




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

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (5.02 pm): I rise to make a contribution on the Police Powers and Responsibilities (Jack's Law) Amendment Bill 2022. First and foremost, I would like to say to Brett and Belinda Beasley that your strength, persistence and determination with the cause to make sure that Jack's life is honoured by protecting others is commendable. Anybody who is a parent knows just how dangerous a knife could be to their young child and as someone who spent his life prior to coming into this place as a publican, I have stood on many doors in Surfers Paradise, in the Valley in Brisbane, in Toowoomba and Ipswich where I have worked security. One of the things that you are always very conscious of when working security is that a moment of madness from a person who has a weapon is an incredibly dangerous situation, no matter how well prepared or how well trained you are, or other mitigations you might put in place. CCTV cameras will not protect you, additional staff will not protect you; in fact, nothing can protect you. The only thing at close quarters that can protect somebody from being murdered with a weapon is to make sure that the perpetrator does not have the weapon. I want to be clear: in my last business—and this is 20 years ago now—we wanded all of the time because it is absolutely unacceptable for people to be carrying these things in a public space, particularly when others are out just looking to have a good time.

If we look at some of the things that have been picked up in this trial: 68 bladed articles, an axe—I mean, what is someone doing with an axe in the middle of a safe night district?—hand tools, five knuckledusters, screwdrivers, handgun replica, many knives of various descriptions. There were 242 in all, and every single one of those had the capacity to take a life in the wrong hands, in the wrong moment of madness, with the wrong person. For the police to have the power to be able to wand is incredibly reassuring.

I am very pleased that this legislation will extend to the other safe night precincts, including that of my home town, Toowoomba, where I used to work. Removing these weapons is the only way to stop someone from that moment of madness where they pull the weapon out. Recently in Toowoomba—and I will not go into any of the details—there was an alleged stabbing in the middle of our safe night district. If the police had the capacity to wand, it would mean that these weapons would be removed. I think it sends a strong message from this place that so many people on all sides of politics, perhaps barring the Greens, think that these weapons should be removed, and that we all support the capacity of the police to be able to ensure that our public spaces are safe.

To Brett and Belinda Beasley, the legacy that is left is a powerful one. There will be thousands of families who will never experience the tragedy that they have over the coming many years because these weapons are not available and this House has sent a message that they should not be taken or carried or used in a public space, and that there will be an ability to be able to find those weapons, to charge people who are carrying them and remove the potential threat.

One area that I am interested in understanding is why this needs to be a trial. I understand that there are sections of the community that are concerned about an abuse of power or that this may be an invasion of people's privacy or whatever. I, for one, who spent more than 20 years working in safe night districts cannot think of any good reason for someone to be carrying these weapons. For the police to be able to check people with a wand, to ensure that no-one is carrying these weapons is something that will keep everybody safe. If I have to give up just a minuscule part of my freedom to ensure that someone else's family does not have to deal with what Brett and Belinda have had to deal with, then I think everybody in Queensland is more than prepared to give up that minuscule part of their freedom.

To stop for a moment and have a suitably trained, well-guided police officer go about their duties in a professional manner and ensure people you are mixing with and the people who are around you are not carrying these kind of weapons is the smallest of impost on someone's personal freedoms for the greatest possible gain you could imagine—the protection of an innocent person's life. I do not understand why we need a trial. I more than accept that we should have a review. I think any of these kinds of powers should be regularly reviewed with good information, good data, good facts, bringing forward all of the outcomes both good and potentially where someone may have overstepped the mark so that we can put appropriate practices in place.

That does not require a trial; that requires a review. I cannot imagine any circumstances under which at the end of this trial a government in Queensland of any colour would suggest we not continue it. Without wishing to go too far into politics, why not just make this permanent and make sure we have a solid review that looks into any potential infringements in an open and transparent way? Then we can ensure we can go forward and improve any aspects that this bill might fall short on.

I reiterate one last time: there will be families who will not feel such a tragedy because of the time, effort and energy of the Beasley family. That is not only in ensuring this law is in place but also in the foundation having 'detect knives, save lives' as its main catchcry, which could not be more true. The foundation is doing some great work. I appreciate the government's support of the foundation. I appreciate the government bringing this legislation in and I thank the Beasleys for their immense strength in travelling here and presenting this law.