




Speech By
Les Walker

MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA

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

 **Mr WALKER** (Mundingburra—ALP) (12.19 pm): I first want to acknowledge Mr and Mrs Beasley for their advocacy in continuing to keep our community safe after the sad loss of their son Jack, which led to the establishment of the law named after him. I also acknowledge the serious and horrific stabbing death of Ms Vyleen White and the heartbreaking loss for her family and friends. I send my sincere condolences.

I rise to speak in support of the Summary Offences (Prevention of Knife Crime) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. Knives are deadly. We all know that those opposite had serious juvenile crime under their watch. Yes, that is right: stabbings, stolen cars, break and enters, murders, domestic violence—the list goes on. We just heard the member for Moggill clearly say that they only want to reduce it. The LNP have people believing that they are going to stop it, which is a fallacy. Do not be fooled by those opposite playing politics with this serious issue. The sooner they get on the same page and work collectively to address the youth crime scourge, the sooner our communities will feel much safer.

It is no secret that crime fighting is a challenge for all crime fighters around the globe in the ever-changing world that we live in. What is of grave concern for me is the constant political pointscore at the cost of community safety. Speaking as a former corrective services officer with five years experience and 18 years experience and service in the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre, I can say that edged weapons are the biggest fear when working at close quarters with offenders inside a detention facility—more so today.

In a detention centre you know the environment you are working in and the individuals you are managing. Even with all of the training you receive, it is still a very dangerous environment. That is why it is critical to have good laws, the latest equipment, best practice procedures in place and high-level training to help to manage edged weapons within a detention centre facility to keep officers, support staff and other detainees safe. Police need the same support. In an uncontrolled environment—on the streets, in safe night precincts, on malls and in the broader community—it is even harder for our police and security to know what will be presented to them in a split second when confronted by an agitated person or a conflict that involves several individuals. This is why the Miles Labor state government has committed to a new police helicopter for the Townsville region with a new encrypted radio communications system that will give police a safer working environment and stop criminals listening in to police operations.

This legislation controlling the sale of knives will help minimise the risk to police and security officers when confronted with aggressive individuals on the streets, in shopping centres and in other areas where large numbers of youth and others congregate. It will no doubt also improve community safety. With the emergence of different social media platforms, the World Wide Web and young people

having access to mobile telecommunication devices, more information is being shared with young people and offenders about crime and the use of edged weapons—knives—as a lethal force against others. It presents a challenge in terms of how individuals obtain illegal items.

Just the thought of knives being used in an aggressive and threatening manner is confronting and sickening. This is why it is important to support this bill. It will not only improve community safety but also give our police the tools they need to carry out their very important work and to keep themselves and our community safe.

As a former trainer in protective actions I can say that edged weapons are one of the deadliest and hardest things to deal with when it comes to an individual making a threat, especially if the person exhibits in a manner that demonstrates they know exactly how to use them. It is critical that we limit the access to knives, which have deadly consequences in the hands of those who want to create mayhem or inflict serious injury or death. An edged weapon is easily concealed and is in some cases very small in size but still able to cause serious harm or death. There is no doubt that we will have not only the people of Queensland supporting this bill but also every police and security officer in Queensland waiting for it to become law.

I note the new measures in the Summary Offences (Prevention of Knife Crime) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill to control spray paint and gel blaster guns. Spray paint not only causes endless damage through graffiti in towns and cities across our beautiful state but also leaves many local authorities and private property owners with huge clean-up bills from vandalism. As a former Townsville City councillor, I witnessed firsthand the large amount of damage graffiti caused through direct access to spray paint; it is a big cost to council to have it removed. The program introduced by former Townsville City mayor Tony Mooney—Graffiti Busters through CitySafe—for the quick removal of graffiti was highly successful. The current Townsville City Council really needs to bring back this highly successful program and to get the young offenders involved in cleaning it up.

People continually sniffing spray paint is a very serious concern for their health and the mental state they enter. In some cases it causes fear for people such as police, paramedics, support services and health professionals when confronted by individuals who have been sniffing spray-paint products. These extra measures to secure spray paint and limit its sale will no doubt be a welcome change for all concerned.

I support the changes in this bill to limit young people's access to replica firearms like gel blasters. Gel blasters in the hands of young offenders, and young people in general, are very dangerous. It makes operational life for police extremely hard when they are confronted by a young person with a gel blaster in a highly stressed and confronting environment which requires a split-second decision by law enforcement officers to bring the situation under control. This bill will go a long way towards minimising this type of scenario.

The changes in the Summary Offences (Prevention of Knife Crime) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 have my unconditional support. I commend the bill to the House.