




Speech By
Barbara O'Shea

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

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

 **Dr O'SHEA** (South Brisbane—ALP) (7.58 pm): As part of this debate I will focus on addressing the important legislative measures proposed in the Police Powers and Responsibilities (Making Jack's Law Permanent) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. I want to begin by acknowledging the profound grief of the Beasley family and other families across Queensland who have experienced the devastating impacts of knife related crime. The tragic loss of Jack Beasley in December 2019 at just 17 years of age reminds us why the measures we are debating today are so important.

As a doctor who spent many years working in emergency medicine, I have witnessed the catastrophic impact of knife attacks on victims and their families. I understand the serious harm these weapons can cause and how the long-term effects of these attacks can change people's lives forever. I believe we must act to prevent such tragedies happening to more families. The objective of Jack's Law is clear: to enhance community safety and security by proactively detecting and removing dangerous weapons from our streets. Jack's Law seeks to prevent knife related crime by authorising police officers to use a handheld scanner or wand to detect knives and other weapons in designated places.

The genesis of Jack's Law was in 2021 as a two-year trial in the Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach safe night precincts whereby a police officer in those areas could require a person to submit to the use of a handheld scanner to determine if they were in possession of a knife. The trial was reviewed by the Griffith Criminology Institute. Following the findings of the Griffith report, Jack's Law came into effect from April 2023 with legislative changes increasing the locations where handheld scanners could be used and defining these areas as relevant places. The areas considered as relevant places were expanded through further legislative change last year. I want to thank the former minister for police, the member for Morayfield, for his leadership, compassion and steadfast commitment to community safety in championing Jack's Law over the years.

In addressing this bill, I would also like to acknowledge our Queensland Police Service, particularly the local police in my electorate of South Brisbane at the West End, South Bank and Dutton Park police stations as well as the members of this House who have served as police officers. Our police put their lives on the line every day when they go out to serve and protect our communities and I would like to commend them for their hard work and dedication in keeping our community safe. I would also like to recognise the support provided to serving officers by the Queensland Police union.

The bill before us proposes several key amendments to Jack's Law. Firstly, it makes Jack's Law permanent by removing the sunset clause whereby the provisions of Jack's Law were due to expire in October next year. I believe this is a necessary step. Making these powers permanent will give our police certainty around the continuation of this important crime prevention measure as well as send a

clear message to the community that carrying a dangerous weapon in public is not acceptable. During the committee review of this proposed legislation the Jack Beasley Foundation strongly supported this amendment, stating—

Jack's Law is allowing weapons to be taken off the streets and we believe every weapon off the streets is a potential life saved.

The Queensland Police Union of Employees, QPU, also expressed strong support for making Jack's Law permanent, pointing out that other Australian states and territories had followed Queensland's lead and adopted similar laws. During the hearing, QPU told the committee—

We are very supportive of the introduction of this law. It has empowered our police, who do an extraordinary job every day, to go out into the community and seize these weapons where they should not be in the first place.

This bill will allow police officers to use handheld scanners in previously prescribed relevant places—for example, safe night precincts, public transport stations, shopping centres and major event venues—without needing specific authorisation from a senior officer. I note that these relevant places have been carefully chosen as areas where police scanning and detecting knives can make a genuine difference to community safety.

In addition, the bill expands Jack's Law to other public places that are not deemed to be relevant places such as areas with a predominance of licensed premises or where the police have received intelligence about the use of knives. Scanning for knives in these areas will require prior authorisation from a senior police officer. The senior officer must be satisfied that using handheld scanners is likely to be effective in detecting or deterring knife related offences. This represents, in my view, a sensible balance between proactive policing and necessary oversight. Of course, I also support maintaining the existing safeguards in carrying out handheld scanning, the requirement for police to exercise these powers in the least invasive way and to only detain the person for as long as is reasonably necessary. The bill also retains the requirement for the QPS to provide within its annual report information concerning the number of authorities issued and people scanned, the number of knives or other weapons detected and details of the charges resulting from the use of handheld scanners.

As part of a multifaceted approach to combating knife related crime, I would encourage the government to consider other preventive measures and support the amendments proposed by the opposition to ban machete sales in Queensland. In February 2024, the former Labor government prohibited the sale of knives and machetes to minors. The proposed amendments seek to build on these laws by introducing a ban on the sale of machetes to everyone throughout Queensland in recognition of the significant harm this type of knife can inflict on victims. For those adults with a legitimate reason to purchase machetes—for example, due to work in primary industries—the amendments provide for an exemption to allow the purchase of machetes for work purposes by these Queenslanders.

As I have previously argued in this parliament, we must acknowledge that enhanced police powers alone will not solve the complex issue of crime. We must address the underlying causes: housing instability, poverty, addiction and untreated mental illness. Early intervention, effective rehabilitation and strong community support systems are essential. If we want safer communities, we need to address these foundational issues, too.

I believe this bill is a necessary response to the dangers of knife related crime. It acts on the evidence gathered during the trial period, initiated under the previous government, and provides our police with additional crime prevention measures to protect our community. In my electorate of South Brisbane and across Queensland, residents deserve to feel safe in their homes, on the street and in public spaces. This bill will help to achieve that. I support the passage of this bill.