



Speech By
Samuel O'Connor

MEMBER FOR BONNEY

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

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (3.17 pm): Jack Beasley is a name that I wish none of us had to repeat in this place today. With all of my heart, I wish that we did not have to create laws in his name. Jack should have been allowed to grow up like any other Gold Coast teenager. He should have been allowed to finish his apprenticeship. He should have been allowed to keep playing footy for the Helensvale Hornets. He should have been allowed to fall in love and to create a family of his own. This Sunday, 2 April, Jack should have been allowed to turn 21. At just 17 years of age, Jack was taken from us in the most horrific way. Jacko's murder in a senseless random knife attack was devastating for so many people from my part of the Gold Coast: his brave young friends who were with him when it happened; his brother, Mitch; the police who first responded, including those on holiday from interstate who were passing by; the workers at GCUH who did all they could to try to save him; the close-knit footy club he played for since he was a junior; and the school he went to, Pacific Pines State High.

The decision those young men made to take a knife into Surfers Paradise that night and the split-second moment they decided to use that knife destroyed so many lives. Jack's Law to expand police knife detection powers is a result of my community saying 'this is unacceptable'. It is unacceptable for a 17-year-old to go out with their friends into Surfers Paradise—or anywhere—and not come home safe. Jack's Law is in this parliament today because the people I represent did everything they could to make sure no other family has to go through the nightmare that the Beasleys have endured. Today I dedicate my contribution to Jack's mum and dad, Brett and Belinda. They are in the gallery with us, and it is a proud moment to see them there as we finally achieve what we set out to just over three years ago. You two are the strongest people I know. It has been an honour to get to know you so well over the last few years, and I am proud to now call you friends.

It is not every day that you have laws come to this place driven by your community, and in this case they have been driven by people who lived in the same suburb as me, Parkwood. This all started when our organisation, the Jack Beasley Foundation, was established just weeks after Jack's death. Reaching out to me as his local MP not long after going through the most traumatic of events gives members a good idea about the type of bloke Brett is. He wanted to do something about what happened, he wanted to make sure he did everything he could to stop any other family going through this, and he wanted me to shout him a beer. I can tell this House that I have shouted him many beers since then because, like many good things, this all started with a meeting at our local pub, the Arundel Tavern. We gathered a group of friends and supporters there to try to figure out what we could do about knife crime in our city. We have held many more meetings there, trivia nights, the annual Ride for Jack, the annual Walk for Jack and so many other fundraisers to support this cause. I will declare for full transparency that I proudly serve as an executive board member of the JBF and I want to acknowledge the other

volunteers I serve with on that board—Brett and Belinda of course, Deb Frugtniet, Wayne, Griffo, Trace and Anne-Maree. This has been community-led from the start, championed by incredible, selfless people who give up so much of their own time.

We started with an online petition calling for metal detecting to happen at Helensvale station. That was the place where Jack's murderer and his group got on the tram into Surfers Paradise after catching the train down to the Gold Coast. What that petition wanted to achieve was 'detect knives, save lives', and this has now turned into the bill we are debating today. I also want to acknowledge the member for Nanango, who has been a tireless supporter of the JBF and has been there from the very earliest of days to warmly and generously embrace the Beasleys. The member for Broadwater has also continued that, always taking Brett's many phone calls, like I do, and I thank every other shadow minister whom I have got down to the coast to visit us and hear our calls for change.

The LNP has been there from the very beginning. Laws like these and better police resourcing play a big role in deterring knife violence, but this is just part of the solution. To really create the change, we realised we needed to change the mindset of the people who think they need to take a knife when they leave their house. We must stop young people from even thinking about using a knife, and that is why we put together our education program. Over the last 18 months the JBF has engaged with thousands of students at 23 schools across South-East Queensland and northern New South Wales and requests have come in for visits from around the country. It is delivered in partnership with the QPS and it is called the One Moment presentation. It is all about educating young people on the consequences of carrying a knife and the impact that it could have on the victims, their families and friends and on the offender themselves. Brett and Belinda share their story before a police officer talks about the laws in place around knives. We know the decision to take a knife when they are heading out is often a split-second one and it is often because they think they need it for their own protection. Hearing Brett and Belinda talk about their loss will surely make some of these young people think twice about doing this.

I want to particularly pay tribute today to Jack's friends. Last year I went to court with Brett and Belinda and all of their supporters and sat in on as many days of the trial as I could. Jack's mates went one by one into the witness box telling their story, reliving the most traumatic night of their lives. Their courage is something I will never forget. Nothing quite prepares you for seeing the small details of such a horrific event replayed over and over again, and nothing prepares you for having to sit just metres away from those who are accused of murdering someone so special. Jack's murderer and the other young men with him left Jack to die on the footpath at barely 8 pm in the full crowds of school holiday-makers in the middle of Australia's tourist capital.

The two-year trial of these powers so far has clearly worked. Some 241 weapons are no longer on the streets of the Gold Coast because of these powers. There has not been a single police complaint in over 21,000 interactions with the public. When we think of the state that some people are in at the Surfers and Broadbeach safe night precincts, that is a commendable reflection on the professionalism of our Queensland Police Service. These powers should be targeted in the time, the place and the broader circumstances that they can become activated under. This is not a general search power for police; these powers are specifically about stopping knife crime. They will apply to safe night precincts and public transport vehicles and stations because they are where crowds of people are. That is the last place you want someone to bring a knife. Every single person who is caught with a knife in these areas or who is deterred from taking one into these areas because they know the police have these powers is a potential life saved.

It is a big step up to go from essentially a few streets on the Gold Coast to 13 other party precincts across our state as well as every single public transport vehicle and station, so we need these police knife detection powers to work, and for that we need police to have the best possible resources and training. It has been a great privilege to get to know some of the Queensland Police Service's finest officers on this journey. It started with now Acting Deputy Commissioner Mark Wheeler. A couple of days after I met Brett at the pub I ran into Mark at an event at our local mosque in Arundel. It was a fundraiser for bushfire relief. He had just arrived to the coast and I told him about the Beasleys' story and what Brett had opened up to me about, and I asked if he could meet with them. There was no hesitation. I gave him Brett's number, and at every single meeting or event we held Mark would be there. He championed these laws internally so that when the government was looking for an option to respond to the youth crime crisis in early 2021 this was ready to go. Rhys Wildman continued Mark's exceptional work when he took over the chief superintendent job on the Gold Coast. He is a thoroughly decent man, incredibly genuine in his support and again he has shown up every time and gone above and beyond. For the detectives who worked on Jack's case—Ash, Shane and Nat—again, they are just the best. The support they provided us, especially during that murder trial, was so very appreciated.

I thank the government for agreeing to these powers and for naming this Jack's Law at the request of Brett and Belinda. I thank the committee for its consideration of the bill and for allowing me to appear as a witness alongside Brett and Belinda on behalf of the foundation which I know is unusual. However, the way the government has drafted this bill means that Jack's Law will end in April 2025. That bit should be removed. Jack's Law should be permanent. This should be reviewed in two years but the end date should not be included. I will vote to try to remove it. I will strongly support this reform that my community has championed and I urge all members to do the same in the name of Jack Beasley.