




Speech By  
**Robert Skelton**

**MEMBER FOR NICKLIN**

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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)**

 **Mr SKELTON** (Nicklin—ALP) (3.45 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Police Powers and Responsibilities (Jack's Law) Amendment Bill and the Police Service Administration and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2). I acknowledge the Beasley family in the gallery and offer my condolences for their loss. I also pay tribute to all the members who have spoken with great heart about other victims of this prevalent crime. I thank the police officers to whom I have spoken. I acknowledge that it is not only in safe night precincts or on public transport where people carry knives. The work that Brett and Belinda are doing to educate young people about carrying knives and what that could mean is extremely valuable.

This bill will expand the trial of handheld scanner provisions to detect unlawfully possessed knives beyond the Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach safe night precincts. The proposed legislation aims to: amend the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000, PPRa, to extend the expiry date of the scanning provisions to 30 April 2025; increase the scope of prescribed public areas for scanning to include all 15 safe night precincts and all public transport stations including public transport vehicles—that is an extremely important issue that has come up in most members' electorates; and strengthen the criteria a senior police officer must consider before approving the use of a handheld scanner device.

The original trial, in Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach, was launched following the tragic murders of two young men in 2019 and 2020. The 12-month trial allowed police to use handheld scanners to detect unlawfully possessed knives in those areas. The primary goal of the trial was to detect and deter the unlawful possession of knives in those areas of the Gold Coast, providing public safety benefits by reducing the opportunity for serious violent offending involving knives and other bladed weapons. Expanding this trial to include all 15 safe night precincts is justified by the record levels of unlawful knife possession in these areas. During the period between July 2021 and June 2022, 542 persons were charged with unlawfully possessing a knife across those precincts in Queensland.

Areas intended to function as entertainment precincts can result in the congregation of large numbers of people. The congregation of people in these areas increases the risk of harm being caused through the carriage of weapons, warranting particular attention. We should remember that everyone should be able to go out in public and feel safe. The proposed legislation also aims to expand the trial to areas of public transport stations, including vehicles. This is to provide the public safety benefits of reduced unlawful knife possession and the consequent reduced potential for offences involving a knife to be committed.

During the original trial an array of concealed weapons were detected, resulting in 68 bladed articles being seized, 53 weapons offences and 101 other offences detected while scanning for knives. Of those weapons seizures, eight were household knives, 59 were other types of knives and one was

an axe. Other weapons seized included a replica handgun, one baton, two hand tools, knuckledusters, one screwdriver and one other tool. The police also seized one acoustic and one electronic antipersonnel device while scanning.

Parallel to this trial has been the 'I live my life ... without a knife' statewide crime prevention campaign led by the Queensland Police Service in collaboration with external agencies as local partners. I suggest that was because of the keen advocacy of the Jack Beasley Foundation. The campaign provides community awareness of the risks and penalties of knife carrying in public places. This was done through advertising, community events and engagement and school presentations. I thank my school-based police officer, Marty Hunt, for taking that on board in Nambour.

The Police Service Administration Act and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) aims to improve the administration of the Queensland Police Service by providing for its maintenance, membership, development and administration. The QPS has conducted an evaluation of the act to identify opportunities for improvements, and a number of provisions have been identified as suitable for amendment. These amendments address a wide range of administrative issues within the QPS, including clarifying employment arrangements, improving the police discipline system and removing duplicate or obsolete provisions.

The bill proposes amendments to the act that will improve the police discipline system by allowing the commencement of a police disciplinary proceeding to be delayed until related applications for DV protection orders naming the subject member as the respondent are finalised. This will clarify the time frame that will apply to the discipline process when an abbreviated disciplinary proceeding is initially offered but later fails. The bill also expands the definition of 'prescribed operation' to include investigations using surveillance devices and similar operations conducted by other law enforcement agencies.

Furthermore, the bill provides for the dismissal from the QPS of a police officer or recruit immediately upon being sentenced to imprisonment, including a suspended sentence, for an offence. These amendments reflect the unique position in the community that police officers and police recruits hold—a position of power, authority and, most importantly, trust. A conviction for an offence resulting in a sentence of imprisonment is inconsistent with the high standards expected of a police officer. The proposed amendment would avoid a situation where an offender in jail continues to be employed.

The bill also aims to reduce the legislative burden on the QPS through amendments allowing medically unfit police officers to get transferred to staff member positions, inserting the new offence provision 'unauthorised use of confidential information' to address the misuse of police information and removing the obligation for police officers to obtain a written approval from the commissioner prior to instituting proceedings for certain offences. The amendments also omit a number of outdated provisions, which I will not go into.

This bill allows for public safety based on strong evidence. It is based on community advocacy. It is based on the will of parliament. I thank the committee, which I am a member of. It is always an honour to be on committees but it is also very difficult when dealing with such sensitive matters and people show such courage and resilience in advocating their cause.

I hope the bill can become another example of government listening and addressing community expectations, addressing the needs of our hardworking Police Service and paying proper respect to the victims of crime.