




Speech By
Robert Skelton

MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

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

 **Mr SKELTON** (Nicklin—ALP) (4.42 pm): I rise in support of the Miles government's Summary Offences (Prevention of Knife Crime) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. Knife crime poses a serious risk to community safety. Since 2019, reported offences where a knife was identified as the most serious weapon have increased by 18 per cent. That number is too high. Like all members, I offer my deepest sympathies to all victims of knife crime. The Queensland Police Service are on the front line and has implemented various policies and tactics to combat knife crime, including in schools teaching the risk of carrying knives. It also includes the passage of Jack's Law last year, giving police officers the power to conduct wandering in safe night precincts, on public transport and at public transport hubs across the state. I thank my Nambour police officers for their wandering efforts at Nambour train station.

I would like to thank the chair, deputy chair, members of the committee and of course the tireless secretariat and Hansard. I note that this bill is the result of the advocacy of our communities and is informed by numerous submitters with a dearth of knowledge and experience in crime prevention. We know that a stronger response is needed to tackle the risk of knife crime in our communities. Alongside knives, something else that this bill considers is the use of gel blasters—or replica firearms—that despite generally not being a physical risk to people are used in the commission of serious offences. It can be difficult to tell a gel blaster apart from a real firearm.

This bill seeks to further combat youth crime and promote community safety by: prohibiting the sale of knives and other weapons referred to under the bill as 'controlled items' to minors; making it an offence for someone to lie about their age in an attempt to purchase a controlled item; requiring retailers to display signage banning minors from buying controlled items; banning controlled items from being sold or marketed in a way suggesting the item is used for combat, violence or likely to stimulate or encourage violent or criminal behaviour involving the item; requiring suppliers of controlled items to safely and properly secure said 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.

This bill amends the Summary Offences Act 2005 and the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 1999 to introduce new offences. A controlled item will include: knives, swords, machetes, axes, sickles, scythes, spears, spear guns and replica firearms including gel blasters, that I mentioned before. By prohibiting the sale of knives and other dangerous items to minors, we are taking another step forward in enhancing how police can stop knife crime and in getting items like knives and machetes out of the hands of young people and off our streets. Notably, to avoid any manifestly absurd outcomes, the prohibition on controlled items does not include things such as knives made of plastic or wood that are designed to be used for eating.

Retailers of controlled items will be required to display signage at their stores advertising the prohibition of sale to minors. They will be required to instruct their staff on how to adhere to these new obligations—for example, sighting a customer's ID when they look younger than 25. These laws will apply to retailers regardless of their location or set-up—whether they are in a permanent shopfront, a market, temporary stall or are even selling online.

All sales involving knives, swords, machetes and other controlled items to minors will be prohibited. A new storage requirement will apply to particular controlled items including double-edged blades, double-ended knives, swords, machetes, axes, sickles, scythes, spears, spear guns and any other bladed item prescribed by regulations. To securely store the item, retailers can store controlled items in locked rooms, cages, cabinets or containers or have them securely tethered so that they can be held and inspected but not removed from the display without the assistance of a sales attendant. The bill will prohibit controlled items from being sold or marketed in a way that suggests the item is suitable for combat, violence or is likely to encourage such behaviour on the part of their purchasers.

There is a growing trend internationally of knives, machetes and other items being sold that possess words, images or markings either on the item itself or its packaging, on a related accessory or in an associated advertisement that encourage its use for violence. Commonly known as 'zombie knives', these items are deliberately designed to look menacing and replicate elaborate weaponry often seen in horror films. This is achieved by stipulating that the features of a controlled weapon, or the way in which it is sold, must not indicate or suggest the item is suitable for combat or intended to be used for violence, whether actual or threatened, against a person or fictional creature—for example, a zombie—or be likely to stimulate or encourage violent or criminal behaviour that involves using the item.

Prohibited features of a controlled item or the way in which the item is sold includes images, words or markings on the item, or images or words in an advertisement for the item. For example, a knife which possesses an image of blood on the blade or contains words such as 'killer' or 'slayer' anywhere on the knife, packaging or associated items such as a sheath would be prohibited. These kinds of weapons I have talked about serve zero practical purpose, particularly in the hands of our youth, and exist purely to encourage violent acts. The Miles government takes the threat of knife crime and violent offences involving these kinds of weapons very seriously. We are taking action in collaboration with and on the advice of QPS to better equip our world-class police service with the powers needed to combat knife crime in our communities.

The Miles government is tough on crime. We need comprehensive and coordinated intervention to address youth crime. This bill is one step towards achieving that end. On a personal note, with regards to understanding the threat of bladed weapons and how quickly things can turn, I did serve in border protection. I boarded many fishing vessels and illegal people smuggling vessels where there were always plenty of knives. I actually have at home something I confiscated off an Indonesian gentleman. Taking a knife out to attack somebody can take a very short time. I am pleased that the Queensland Police Service has commissioned those new ballistic vests, because a knife can come out before anything else. I hope this will enhance our community safety. I commend the bill to the House.