




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MACALISTER

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

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (5.26 pm): I rise to offer my support for the Summary Offences (Prevention of Knife Crime) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I support this bill because I think, as has been discussed by a number of contributors earlier, the issue and the prevalence of knife crime, particularly among young people, is concerning. It is concerning as someone who spent a significant period of time working on the front line of policing in such areas as the Gold Coast, Logan and Oxley.


The prevalence of knife crime has a number of factors, particularly in young people. A lot of that comes down to the peer group culture, the idea that carrying a knife comes with a level of street credibility, and there is a lot of popular culture, media portrayal, both social media and mainstream media, that has to take responsibility for that, as well as people who would otherwise be deemed role models for our young people. Unfortunately, those are things that we cannot necessarily legislate against in this House. However, one thing we can do is address the other issue which increases the prevalence of knife crime and that is the ease of access to knives. I remember when—and it has been mentioned before—the Howard government introduced the national ban on a number of weapons and the sale of weapons, and that was a good thing, but I think we all, and certainly for those of us in the policing space, understood that it would likely just end up in a different type of weapon being carried and used. I do not think anyone could have predicted the type of knife crime that would really flourish amongst our young people.

What we do here today and the purpose of this bill is to address the issue of the access that our young people have to knives, particularly knives that have no purpose in society, other than to perpetrate violence and to carry a sense of violence and street cred that young people crave so much. They serve no purpose. You are not going to eat your steak dinner with them. The fact that there is actually a type of knife called the zombie killer tells me that it is not designed or manufactured or sold for any purpose other than to glorify violence.

When I started my policing career, there was no offence 'to carry a knife'. The only offence that we had was 'going armed as to cause fear'. That meant you could actually carry a knife, but it was how you used it or how you brandished it which generated it, and you actually had to prove the intent to cause fear. It was a very difficult charge to prove.

As I started my policing career, there was a change to the Weapons Act which introduced the offence of possessing a knife in a public place. This did not actually require someone to be holding the knife visibly but just to have it on their person for no lawful reason. At the time, there was a range of debate and discussion about what was a lawful reason. Everyone from the local boy scout to the fisherman and the apprentice butcher was used as an example as to why someone would carry a knife in public. Thankfully, because the caveat in the offence is without a reasonable—

Debate, on motion of Mrs McMahon, adjourned.

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (6.10 pm), continuing: Before the debate was adjourned, I was discussing the introduction of the offence under section 51 of the Weapons Act, which was 'Possession of a knife in a public place or school'. The section refers to a lawful excuse that allows someone to carry a knife in a public place. It extends to tradies and people who use knives for work. It even extended to someone who would ordinarily wear a little Swiss Army pocketknife on their belt. I call that the 'little grandfather provision' as it allows granddads who like to wear pocketknives on their belts to go shopping and still wear those pocketknives. We did not see an inundation of grandfathers being charged with possessing a knife in a public place, because the 'reasonable excuse' provisions are generally well canvassed and well known by operational police and by courts.

The first time I encountered juveniles carrying knives I must admit was a surprise to me. It occurred when I used to work at the blue light disco—Hyperage that used to be at the Hyperdome. It was the first time I had ever had to wand children, going into the blue light discos. That was something I had not experienced when I had worked at the PCYCs on the Gold Coast, but then I came to Logan. I remember the amount of knives and other weapons that were carried in the late 1990s—this is not a new thing—and the amount of sweeps and searches we would have to do of the vicinity. They knew they would be wanded, so they would go into the shopping centre earlier in the day and stash things in the cisterns of the toilets and so on. Eventually, a bit of environmental engineering made sure we reduced risks in those terms. Sadly, the Hyperage discos are no longer at the Hyperdome. As someone who had not come from a culture where there was a need to carry a knife or the need to prove some kind of reputation by carrying a knife, it was a big eye-opener for me in my early 20s.

Police officers have always had the power under the Weapons Act to stop, search, detain and seize weapons if they reasonably suspect that a person is carrying a weapon. I note the current debate happening in the public about wanding powers and the legislation that we passed last year in relation to wanding in safe night precincts. We have heard contributions about how many knives have been detected during those operations. There has also been discussion about the use of wanding provisions in and around public transport. Public transport users need to have a sense of security and safety when travelling on public transport, given that is also largely the mode of transport of our young people.

This bill will prohibit the sale of controlled items. We have gone through what those controlled items are. They include knives other than exempt knives—timber and plastic takeaway knives and whatnot. It also creates the offence of knives being sold or advertised on the basis that they are purely knives for violence. As I said, these are not knives that you would be using to eat your steak dinner and to cut your cheese platter. These are knives, such as a 'zombie killer', that serve no logistical or legitimate purpose in our society—whether you believe in zombies or not, Minister! There is no purpose at all for selling them, let alone buying them—other than for promoting yourself on social media or whatever outlet people use to gain notoriety. By prohibiting the advertisement of these types of weapons in that context, we are doing what we can here to minimise the glorification of knives and knife violence. It also requires those who sell such items to make sure they are stored securely in the retail precinct.

I know that some contributions mentioned the impost on small business. Obviously, those who sell tobacco have prohibitions on selling to minors. They also must have it secured, and we have imposed restrictions and regulations on advertising. We also banned the sale of spray paints to minors. They are all locked up and purchasers have to show proof of age. Businesses are already doing this, be they the big Bunnings or the local hardware store. Locally in Brisbane city, you cannot buy aerosol spray deodorant. At Coles in the Myer Centre these items cannot be purchased, because we know that young people use them for dangerous activities. That is something that the businesses were happy to self-impose, because they knew it was a risk. At Coles at the Myer Centre you cannot buy a kitchen knife. Again, we have not regulated that, but that is what business is doing because it knows the risk. I am glad to see that there are businesses out there leading the charge in this respect, but we need uniformity. Even though you cannot buy it at Coles in the Myer Centre, you could go to Ashgrove and buy it at a Coles there. This bill introduces safe measures across the board and statewide to keep knives out of our young people's hands.