




Speech By  
**Laura Gerber**

**MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN**

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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)**

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (4.09 pm): Knife crime is tragic and it is a reckless scourge that has ruined many young lives and continues to threaten the safety of our communities. The need to act on this has become devastatingly apparent over the past few years, and as the youth crime crisis continues there has never been more need for legislation like this. I too would like to align myself with the contribution made by the member for Bonney in this House and thank him for his efforts. This law is a direct result of the advocacy of the Jack Beasley Foundation and the support of their local member, the member for Bonney, along with a number of other LNP members in this chamber, including the member for Nanango, when she was the Leader of the Opposition, and now the member for Broadwater, as the current Leader of the Opposition.

Brett and Belinda Beasley, supported by the member for Bonney, have done an incredible amount of work to bring the issue of knife crime to the attention of the community and this government. They created the Jack Beasley Foundation following the tragic death of their son Jack, and they have worked relentlessly and tirelessly both in the community, focusing on grassroots education through school presentations, and for legislative change focused on their motto 'Detect knives, save lives'. This is exactly why we are in this chamber today debating this bill, Jack's Law. Knife crime and knife related offences continue to rise sharply. Blood is being spilled on our streets, people are dying, and it seems a near weekly occurrence that we hear media reports of another stabbing. Knife use is also a significant aspect of youth crime.

I will never forget hearing Belinda Beasley tell her story at the Gold Coast public hearing back in 2021 as part of the first inquiry into these laws. I was part of the committee that was hearing Belinda's testimony. She spoke so bravely, appearing in front of our parliamentary committee to talk about her trauma and the trauma her family has gone through. This was compounded by the fact that the committee hearing, completely inadvertently, was held barely 100 metres from where Jack was killed. Belinda bravely put herself through this, walking past the spot where her son lost his life to tell her story to our committee. I am going to read extracts of what Belinda said because it is the reason we are here today. It is the reason we are here with Jack's Law. Belinda said—

On Friday, 13 December 2019 at 8.27 pm we received a call that changed our lives forever and that call should never happen to any parent. Jack headed out, as many young people do, with a group of friends. They hopped on the G:link and headed into Surfers Paradise. Just after 8 pm, Jack and his friends stopped at the IGA before they were heading to a friend's apartment.

Outside the IGA Jack and his mates were set upon and attacked by five youths for no reason. These five youths had travelled down by train from the Logan area. They were aged 15, two 16-year-olds, a 17-year-old and an 18-year-old.

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Jack ... had been stabbed and had been taken by ambulance to Gold Coast University Hospital. We raced up to the hospital as soon as we got the call. Sitting in that hospital room that night was just the beginning of our nightmare—not knowing if Jack was going to make it or not, constantly being updated on his condition by the great staff at Gold Coast University Hospital and then the cardiac surgeon walks in the door and says one word: 'Sorry.' Our world shattered with that one word, and seeing our son Mitch fall to the floor at being told Jack, his little brother, did not make it through surgery was heartbreaking. There are so many traumatic images that we have imprinted on our minds forever.

Jack was 17. He was three months off turning 18.

The Beasley's bravery in fighting for change, trying to prevent another family from going through what they have been through, is why we are here today. This bill extends the trial of handheld scans to detect knives for another two years. It expands the trial outside just the two safe night precincts of Broadbeach and Surfers Paradise to all 15 safe night precincts in Queensland, and it expands the trial to public transport and public transport stations.

In 2021 when the trial was proposed for the Broadbeach and Surfers Paradise safe night precincts, I initially expressed concerns that the trial needed to be larger, that it needed to include those parts of the Gold Coast where knife crime starts, where there are tram stops and bus stations. I was concerned that, because the trial only applied to Broadbeach and Surfers Paradise, it might not catch all the knife crime in Queensland and it might not produce the data that is needed to truly convey the reality of knife crime in Queensland. Here we are today talking about expanding the trial further for those exact reasons.

As of last month, the two-year trial under its current narrow parameters, in just the safe night precincts of Broadbeach and Surfers Paradise, resulted in approximately 242 weapons being seized, 336 arrests and 467 charges. Even given the narrow parameters of just applying to the Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach safe night precincts, these are pretty big numbers for those areas. I think it tells us how prevalent knife crime is across our state and how much we need Jack's Law to be permanent.

This bill, as it stands, will expire in two years. Jack's Law should be made permanent. Yes, it should be reviewed in two years, but I think the data that has been conveyed already in the safe night precincts trial in Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach demonstrates the prevalence of knife crime across our state and demonstrates that we do need to make this permanent. We have heard far too many devastating stories of knife crime at train stations and tram stations. As the committee heard from Belinda Beasley, the youth that took Jack Beasley's life had travelled on public transport to Surfers Paradise, illegally armed with a knife that would ultimately end Jack's life.

The LNP's amendment making Jack's Law permanent would strengthen the police's ability to keep our community safe and act as a strong deterrent for youths to be carrying knives. We on this side of the House understand the need to give police the ability to maintain community safety. It is a priority for us. The police need the resources, the funding and the capability to ensure strong action can be taken on knife crime and crime in general, but remarkably and regrettably what we have seen from this state government is the funding for our safe night precincts being cut.

Safe night precincts are designed to keep locals safe and it is a huge part of having a highly visible police presence. Labor knows that, but in the state budget papers for this financial year we see that the state government has removed some of the funding for our officers in our safe night precincts. As a result of these cuts, we are hearing reports of police stations having to beg for more officers to cover shifts in their safe night precincts. The additional funding is crucial as it will enable officers to be on duty in these areas without pulling on local resources. We do not want to see a scenario where other important police operations in different areas—such as responding to break and enters and the rising crime of thefts—are hindered and resources are strained. Police numbers are dwindling as a direct result of this Labor government's inaction. Cutting funding at a time when crime is on the rise and when there is a greater risk of alcohol fuelled violence in these safe night precincts simply makes no sense.

I welcome this bill. It is the culmination of incredible community groundwork by the Jack Beasley Foundation and the Beasleys, and it is the culmination of incredible advocacy by the member for Broadwater and other members in this chamber, as I have acknowledged. I thank the state government for bringing this law to this chamber. I want to also acknowledge the broader part of what the Jack Beasley Foundation does around cultural change. They have developed an education program to explain to young people the consequences of their action and to urge them to think before taking a knife with them when they head out.

Brett and Belinda Beasley, this House thanks you sincerely for all the work you have done in the aftermath of your son's death. The foundation has already contributed so much to the safety of the community through the awareness and education programs you have developed. This legislation is an important part of achieving the meaningful change you have spearheaded, and the LNP will continue to fight for Jack's Law to be made a permanent law in this state.