their lives because of the weight hanging over their heads. I welcome those changes. I think other changes can be made.

I also welcome the changes to the weapons licensing process to deal with the enormous backlog of thousands of applications and permits to acquire. Certainly it is not beyond time. I have asked many questions on notice on behalf of my community and others in Queensland have made representations as well. Finally, some things are happening in that space. As I said, it is certainly not before time.

Returning to the issue of the disciplinary process for police, this really is something where I am constantly at odds with some people in the legal fraternity who talk about having a different body or an independent body. People such as police, lawyers and teachers are professional people. The most important part of a professional organisation is learning and the continual improvement of practice. The best way for police officers to continue to do that is to be held to account by their own so they continue that professional learning. The responsibility on investigators within the police—and I was one for many years—is so heavy and accountable that you would not do the wrong thing. I say this to those who are concerned about not having an independent body: let us be and see the most professional police service possible, which is what we have in Queensland today.