




Speech By
Hon. Amanda Stoker

MEMBER FOR OODGEROO

Record of Proceedings, 10 June 2025

POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES (MAKING JACK'S LAW PERMANENT) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; CORRECTIVE SERVICES (PAROLE BOARD) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. AJ STOKER** (Oodgeroo—LNP) (7.30 pm): I rise to make a contribution in this cognate debate on the Police Powers and Responsibilities (Making Jack's Law Permanent) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and the Corrective Services (Parole Board) Amendment Bill. Every person deserves to be able to go out at night in safety and in confidence, but for too long under Labor's crime crisis that has not been assured. After Jack Beasley sadly passed away after being the victim of a knife related incident on the Gold Coast in 2019, there has been a greater awareness growing in our community about the need for action to deal with knife crime enforcement. With the support of many people in this chamber—and I have heard in the debate today about the support from many people in this room of the need for fewer blades to be on our streets—Jack's Law was passed. It came in with good intentions, but unfortunately it had some limitations because of the way it was framed.

We have an opportunity in the first bill that I mentioned to make Jack's Law permanent, and that is very important to make sure we are being vigilant about the number of bladed weapons on our streets. This bill will also make Jack's Law more practical because the way it has been framed in recent times has meant it has been so encumbered by bureaucracy that its effectiveness has been largely stripped away. As a consequence, Jack's Law will be more effective in taking these dangerous weapons off our streets so that people like young Jack can go out at night, enjoy their friends and enjoy being young and have a good time in the knowledge that they will be able to get home safely. In a country like Australia that should be a given. It is very sad that in recent times that has been something far from assured.

The LNP has been supportive of Jack's Law from day one, as would be expected, but today's improvements will make that law better and more effective than it has ever been. Jack's Law was trialled in 2021 in the Broadbeach safe night precinct in Surfers Paradise. After that initial trial, it was extended by the former government, but unfortunately in April 2023 Labor made a number of changes to the way that Jack's Law operated that undermined its effectiveness from that point forward. They brought in a system that was complex and difficult to navigate. This made the police's job so difficult that it had the subtle effect of dissuading them from using Jack's Law which then had the effect of reducing the amount of enforcement of these types of measures on a day-to-day basis. These regulatory roadblocks had a practical effect on the safety of our streets that meant there were more blades than there should have been, and today we have the opportunity to make that right.

What Labor did back in 2023 when they brought in those changes was to introduce a number of tests—a number of gateways that had to be passed through—before a police officer could confidently use the deterrence tools available to them to get these blades off the streets. In practical terms, that tool was wand, which is swiping a detection wand around the outside of a person's body to determine whether or not they are carrying any of these weapons. The first of those gateways was an evidentiary test. A senior police officer—an important threshold is that they needed to go to a senior officer to get

this kind of permission—had to determine whether a serious violent crime had occurred in that place in the last six months before there was an opportunity to authorise the use of wandering in that precinct. That meant that big events like schoolies, music festivals or even the V8 Supercars could not benefit from this kind of prevention technique.

Once that gateway had been satisfied—in the small number of circumstances where it could be met—a second test had to be satisfied as well, and it was a subjective test. The officer then had to think about whether the use of handheld scanners would be likely to detect or deter crime, and they had to do that by drawing comparisons to whether or not that had been effective and whether or not it had been used in that place in the past. We have to think in practical terms here. A police officer who is on the job and out in the field is not able to get on a computer and look these things up, so it ended up becoming a significant barrier to the willingness to use these powers.

In addition, for licensed premises that were not in safe night precincts, a shopping centre or a sporting or entertainment venue, that senior officer also had to have reasonable grounds to believe that an offence considered in that first test might be committed at the premises again in the next six months. That shows how complex that test was and how bureaucratic it became as those senior officers needed to engage with people on the ground, do background research and make assessments before police officers felt they could use these powers with confidence. It created a bit of a nightmare in terms of making this have the practical effect that was desired. The purpose of this bill, therefore, is to make Jack's Law permanent and also remove those bureaucratic barriers and administrative arrangements that stood in the way of this bill reaching its potential. We owe Jack Beasley and his family no less than to make the law established in his name effective in preventing the kind of crime that he very sadly was subject to.

Today we are making the effort to get it right. This bill makes Jack's Law permanent. The original bill had a sunset on it when it was passed by those opposite and it would have fallen away on 30 October 2026. Our bill removes those bureaucratic hurdles so that police officers feel confident they can go about their duties and use the powers needed to prevent crime of this kind. It does so while retaining some important safeguards to ensure that civil liberties are protected, to make sure that police officers are properly trained to use these powers well and to make sure that these special powers are only used in a time limited way. With those special safeguards in place, this is a measure worth taking. It will make Jack's Law effective for the long term, and it will remove the limitations that were established by those opposite when they set up an overly bureaucratic system for dealing with these things in the past.

I notice that the opposition have also put forward a range of amendments dealing with machetes. It is worth saying a few things at this time along the lines that it is already illegal to carry a machete in a public place. It is already illegal for these weapons to be carried and used in a range of ways that deal with the essence of the criminal factor. Given those opposite have not been able to even define what a machete is in their amendment, I do not think we should be entrusting them with the task of changing this law.

Mr O'Connor: They had 10 years.

Mrs STOKER: I take that interjection. That is quite right; they had almost 10 years to allow their priorities to be made into law, and they did not make this a priority. It exposes those opposite for what is nothing more than a grandstand, an attempt to change the subject away from the reality, which is that their laws did not do the job they were passed to achieve. It is our job to make that right.

In the time I have remaining, I want to say a few things about the other bill we are considering today and that is the Corrective Services (Parole Board) Amendment Bill. This bill does something important in the parole system and that is to reorient it to put the rights of victims at the top of the list for consideration when parole decisions are being made.

In practical terms, as it currently stands, when a parolee fails to comply with a parole order or they present an unacceptable risk to community safety, the prisoner's parole order can be suspended. But when a decision is made to release a person in that environment, where they have considered it and decided, 'No, we are not going to cancel that parole order,' there is no capacity at present to review that decision. We make that right today, because it is really important that the rights of victims in this system are given the priority they deserve. It is an important pillar of keeping our community safe, and we will do it every day of the week.