




Speech By  
**Stephen Andrew**

**MEMBER FOR MIRANI**

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

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (11.53 am): I rise to speak on the Summary Offences (Prevention of Knife Crime) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The stated aims of the bill are to reduce knife crime and youth offending in Queensland and the risks associated with the sale, possession and storage of knives and other dangerous items. The reforms in the bill have clearly been brought forward by the government in response to the tragic fatal stabbing of Vyleen White at the Redbank Plains shopping centre in Ipswich. This appalling event has devastated Vyleen White's family, friends and the whole community. Sadly, it is just one of a long list of high-profile incidents involving violent youth crime here in Queensland.

According to figures released by the QPS in 2019, the number of knife crimes in Queensland jumped more than 40 per cent between 2014 and 2019. In 2021-22 QPS reported a 21 per cent increase in the number of young people caught carrying a knife in a public place and 11 knife related murders. That year there were five stabbing deaths within 12 months in the Surfers Paradise area, and since 2015 criminal offences in Queensland have soared 31 per cent. The number of assaults skyrocketed 219 per cent, unlawful entry offences increased 54 per cent and unlawful use of a motor vehicle rose 115 per cent. These are truly shocking statistics. The youth crime crisis in Queensland is no beat-up. That is why I stand here today to deliver a message loud and clear about the issue our state is facing with regard to youth crime, in particular the absolute carnage that is taking place because teenagers who participate in serious violent offending with weapons are being enabled by the current out-of-touch, unsatisfactory responses of this government.

The blame continues to cycle, with the government pressuring police to make more arrests, only to see offenders back on the streets the next day and the police questioning why they even bother. Many police will tell you that magistrates are giving defendants far too many chances, while the judiciary claim their hands are tied by legislation. It is a never-ending cycle of blame. Meanwhile, people are living in fear and others are being killed, and all the public can see—the public we are paid to represent, incidentally—is a lot of us sitting here on our backsides bickering over knee-jerk solutions that will do little to help those exposed to the real-life threat of what is going on.

This bill focuses on stopping the sale of weapons to under 18s. Is this like how we stopped the sale of vapes to minors? Speak to any parent of a teenager in this state or any teacher at a high school and ask them if stopping sales has made a single bit of difference to vaping. Does anyone seriously think that these young criminals, who are so brazen as to go out and stab someone, will stop that behaviour or be deterred because we pass legislation here in this House banning the sale of knives? Do not get me wrong: we should ban the sale of these weapons if we can, but it will not stop the problem.

We need to get real and we need to get practical. In many instances these offenders are from war-torn countries with a long history of intergenerational violence and trauma. Rather than being given the guidance and support they need, they are being dumped into our schools under the banner of

diversity and expected to magically transition into our way of life here in Australia. In some cases they are not transitioning to our way of life at all; they are trashing it. We are left scrambling to find solutions without offending anyone. Let me be clear here today: we owe it to the families of those people who have been stabbed to come up with something a lot more tangible than the laws contained in this bill. As I said, we have not stopped vapes. Do you really think this is going to stop machetes? While I am on the topic of machetes—

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr ANDREW:** I will tell you something: the old Labor government deported South Sea islanders back to the South Seas for a lot less than the continuing murders we have in this state. While I am on the topic of machetes, I have spoken at great length to the parent of a child at a private school in Brisbane who last year raised concerns over a number of serious gang offenders at the school who were threatening students with knives and machetes. The parent was even told by one teacher that he had personally taken machetes off students and that this had now largely become his job. Yet when meeting with the principal to discuss their concerns, the parent was told that it was not happening and that it was a delusion and they were the ones deluded. The parent even went to police with their concerns and was told that they had very valid reasons for being worried and concerned, as the criminal histories of these individuals were significant. The school, however, completely denied there was any problem with students carrying weapons. They even referred the parent to the department of child safety and demanded they seek written permission before setting foot on school grounds again. That is outrageous!

Parents get a letter when headlice are detected in schools, but it seems that it is nothing when machetes are detected. No-one gets told. Young offenders are committing these serious crimes in plain sight and the whole thing is being papered over and suppressed. It is all being dealt with behind closed doors because of their age. Those who are carrying machetes and killing people are more protected than the actual communities. We need to look at what is in place right now to monitor, detect and respond to the fears people have around kids who are bringing weapons into school yards and threatening other students with them. We need to look at any government funding that is being given to those schools to house these offenders, and we need to consider the safety of our young people who are being threatened and exploited by these individuals.

According to reports, the teenager who allegedly stabbed Vyleen White was out on bail for armed robbery. The teen had reportedly been charged with these armed robbery offences last year. This incident must serve as a wake-up call to Queenslanders of the state's worsening youth gang problems. At least two of the teens involved in this crime are alleged to have links to the Brisbane drill gang known as SBG. Several of these gangs are linked to car thefts and home invasions, with the groups themselves boasting of their criminal activities on social media. They hold large knives and weapons—

**Ms RICHARDS:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Krause): I think I know what the point of order is going to be. Is it questioning whether the matter is sub judice?

**Ms RICHARDS:** Yes.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Mirani, could you please assure the House that the matters you are referring to are not sub judice, before the criminal courts?

**Mr ANDREW:** To the best of my knowledge.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** On the point of order, my understanding is that in the offence that is being talked about the people involved have been charged and have been before the courts. There has been widespread reporting in the media about that, so I suspect that these matters are in fact before the criminal courts at the moment.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you. I will take some advice. Member for Mirani, I would ask you to please exercise great caution in how you proceed, bearing in mind the comments from the member for Clayfield. Deputy Speaker Lister and I were in the process of changing over the chair when you made your comments so we did not hear all of them. I would ask you, for the benefit of the House, to please exercise extreme caution about this.

**Mr ANDREW:** Thank you. Despite this, a gang taskforce set up by QPS in 2022 to tackle the problem was disbanded last year, and we are wondering why. It is hard to comprehend that the government would abandon such a vital taskforce, particularly when even the Police Commissioner acknowledges that gangs are an escalating problem in Queensland. The only explanation is that, yet again, Queensland police are being stretched to the wire when it comes to funding, resources and adequate staffing levels.

According to all reports, police officers are now leaving the Queensland police force in droves, and those who remain are stressed and overwhelmed as the pressure and workload mount. Today there are 322 fewer full-time frontline police to deal with these issues in Queensland than there were 18 months ago. Queensland detention centres are overflowing, with several police watch houses in North Queensland at more than 170 per cent capacity. A Working for Queensland survey has found that 50 per cent of police officers say they are likely to quit their jobs over the next two years. A lot of them are on extended sick leave and are not going back to work. They are stretched to the wire.

The problem of violent crime in Queensland is an issue that transcends party lines. It is time for leadership, clear action and a united vision, and it is time for emergency funding for the police and prevention programs to keep the public of Queensland safe. Warm words here are no longer enough. We need change.