




Speech By
Melissa McMahon

MEMBER FOR MACALISTER

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

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (4.02 pm): I rise to speak in support of the two bills before the House: the Police Powers and Responsibilities (Jack's Law) Amendment Bill and the Police Service Administration and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Queensland's vibrant night-life economy is dependent on maintaining patrons' safety. We acknowledge that people have a right to have a good night out and that they should have the freedom to eat, drink and be merry. The luxury of youth is learning about one's limits and the consequences of overstepping them and overimbibing. This should be able to be done without too much damage to one's safety other than the repercussions of the next day. In this space, with alcohol on board and a healthy amount of hedonism as the clear priority, people are vulnerable, judgement is impaired, poor decisions are made, tempers can flare and arguments and altercations can happen, but no-one should lose their life over it.

I spent my formative years in the night spots of Broadbeach and Surfers Paradise—working, I might add, for the benefit of the House. My first police posting was to the Gold Coast and those were my first two stations. As a 21-year-old police officer, I was entrusted with ensuring community safety in these locations. To say that Gold Coast night-life in the 1990s was a bit like the Wild West is a bit of an understatement. It was certainly an eye-opener. The night brings out all sorts of night-life—most of it good, fun and vibrant, but there was always an edge to it—one where a night could turn in an instant. I certainly conducted my fair share of searches of individuals and seized my fair share of weapons in the course of my duties.

Safe night precincts in our entertainment and hospitality zones were created with the understanding that areas where large numbers of patrons consume alcohol created a number of public safety concerns. Initially dubbed drink safe precincts, safe night precincts have undergone a number of evaluations and reforms in the last 10 years. Today we seek to continue to improve aspects of the safe night precincts. I would like to acknowledge the initial Tackling Alcohol-Fuelled Violence strategy released in 2016 through the hard work of the former member for Stafford, Dr Lynham, who did an amazing amount of work in that space. An evaluation of that strategy did show a reduction in violence and hospital presentations after the introduction of a number of those reforms.

In 2021 a trial using metal scanners, or wands, to scan patrons in Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach safe night precincts commenced. It was introduced to curb a spate of knife related violent crimes and it was authorised to run for two years. An examination of the trial by the Griffith Criminology Institute was published in August 2022, just one year after the trial started. While the Griffith report certainly made recommendations on improving processes involved in the trial, it also noted that the trial time line did not provide a significant period of time to determine the efficacy of the trial. Accordingly, this bill seeks to extend the trial in terms of time and locations to ensure that the best possible data is captured as we continue our attempts for continual improvement in public safety.

I would caution those opposite who would like to see the end of the trial to go back and read the evaluation of the original drink safe precincts that were introduced when the LNP was last in government. It does show the error in not doing a proper evaluation. Not only will the trial roll out in all safe night precincts throughout the state but it will also include public transport vehicles and stations. Having policed the safe night precincts subject to the trial, I am aware that patrons there are accustomed to travelling on public transport to and from the precincts, and their safety in the precinct should also extend to their travel to and from. I note the improvements made to safeguards and the recording of data that are also contained within the bill and acknowledge the training that will be required for police officers working within the safe night precincts.

I would now like to briefly turn to the amendments to be considered in the Police Service Administration Act. This is the act under which police officers are employed and derive their powers and entitlements of office. Therefore, in relation to discipline and the potential misuse of police assets and resources this is a primary bill for the Queensland Police Service. There have been some significant changes to police disciplinary processes in the past few years, but much of that focus has been on investigations around potential criminal charges.

Recent commissions of inquiry have detailed significant concerns around police officers named as respondents on domestic and family violence order applications. To be clear, to be named as a respondent on an application is not in and of itself a criminal matter, so those names have largely been out of the scope of many of the disciplinary process improvements; however, this should not be without consequence if an officer is found to have committed domestic and family violence. In all of this the balance between natural justice and the community's expectations of the behaviour of police officers must be considered. In this instance, the amendment will allow the domestic and family violence application to run its course and be finalised in the DV courts before the internal investigation commences. Given that DV applications are generally finalised within a few weeks, this is not considered an onerous delay to any potential disciplinary process. Further, it is likely to enhance and expedite the internal investigation as all relevant evidence is likely to have been adduced during the application hearing. I note that the Queensland Police Union of Employees is supportive of this. I think we have the balance right here.

Additional amendments to the Police Service Administration Act include the ability for the commissioner to summarily dismiss a police officer who is convicted of an offence and sentenced to a term of imprisonment or a suspended sentence. Currently, it is possible for an officer still in the employ of the Queensland Police Service throughout a criminal trial to be sentenced to a term of imprisonment before the administrative processes of dismissing the officer and all associated administrative appeals take place. This means that a serving officer might actually find themselves imprisoned, and this is something that is certainly not a good look for the Queensland Police Service or in line with the community's expectations.

By having this change in the act, the dismissal becomes an automatic one, not an administrative one subject to appeals—although I do note the safeguards in effect in the event that the sentence is overturned. These amendments are about ensuring the community's expectations of police officers are upheld—the expectation that our police are highly sought after and highly respected. I commend the bills to the House.