




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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SUMMARY OFFENCES (PREVENTION OF KNIFE CRIME) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (3.48 pm): A young offender's decision to carry a knife can have far-reaching consequences and rock an entire community. This is the chilling reality for the Gold Coast after we faced the senseless death of Jack Beasley in 2019 at the hands of a young offender carrying a knife. It is the horrific reality for communities right across Queensland who have lost loved ones at the hands of a young offender with a knife. These deaths are a stark reminder of the devastating impact of knife violence and youth crime on the families and the communities left behind. I want to personally thank Brett and Belinda Beasley for their advocacy in this area. Because of their strength and courage, we have Jack's Law—a two-year warring trial targeting youths with knives. The LNP has committed to making this permanent, and we are calling on the state government to do the same. Queensland is in the grips of a youth crime crisis, and the increase in knife violence is just one aspect of the youth crime crisis ripping through our state because this state Labor government watered down our Youth Justice Act nine years ago. In fact, knife crime has risen by 22 per cent in the most recently reported data.

The bill before the House today proposes to ban the sale of knives and other weapons to those under the age of 18 and make it an offence for a juvenile to falsely represent themselves as being over the age of 18 to try to buy a knife or a controlled item. The LNP will definitely not stand in the way of this bill, because Queenslanders are suffering under the scourge of youth crime as a result of this state Labor government watering down the laws when they came to power nine years ago. Any step to prevent youths from picking up a knife is a step we will not oppose, but I want it on the record that this change is not going to the root cause of the problem and it is not giving police the powers they need to curb the youth crime crisis that this Labor government has started.

While I am sure we can all agree that preventing youth knife crime should absolutely be a priority of this state government, this bill does not correct the behaviour of youth criminals or change the escalating mindset of youths around arming themselves with knives. What is more, it does not give police the additional powers they need to prevent knife crime. If this government were serious about cracking down on youth crime, it would give police the powers they need to actually make our community safer. Once again, this Labor government is failing to take decisive action to tackle the youth crime crisis that it created when it watered down the laws nine years ago. That is why our shadow police minister will be moving critical amendments to both the Youth Justice Act and the Childrens Court Act to make our community safer. I table a copy of those amendments.

Tabled paper: Summary Offences (Prevention of Knife Crime) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, amendments to be moved by Mr Dan Purdie MP [174](#).

The amendments will remove detention as a last resort from the Youth Justice Act and reopen the Childrens Court to media and, most importantly, to victims and their families. Nine years ago, this Labor government closed the Childrens Court and nine years ago this Labor government inserted the

principle of detention as a last resort into the Youth Justice Act. Tell me: as a result of these changes, do our community feel safer today than they did nine years ago? The answer to that question is a resounding no. They are living through this youth crime crisis.

Will Labor put politics aside and accept that it has created a generation of untouchable youth offenders with bad policy when it watered down the Youth Justice Act and enacted detention as a last resort? Will it admit it got it wrong when it decided that it was preferable for a youth offender to remain in the community? Will it now take action to undo the harm this has caused our community and support the LNP's amendments? If this government fails to support the LNP's amendments, to undo the damage and the harm it caused to our community nine years ago by watering down the Youth Justice Act, then that should signal to every single Queensland that this state Labor government puts politics before people.

The Premier was asked this morning if he would support Queenslanders and remove detention as a last resort. Instead of addressing the substance of the question and committing to making our community safer, he tried to confuse the issue by talking about mandatory sentencing. Premier, the LNP has done the work for you. The changes this government needs to make are before the House today. Decisive action on the youth crime crisis could be taken today. The question is: will this Labor government listen to Queenslanders and fix the Youth Justice Act after it broke it so terribly, or will it put politics first? Let's face it, if this state government were serious about cracking down on youth crime, it would back these amendments today.

It is the highest mandate of any state government to keep our community safe. That certainly does include from knife crime. Instead of giving police the powers they need to stop youths with knives, this bill is putting the onus on small and family businesses, making small and family businesses the gatekeeper of youth related knife crime. If you are a small or family business in my beautiful electorate of Currumbin, a retailer selling knives—this includes kitchen knives and other utility knives but excludes plastic knives, wooden knives or cheese board knives or a butter knife with a round edge—or you are selling controlled items, here is what you need to know. This bill requires you: to display signage advertising the legal prohibition against the sale of controlled items to minors; to check the age of young people before purchasing a knife; to prohibit these items from being sold or advertised in a way that suggests the item is suitable for combat or intended to be used for violence; and to ensure controlled items are safely secured. If you are a small or family business that stocks controlled items, which includes knives, swords, machetes, axes, tomahawks, sickles, spear guns, spears and replica firearms, you must ensure they are safely secured, so behind a locked cabinet or tethered to the bench. As a business owner or commercial seller, you will have the responsibility to instruct your staff about these new restrictions, their responsibilities and the potential penalties. You will be required to obtain written acknowledgment from your employees that confirms they have received these instructions and warnings. During the committee process, the Queensland Small Business Commissioner noted that they were concerned about the administrative burden this requirement places on small and family businesses and called on the state government to fund specialised training because, as it stands, small and family businesses will have to wear the cost of this training.

There are some further issues with this bill that warrant mentioning. The bill prohibits the sale of knives to minors, but the definition of 'sale' includes sales made online as well as outside Queensland. While this broad scope theoretically ticks the box, in practice there are no tools to enforce this. All a young offender needs to do is to get online, tick the box 'Yes, I am over 18' and it will be next to impossible to prove a prosecution of an online sale or, for that matter, a purchase made outside Queensland. It is just another example of a government more interested in the announcement than in actually making our community safe.

While we will definitely not stand in the way of this bill, this is a missed opportunity. It is a missed opportunity to address the root causes of the youth crime crisis, it is a missed opportunity to correct the behaviours of these youth criminals and change the escalating crime culture, and it is a missed opportunity for this Labor government to undo the harm it caused almost 10 years ago when it made detention a last resort and when it locked victims and families out of the Childrens Court. These are the laws Queenslanders want. The LNP has brought them; Labor should support them.

Today the LNP has taken critical action to make our community safer with changes to crime laws because Labor has failed to act on the crime crisis it created. Queenslanders are living in fear. They are worried they will be the next victim of the youth crime crisis while Labor fails to act. Failing to support these critical changes to the Youth Justice Act and the Childrens Court Act will be a clear message that Labor cares more about politics than people. The Premier has already admitted their cupboard is bare when it comes to tackling youth crime. This government is in a constant state of chaos and crisis.

The LNP has put solutions on the table today. We have taken the steps necessary in parliament to enact them. This government must support it. If this government is serious about fixing the harm it caused when it watered down the Youth Justice Act, when it enacted detention as a last resort, when it closed the Childrens Court to victims, to families and to the media, then it will support the amendments put forward by the LNP. Our policy to remove detention as a last resort will unshackle the judiciary and police, putting consequences for action at the heart of the Youth Justice Act. By reopening the Childrens Court to media, we will be restoring transparency and openness to the youth justice process. Only the LNP has the right priorities for Queensland's future, including making our community safer.

(Time expired)