




Speech By  
**Stephen Bennett**

**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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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 BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (3.53 pm): At the outset, I point out that this is a cognate debate for two bills that I had carriage for through the committee process. I will start by addressing the most powerful reform—Jack's Law. It is important that the House shows respect to the process. I acknowledge all those who took an interest in this important extension and expansion of the knife detection trial to all the safe night precincts and some public transport networks. It is now going to be expanded.

This has been a grassroots campaign by many, including the families who have suffered tremendous loss. Work on the ground and reports from police have shown that the knife violence deterrent trial has seen successful outcomes. We should be commending all those involved. I acknowledge Brett and Belinda Beasley for the tireless work they do to honour their son Jack.

What was important to me during the committee's deliberations were those who opposed the proposed reforms. I always get confused when those stakeholders turn up to committees with reasons and some sort of ideologically driven nonsense about why we should not keep our community safe. This is about community safety. This is about real outcomes. This is about real people trying to make a difference in Queensland. I will not go on because I will probably say something that I will have to apologise for.

I was confused and frustrated by these stakeholders. When there are no alternatives brought forward, I wonder why they bother. I am frustrated by their ideologically driven position because from April 2021 to January 2023 police have used the wandering process in searching for knives or weapons on 22,000 people. This has resulted in the seizure of 242 weapons and 656 offenders being charged with various offences. The weapons included folding knives, flick-knives, machetes, a bush saw, a tomahawk, sharpened screwdrivers, replica firearms, knuckledusters and tasers. I am confident the legislation is not an inconvenience and our police will conduct the wandering process appropriately.

Our police are ready, trained and committed to community safety. Our communities are ready. I hope we expand this further and remove any time lines on this legislation. This needs to continue into the future. These issues are important.

I want to again promote the work of the Jack Beasley Foundation. The foundation has fought for changes to youth justice laws and has important education programs where it works with young people educating them on the dangers, repercussions and effects that a single act of violence can have on them and families into the future. I acknowledge the member for Bonney's contribution in representing the Jack Beasley Foundation at the committee hearing. It was honourable, credible and incredibly powerful. Belinda and Brett's contributions were incredibly important to the committee's deliberations. We have to make sure that we never forget how important the police role is in community safety. I acknowledge just how important their work is.

I turn now to issues around police administration. At the outset, I voice my support for the members of the Police Service. I acknowledge that the Queensland Police Service's reputation has been in question recently. It reflects on members and their families when there is negative publicity. We heard from the police that the QPS is hurting right now. We all have a role to play in showing our support for the QPS and recognising that they do a great job, many times in difficult circumstances. The actions of a few do not represent the actions of many.

The Police Service Administration Act provides a legislative framework for the QPS by providing for its maintenance, membership development and administration. Improvements have been identified that will assist in the management of the QPS, introduce specific efficiencies and update the QPS's legislative frameworks by omitting duplicated and outdated sections. These improvements have been collated into this bill and will address a wide range of administrative issues ranging from clarifying employment arrangements for specific staff and improving the police disciplinary system through to making the technical changes needed to maintain contemporary drafting standards.

The QPS has monitored the new disciplinary system and has identified improvements that may be made while remaining vigilant for further enhancements in the future. The bill makes a number of minor amendments to assist with the operation of the Police Service discipline system. For example, one improvement made with the new police discipline process is making timely decisions. As a generalisation, a discipline proceeding against the subject officer must start within one year from the date the ground for disciplinary action arose.

Generally, all submitters, including the Police Union of Employees, were supportive of the bill. Most police we have spoken to at committee hearings and outside committee hearings are supportive of the bill. One of the big things that a lot of members in this place have been fighting for for a long time is amendments to the Weapons Act. It might not sound a big issue for many, but for those people who rely on weapons as part of their daily toolkit to run their properties or operations it is a big issue. Now we will see permits to acquire by QPS Weapons Licensing. This is an overdue reform that will be welcome by many. Weapons Licensing has responsibility for managing the regulation of weapons and licence holders.

It is an important role and it has to be done in a timely and proficient manner. The high volume of demand has led to challenges in processing these applications. At issue are limitations within the Weapons Act that only allow authorised officers to approve applications for licences due to the considerations that must be made during the process. Currently, the weapons licensing team manages 214,593 licence holders across the state. These are current figures. They also manage 992,589 registered firearms. At the moment, on average on a weekly basis they receive about 350 new licence applications, 360 requests for renewal of a current licence and about 1,100 permits to acquire. A permit to acquire is an application that must be completed and authorised as a precondition to transfer ownership of a firearm from one party to another. This process was taking up to 30 days and some were taking up to 31 weeks.

Many of the unsworn staff who work at Weapons Licensing have extensive experience in the processing of applications and in applying the provisions of the act to the licensing process. The current ratio of civilian customer service officers to sworn officers is approximately seven civilians to one police officer. The bill will capitalise on the expertise of these staff by allowing the licensing functions of an authorised officer under the Weapons Act to be delegated to a police officer or a QPS staff member. These delegations may be made by the commissioner and executive officer or a commissioned officer. As a further safeguard, the powers that may be exercised by the delegate will be limited to the licensing function outlined in part 2 and division 3 of part 3 of the Weapons Act. We are now in line with New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia, which have comparative legislation. I think that is important; we should not have dragged our feet on this for years. A further amendment in the bill will confirm that any firearms licences, renewals of firearms licences and PTAs issued by an authorised officer prior to the commencement of this bill will be valid.

Cognate bills are never really exciting or important, but we come back to the important thing: remembering that in this place our Police Service deserves our utmost respect and support. As we move forward, we again thank all those who brought Jack's Law to fruition. I am sure that many members will be able to speak about tragedies in their own electorates and issues that could have and should have been prevented. As we go forward into the future, whether it is in high schools or mainstream precincts, we hope that through education programs run by foundations around the state we can start to see a change in the behaviour of young people so we can all go out on the town and have a great time safe in the knowledge there will be no weapons to cause death and destruction. With that, I commend both bills to the House. I thank everyone involved for their hard work.