




Speech By  
**Samuel O'Connor**

**MEMBER FOR BONNEY**

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

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (12.37 pm): At the start of my contribution, I put on the record that I proudly serve as an executive board member of the Jack Beasley Foundation, which of course is declared on my register of interests. This is another reform that has happened only because of the advocacy of this great community organisation. It is an organisation that was born out of tragedy: the devastation left in the wake of the murder of 17-year-old Jack Beasley in 2019. I acknowledge Jack's parents and my good friends, Brett and Belinda Beasley, who are in the gallery. I know that Brett will make me buy him lunch after this. I might put it on the minister's tab. Can I do that, Minister?

**Mr Ryan:** I am taking him to lunch.

**Mr O'CONNOR:** I am off the hook today! I acknowledge the Beasleys for their unwavering determination to drive change, which of course, as other members have referenced, led to Jack's Law that we saw pass last year. Under the government's approach, a two-year trial is underway. I reiterate the LNP's commitment to making that permanent to ensure the police have the right powers to find weapons in our state. It stacks up. Many weapons are off our streets because of Jack's Law and it should be permanent. It should not be a trial. There are enough protections there and we need to ensure it remains part of the police powers in Queensland.

The laws we are discussing today are a direct result of Brett's actions in particular. As the Jack Beasley Foundation's submission showed—it included a lot of media clips—Brett really does enjoy the media. He takes every opportunity he can to advocate for ways to stop knife crime and youth violence. Brett and Belinda are an extraordinary couple. I think I have said before that they never would have expected to be appearing before parliamentary committees or even to be interacting with their local MP or the government at the level they have, but it has come from the unimaginable tragedy they have gone through. It has really made them the extraordinary Queenslanders I am so very proud to represent and call friends.

I said to Brett before that he is basically driving youth crime policy in Queensland through his voice and the way that he cuts through when he speaks. At the start of the year, we saw the impact of Brett's bravery in terms of the Parole Board debacle that he brought attention to. Of course, I acknowledge the introduction of laws today to enhance Queensland Corrective Services' victims register. At the start of this year, Brett called out the disappointing and administratively incorrect decision to grant parole to the young man convicted of manslaughter for the killing of Jack. It would have meant that he served barely half of the jail term to which he was sentenced. It was distressing news for the Beasleys, especially coming at Christmas time, and questions still remain over how this occurred. If Brett had not spoken up, that decision would not have been changed and other victims could have suffered the same trauma. I again pay tribute to him for always using his voice. It is that advocacy which has led to these changes.

This legislation will make it harder for young people to get their hands on knives or other weapons. There is no silver bullet to stopping knife crime, but this is another measure which will reduce access and availability. There are very few good reasons for a young person to buy a knife or another weapon. It is not unreasonable to require shops to store them in a secure cabinet or something similar, as outlined in this bill. It is a very small inconvenience compared to the devastation that these items can cause in the wrong hands. No law will stop all young people from carrying a knife. The only way we will genuinely achieve that is by changing their mindset and by showing them that there is a better way.

**Mr Purdie:** By cultural change.

**Mr O'CONNOR:** By cultural change. I will take that interjection from the shadow minister. It is in the name of the excellent police campaign 'I live my life ... without a knife'. Of course, these laws will stop just one source of knives. It is not just about young people going to buy these items—I would suggest that a significant number of the young people getting these items from shops have probably not purchased them—but it will make sure that they cannot just walk in and grab one off the shelf.

In the Queensland Police Service's submission to the bill, they outlined some frightening statistics. Knife related crime has increased by 18 per cent since 2019. In the 2022-23 financial year, 12,865 offences were reported in Queensland with a knife as the most serious weapon used. For juveniles there has been a 22 per cent increase in knife crime, escalating to 2,177 offences, according to the data for the most recent financial year. We cannot allow these laws to lead to an increase in the online sale of knives to minors.

I thank Melissa from Arundel for writing to me about this. She raised the issue of the online sale of box cutters which come in cute designs, including as key rings. Melissa's 13-year-old daughter bought one of these in the shape of a bunny while ordering some beading materials. She said in her correspondence to me that this was terrifying because weapons such as this can be in plain sight. We need to ensure this ban is properly applied and ensure that it applies to these kinds of products that are designed to be attractive to kids.

I also note the clarification from the Queensland Police Service regarding how these laws will apply to online sales. It will be vital to make sure sellers use robust age verification methods. There needs to be careful monitoring of online sales. We need further information on how this will be achieved, especially with interstate and overseas vendors. It seems to me that this will be near impossible to properly enforce. The more clarification we can get in those terms, the better.

I also acknowledge the Shopping Centre Council of Australia submission which says that they are deeply concerned about the worrying trends in relation to rises in crime, including retail crime and youth crime, and the general concerning trend in relation to the possession and use of weapons. I think it was last August that in my part of the Gold Coast we had an incident at Westfield Helensvale. At quarter to eight in the morning, a security guard was stabbed multiple times outside our local Woolworths. The knife allegedly used by these young offenders, whom the police picked up a little further up the M1, was described as being roughly the size of a meat cleaver. That security guard was lucky to make it out alive.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hart): Member for Bonney, can you assure the House that this is not before the courts at the moment?

**Mr O'CONNOR:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker; I will move on. Alleged incidents such as that highlight the concern around this that shopping centres are places where people congregate. The whole point of Jack's Law was to make sure that it applies to places where people are. That is why the laws we passed last year apply to safe night precincts and public transport stations and vehicles, and it is why it is worth considering where they can be further applied. The committee's recommendations were good. We need an education—not an enforcement—approach, because retailers need to be partners in this ban to make sure it works as it should.

To wrap up, hundreds of weapons are off the streets thanks to the advocacy of my community through the Jack Beasley Foundation. Every single knife that these laws prevent from getting into the wrong hands is a potential tragedy avoided. Change will be made in Jack's name. This is another step in the right direction to make sure we are doing all we can to ensure no-one else is taken from us in a senseless knife attack. I also voice my support for the shadow minister's amendments that he has foreshadowed to remove detention as a last resort and to open up the Childrens Court to victims and their families. That is the right thing to do, and I urge the government to allow him to move those amendments.