




Speech By  
**Bree James**

**MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER**

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

 **Ms JAMES** (Barron River—LNP) (5.00 pm): I rise today in strong support of two crucial pieces of legislation before the House. Behind every clause in these bills are real people—families shattered by violence, communities living in fear and frontline workers desperate for stronger laws to protect us. They are declarations of our shared commitment to safety, to accountability and to the people we are elected to serve. Let me start with Jack's Law, a law born from tragedy, driven by community and made necessary by the reality facing far too many Queenslanders.

Jack Beasley was just 17 years old when his life was cut short in a senseless knife attack on the Gold Coast in 2019. His death shook our state, from the south all the way up to the north. But from that heartbreak came a powerful legacy—legislation that empowers police to proactively search for knives and other weapons in public spaces. The results speak for themselves. Between April 2023 and May 2025, police carried out over 115,000 wandering operations, seized more than 1,100 weapons and laid charges against over 3,000 individuals. These are not just numbers, they are potential lives saved, violent incidents prevented and communities made safer.

Despite Jack's Law delivering clear outcomes, it was burdened by Labor's red tape requiring senior officer approvals, limiting its use to predefined areas and making it difficult to respond quickly during events or emerging threats. This bill fixes that. It removes the sunset clause to make Jack's Law permanent. It expands its reach to more public spaces and it also simplifies police operations by removing unnecessary approvals without compromising civil liberties. It maintains critical safeguards: body worn cameras, randomised searches and mandatory officer training, particularly important in Far North Queensland. It gives police the ability to act before a tragedy occurs, not after.

In Far North Queensland, we know too well the cost of knife crime. In September 2021, a man was fatally stabbed in broad daylight at Cairns Central Shopping Centre. In February this year, a woman was sexual assaulted at knifepoint during an horrific home invasion in Manunda. Just last week I spoke to local principals whose schools have faced knife threats from both students and intruders. One of them was a primary school student. Another shopping centre has knives and scissors stolen on nearly a daily basis by youth, and their packets are found in the gardens surrounding the shopping centre. It is unacceptable, it is terrifying and it is real.

I have spoken to business owners who have been threatened and their premises ransacked. I have spoken to parents too frightened to let their teens go out at night—not going to parties, just to a movie or dinner with friends. As a mother of two teenage boys, I feel that fear deeply. That fear undermines our entire community. It keeps families indoors, drives customers away from local businesses and tarnishes our reputation as a vibrant, welcoming destination.

Cairns Regional Council supports this law. Our police support this law. Today we are strengthening it. By making Jack's Law permanent and more effective, we are saying to every Queenslander, 'We are serious about your safety and violence has no place here.' This is not just about preventing crime, it is about protecting futures, futures like Jack's, futures that deserve to unfold without fear.

While we are addressing safety, we must also fix what has been broken in our corrections system. That is why I also rise in support of the Corrective Services (Parole Board) Amendment Bill 2025. This legislation closes a dangerous loophole, one that allowed a single member of the Parole Board to quietly overrule suspension and recommendations made by the Queensland Corrective Service officers, even when lives are at risk. If you think about that one person, that one decision and no requirement for review, even when the offender posed a known threat to the community, you can imagine what happens. That ends today. With this bill, all urgent parole suspension decisions must be reviewed by the full board within 48 hours. This means no more single points of failure and no more unchecked decisions that put communities in danger.

I ask this House to consider a scenario that is sadly not hypothetical, a scenario we have seen versions of far too often in our regions, including in places like Cairns. Imagine a repeat youth violent offender, or just a violent offender, someone with a history of armed robbery, assault, domestic violence, unlawful possession of weapons or serious drug and property offences. Under the former government's weak-on-crime approach, this individual is released on court ordered parole. Despite our hardworking community corrections officers doing everything they can to monitor them, warning signs begin to appear—concerning behaviour and dangerous messages. Queensland Corrective Services does the right thing and refers the case to the Parole Board, requesting suspension of the parole order. However, maybe at 1.00 am, a single board member, acting alone under Labor's laws, is woken and makes the call to keep this individual in the community, despite the risk identified by the QCS. Then, days later, that parolee breaches curfew, breaks into a neighbour's home, assaults them, steals their car, stalks a former partner—someone they have previously abused—and he or she is also found in possession of a firearm. Under the current system, there is no ability for the full Parole Board to review or overturn that single board member's decision and the community then pays the ultimate price.

This bill fixes that. It gives the full board power to urgently review those decisions within 48 hours to stop offenders from slipping through the cracks and, most importantly, to keep our communities safe. That is how you protect the people. That is how you make a justice system work for victims, not just for offenders.

Parole is not a right, it is a privilege, and that privilege must come with accountability, oversight and a laser focus on community safety. To be clear, this bill does not just lock people up and throw away the key; it ensures that dangerous decisions are reviewed, that high-risk offenders are held accountable and that genuinely low-risk individuals can still be supported back into society, especially in places like Cairns, Cape York and Torres Strait where community-led, culturally respectful reintegration is essential.

In Cairns and across Far North Queensland, we have seen firsthand the consequences of parole decisions that prioritise paperwork over public safety. When violent offenders are released early and go on to reoffend, it is our communities—our families, our business owners and our children—who bear the cost. Parole must be treated as a privilege, not an expectation. We owe it to the victims and to the people of Far North Queensland to ensure that dangerous individuals are not returned to our streets prematurely. Public safety must always come first.

We are closing Labor's loophole. We are restoring real-time accountability. We are making it clear: when it comes to community safety, we will never settle for second best.

Together, these two bills reflect a government that is listening, responding and acting. We are saying to every Queenslander—in Cairns, in Cape York, in Townsville, in Brisbane—you deserve to feel safe. We are giving police and parole officers the tools they need to protect us, and we are ensuring that the lives already lost, like Jack Beasley's, were not in vain. This is what responsible, compassionate, decisive leadership looks like. For every victim, for every family living in fear and for every frontline worker asking for better laws, I commend these bills to the House—for you.