




Speech By
Hon. Mark Ryan

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 29 November 2023

SUMMARY OFFENCES (PREVENTION OF KNIFE CRIME) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (11.18 am): I present a bill for an act to amend the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 and the Summary Offences Act 2005 for particular purposes. I table the bill, the explanatory notes and a statement of compatibility with human rights and I nominate the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Summary Offences (Prevention of Knife Crime) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 [2021](#).

Tabled paper: Summary Offences (Prevention of Knife Crime) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, explanatory notes [2022](#).

Tabled paper: Summary Offences (Prevention of Knife Crime) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, statement of compatibility with human rights [2023](#).

As a community, it is imperative we all have a clear understanding of what is acceptable and what is not. As a community, we need to send clear messages about what is acceptable and what is not. The legislation I introduce to this parliament today sends a very clear message: we will not tolerate a knife culture taking root. We have seen knife cultures develop in other jurisdictions around the world. We have seen the terrible consequences for those communities. We will not go down that path in Queensland. Thanks to the support of Jack Beasley's parents, Brett and Belinda, Queensland is leading the nation when it comes to combating knife crime. We have Jack's Law, giving police wandering powers to disrupt and prevent crime and save lives. The laws I introduce today are the next step: banning the sale of knives and other items to juveniles.

These are commonsense reforms. These are reforms that will support safer retail environments and a safer community. We will always put our community, our people, first. Queensland is not the only jurisdiction in Australia that must confront this issue. There is a global trend towards young people carrying dangerous items such as knives, axes and machetes. The reasons underlying this dangerous trend are multifaceted. However, there is clearly a perceived notoriety that is associated with possessing knives that is held by some young offenders. This is exacerbated by some commercial sellers who profit from this mindlessness by selling knives and other weapons that are designed or advertised in a way that encourages or glamorises these items being used for violence.

This government is leading the nation with new initiatives that address the scourge of knife crime including, as I mentioned, the introduction of Jack's Law and its expansion earlier this year. The Palaszczuk government has empowered police officers to use handheld metal-detecting wands in all safe night precincts, on public transport and at transportation hubs across Queensland to detect weapons, deter offending and protect the community. Within the first seven months of the expansion of Jack's Law, more than 3,200 handheld scanner operations have been conducted across the state,

resulting in more than 36,800 people being scanned and over 380 weapons being seized. That means there are 380 fewer weapons on our streets. Every weapon off the streets represents a tragedy being avoided and a potential life saved. When a knife is used in an offence, it takes only one moment for lives to be changed or tragically lost. Everyone loses with knife crime. Victims may be horribly injured or killed, witnesses may be forever psychologically impacted and the offender may face lifelong repercussions. A single thoughtless act or moment of criminal behaviour can destroy countless lives.

I believe that any injury or loss of life caused by young people offending with knives or other dangerous weapons is simply intolerable and it is unacceptable. This government will take every available measure to bring it to a halt. The new laws introduced by this bill will complement and build upon our existing initiatives designed to tackle knife crime. The bill will introduce essential legislative reform that strengthens regulations regarding the sale, possession and storage of knives and other dangerous items. This is achieved by amending the Summary Offences Act 2005 and the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 1999 to introduce new offences, including prohibiting the sale of controlled items to anyone under the age of 18.

A controlled item will include knives, swords, machetes, axes, sickles or scythes, spears, spear guns and replica firearms including gel blasters that are replica firearms. By prohibiting the sale of knives and other dangerous items to minors, we are taking another step forward in enhancing how police can stop knife crime and get items like knives and machetes out of the hands of young people and off our streets. However, this prohibition will exclude items such as plastic or wooden knives designed to be used for eating, knives with rounded or dull edges such as butter knives and small knives designed to be used as cheese knives. It will also be an offence for anyone to falsely represent themselves as being over the age of 18 for the purposes of being sold a controlled item.

This initiative will work hand in hand with retailers to ensure the success of these measures by requiring commercial sellers to display signage at retail outlets advertising the prohibition against the sale of knives to minors. Sellers will also be required to take preventive measures to ensure compliance with this prohibition. This includes instructing all employees on their obligations under these new laws, including to sight acceptable evidence of age for anyone seeking to purchase a controlled item who may be under the age of 18. This prohibition will apply to any sale involving a controlled item. It will make no difference if the item is sold at a retail store, in a market, at a temporary stall, in a private sale or online. All sales involving knives, swords, machetes and other controlled items to minors will be prohibited.

Commercial sellers of particular controlled items will also be required to securely store these dangerous items in retail outlets. Items captured by this new secure storage requirement will include: a dagger that is a double-edged blade; a knife with a blade at each end; a sword, machete or axe, which includes tomahawks; a sickle or scythe; and a spear gun and a spear. To comply with these new storage requirements, retailers will need to ensure the item is either stored in a locked room, cage, cabinet or container or securely tethered. In acknowledgement of how dangerous these items can be when misappropriated, many retailers already provide safe and secure storage in their retail outlets and I commend those retailers for doing so. However, this amendment will ensure that good practice is implemented universally across the state and will further minimise the risk of these dangerous items falling into the hands of young offenders.

Additionally, this bill prohibits controlled weapons from being sold or marketed in a way that suggests the item is suitable for combat, is intended to be used for violence or is likely to stimulate or encourage violent or criminal behaviour. This offence targets the sale of knives and other weapons specifically designed to glamorise their use as deadly weapons. There is a growing trend internationally of knives, machetes and other items being sold that possess words, images or markings either on the item itself or its packaging, on a related accessory or in an associated advertisement that encourage its use for violence. Commonly known as 'zombie knives', these items are deliberately designed to look menacing and replicate elaborate weaponry often seen in horror films. This kind of weapon serves no practical purpose and exists purely to inflate criminal egos or excite puerile minds. Machetes depicted with blood dripping from the edge of the blade or marked with words such as 'head splitter', 'killer' or 'slayer' serve no practical purpose and have no place in our society. These dangerous items can end lives and the Palaszczuk government takes the threat of knife crime and violent offences involving these kinds of weapons very seriously.

This bill sends a clear message to any business seeking to profit by selling or marketing certain items in a way that deliberately fuels the notoriety of possessing weapons by young people that this must stop. The amendments in this bill will commence on proclamation, following a 12-month implementation period that will include a public education campaign. I am proud to introduce this bill and take another step forward in cracking down on knife crime.

I would like to thank the Jack Beasley Foundation and Brett and Belinda Beasley. I spoke to Brett this morning. He is very excited that this legislation is being introduced. I acknowledge the Beasleys' tireless campaign to help strengthen Queensland's laws and their ongoing efforts to educate the community regarding the dangers and repercussions of knife possession and how a single act of violence can change the course of so many lives.

I thank the retail industry leaders and representatives who have already shown their support for this initiative and for prioritising the safety of their customers, staff and community. I also acknowledge the advocacy of Ian Leavers from the Queensland Police Union and Chris Gazenbeek from the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association. Everyone has a part to play in making Queensland a safer place. By working together to implement these measures we can achieve greater success and greater safety and save lives. I take this opportunity to commend all of those who have contributed to the development of this bill. I encourage all members to support it. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

Hon. MT RYAN (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (11.28 am): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Referral to Legal Affairs and Safety Committee

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee.