




Speech By  
**Peter Russo**  
**MEMBER FOR TOOHEY**

Record of Proceedings, 13 February 2024

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

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (6.36 pm): I rise to speak on the Summary Offences (Prevention of Knife Crime) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The State Development and Regional Industries Committee Report No. 54, 57th Parliament, tabled on 1 February 2024, recommended that the bill be passed.

The objectives of the bill are to promote community safety, reduce youth offending and minimise the risks associated with knives and other dangerous items. The bill does this by: prohibiting the sale of knives and other weapons, including machetes, axes, tomahawks, sickles, spear guns, spears and replica firearms, known as controlled items, to minors; making it an offence for a person to falsely represent themselves as being over the age of 18 years for the purpose of being sold a controlled item; requiring retailers to display signage advertising the legal prohibition against the sale of controlled items to minors; prohibiting controlled items from being sold or advertised in a way that suggests the item is suitable for combat, intended to be used for violence, or likely to stimulate or encourage violent or criminal behaviour involving the item; imposing obligations upon suppliers of particular controlled items to safely secure the items at retail locations; and making consequential amendments to support these reforms, such as allowing a police officer to request to see proof of age if they see or reasonably suspect a person under the age of 18 has been sold a controlled item and authorising the police officer to seize the item under certain circumstances.

It is important to focus on the issue of crime associated with knives and other dangerous items. It is one part of the government's response to preventing crime, especially those crimes utilising knives and other dangerous items by prohibiting the sale of identified items to juveniles. We want to reduce the accessibility of these dangerous items. In addition to the recommendation that the bill be passed, the committee's investigation produced an additional two recommendations. Recommendation 2 states—

The committee recommended that the Queensland Police Service develop guidance and resource materials, in consultation with the retail sector, to support businesses implement new operational obligations introduced by the Bill.

Recommendation 3 states—

The committee recommends that the Queensland Government consider undertaking an education campaign to inform the public and stakeholders about the changes introduced by the Bill.

There was broad support amongst stakeholders for the objectives of the bill with several key issues identified. As stated in the committee report these include—

- definitions of what is and what is not a 'controlled item'
- the need for clear guidelines for sellers to assist with meeting any new legislative requirements
- operational and financial impacts on retailers and associated penalties for non-compliance with new requirements
- implementation of a community education campaign to build awareness in the community and with stakeholders regarding any new requirements.

I mentioned earlier that this legislation is a component of an all-encompassing approach by the Miles government to violent crimes, including knife crimes. This legislation is not a kneejerk reaction to violent crimes. It is a considered, progressive and ongoing approach to address an alarming and ever-invasive increase in crimes committed with dangerous items including knives. The bill defines a controlled item as any of the following: a knife; a sword, machete or axe; a sickle; a spear gun; a spear; and a restricted item under the Weapons Act that is a replica of a firearm under the act. It includes a thing prescribed by regulation to be a controlled item and does not include a thing prescribed by regulation not to be a controlled item.

In 2021 the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee reported back to this Assembly following our then inquiries into the Police Powers and Responsibilities and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and the Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. At the time of our inquiries, and with regards to the Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021, the committee conducted extensive investigations which took us across Queensland. We received many submissions from interested parties and stakeholders, and we had many conversations, discussions and interactions with people from all walks of life.

The 2021 youth justice bill proposed the introduction of a two-year trial of handheld scanners in the safe night precincts of Broadbeach and Surfers Paradise with the object of minimising the risk of physical harm caused by knife crime. Data from this trial was recorded to inform a 12-month review of the operation to determine whether additional areas should be included in the scheme. As we all know, those wandering provisions were increased to take into account public transport and public transport hubs.

At the public hearing on 12 December 2023, the deputy commissioner of the Queensland Police Service advised the committee that the prevalence of knife crime and youth offending is still a serious concern and poses an increased risk to communities throughout Queensland. It was further stated by the deputy commissioner that knife related crime in Queensland has increased by 18 per cent, with 12,865 reported offences in the 2022-23 financial year. The Queensland Police Service is particularly concerned that knives are predominantly used in the commission of violent offences such as assault, robbery and other offences against the person.

The Queensland Law Society in their submission spoke of crime statistics and the importance of considering the demographic characteristics of offenders. These statistics are incredibly sobering and give pause for thought, especially as the father of boys, and they corroborate the views of the community that knife crimes and youth offending pose an increased risk to communities throughout Queensland. The bill is designed to complement existing strategies to prevent knife crime in Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.