



Speech By
Hon. Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

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

 **Hon. GJ BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (11.41 am): Queenslanders deserve to feel safe and to be safe. We have led the way nationally in the fight against knife crime. Let's remember one very important fact: this nation-leading fight started under Labor. It was a former Labor government that first introduced these powers back in 2021, trialling handheld scanners in the safe night precincts in Surfers Paradise and in Broadbeach. It was an Australian first. In the Surfers Paradise SNP the overall number of weapon offences detected doubled during the trial. Since that trial, Labor has strengthened Jack's Law at every opportunity. We did that because we listened: we listened to the community; we listened to the victims; and we listened to Brett and Belinda Beasley.

Brett and Belinda have been tireless advocates for reform to prevent knife related violence and to protect those young people because they experienced the devastating loss of their boy Jack when he was on a night out with his mates in Surfers Paradise. Their ongoing advocacy has seen continued change not only here in Queensland but also in the Northern Territory, in New South Wales, in Western Australia and in Tasmania. We are grateful for all their work and the work of the Jack Beasley Foundation in Queensland and the education programs that go with it. I would also like to acknowledge the member for Morayfield, who is in the House, for his significant leadership, drive and enthusiasm in this space during his many years as a Labor minister for police in Queensland. I know he is grateful to have worked with the Beasleys to make the changes that were required.

Labor has strengthened Jack's Law at every single stage, as I said. In 2023 we expanded its use to all 15 safe night precincts. We expanded it to public transport stations and to vehicles. In 2024 we expanded it again to shopping centres, retail premises and sporting and entertainment venues. What has this delivered? Over 100,000 wandering operations have been conducted and more than 1,000 weapons have been taken off Queensland's streets. That is leadership. They are results. In the words of Belinda Beasley, 'We believe that every weapon off the street is a potential life saved.' With this bill, Jack's Law will be made permanent. We support that. Of course we support that because Labor has led the way on it. I will let the House in on a little secret: if we were re-elected, we would have done exactly the same thing because it is the right thing to do to support community safety.

The bill will make important changes to strengthen the Jack's Law scanning powers even further. Under the current framework, the use of handheld scanners is limited to designated relevant places, like those I mentioned earlier, and require prior authorisation from a senior officer after specific criteria have been met. After sufficient use of these powers since the initial trial, efficiencies have been identified to improve the framework so officers can have more flexibility in responding to real-time safety concerns. The bill will enable police officers to use a handheld scanner in relevant places without a warrant. This will mean that they will be able to respond to situations faster. Police will also be able to continue scanning a person who has left a relevant place during the scan.

The bill will expand the use of handheld scanners to public places not designated as relevant places when authorised by a senior officer. For the authority, the senior officer must consider that the use of the scanner will likely be effective in detecting or deterring an offence involving the possession or use of a knife or other weapons in that place. Authorisations will be limited to a 12-hour period, ensuring proper oversight remains in place.

Under the act, the annual Queensland Police Service report publishes information on authorisations. The bill will remove a duplicative requirement to publish notices about handheld scanner authorities on the Queensland Police Service's website within two months of the authority being issued. The bill will also remove the requirement for a handheld scanner information notice to be provided to a person on request as a police officer uses the same information to inform a person before conducting the scan. These changes will ensure that Jack's Law remains an effective policing tool to detect and deter knife crime.

The bill also makes several necessary amendments to other acts as well. It extends the sunset clause within the Terrorism (Preventative Detention) Act 2005 to 2040, ensuring Queensland retains nationally consistent powers to prevent or respond to a terrorist attack. It amends the State Emergency Service Act to retrospectively validate past appointments of SES members after an issue in the historical appointment process was identified during business alignment processes. All current affected SES members have already been reappointed, but this ensures that all impacted members have the benefit of protections provided to an authorised rescue officer.

The bill also clarifies that Marine Rescue Queensland is lawfully able to receive charitable gifts, including the transfer of assets to MRQ from existing volunteer marine rescue organisations, following reforms to emergency services and disaster management arrangements last year. I take this opportunity to thank all of the hardworking and dedicated Queensland police officers, the SES, the Marine Rescue Queensland staff and volunteers and all the staff associated with community safety in Queensland. They all do a fantastic job on behalf of our communities. It would be remiss of me not to thank the better Butcher—my brother—for his service as a Queensland police officer in our home town of Gladstone. While these are all-important changes and are supported by this side of the House—

Ms Grace: The better looking one.

Mr BUTCHER: I will not take that interjection.

A government member: You just did!

Mr BUTCHER: That is true. The real test will be if those opposite are willing to go further this week and deliver stronger protections against knife crime. The explanatory notes for this bill detail the primary policy objective is—

... to enhance community safety and security through the expansion of 'Jack's Law' which proactively prevents knife related crime
...

Labor will always ensure that community safety comes first. We want to see further action that directly addresses the primary policy objective of the bill through proactive prevention of knife related crime by moving to ban the sale of machetes in Queensland. I table those amendments, the explanatory notes and a statement of compatibility with human rights.

Tabled paper: Police Powers and Responsibilities (Making Jack's Law Permanent) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, amendments to be moved by Hon. Glenn Butcher MP [603](#).

Tabled paper: Police Powers and Responsibilities (Making Jack's Law Permanent) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, explanatory notes to Hon. Glenn Butcher's amendments [604](#).

Tabled paper: Police Powers and Responsibilities (Making Jack's Law Permanent) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, statement of compatibility with human rights contained in Hon. Glenn Butcher's amendments [605](#).

These are amendments that every single member of this House should support. In fact, we might already have some support from those opposite. In his explanatory speech, the minister spoke about 'an urgent need for decisive action to combat knife related crimes in our state'. Earlier that day, the Premier stood up in question time and said—

... there is no excuse for someone to be going out with a machete—there just is not one. We have to do all we can to make our community safer.

Labor is doing just that today with this amendment.

Our amendments build on the work of the former Labor government of banning the sale of knives, machetes and other items to minors because knife crime is not exclusive to one demographic. Let's be crystal clear: this is not about targeting legitimate users in Queensland. Our sensible, reasoned policy enhancements bring about a total ban on the sale of machetes to the public while also including a regulation-making power to allow a 'permit to buy' for legitimate uses such as people working in primary industries in Queensland.

This is about stopping thugs and criminals from walking into a shop and buying a weapon designed to terrify and to harm. We have seen reports that Jack's Law has already picked up machetes in our streets. I understand the government have reported this very fact. Right across Queensland, machete attacks are becoming far too common and far too dangerous. These concerns were recognised throughout the committee hearing. In response to stakeholders calling for other preventive initiatives, page 25 of the committee report provides a response from the Queensland Police Service referring to Labor's legislation. It states—

A number of knife crime preventive initiatives exist and include Jack's Law, the passing of the Summary Offences (Prevention of Knife Crime) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024 to restrict the sale and provision of knives and other controlled items to minors ...

There is not just one single fix to these things. You must take a multifaceted approach. That is why we are doing something about it, and we know that this approach works. The LNP say they want to get tough on crime. The LNP say they want to put community safety first. Here is their chance today to prove it. This is the LNP's chance to send a clear message that knife culture has no place in Queensland. Stand up for victims. Stand up for Queenslanders. Stand up for common sense. Support Labor's amendment. Take a bipartisan approach on this amendment. If they do not, if the LNP block these sensible changes, Queenslanders will know exactly who is standing in the way of stronger community safety. I am proud of Labor's record on this issue. I am proud to commend this bill and Labor's amendment to the House.

I turn now to the debate on the Corrective Services (Parole Board) Amendment Bill 2025. Parole in Queensland is not a privilege. It is not an entitlement. It is a tool to prevent people from reoffending. In his 2016 review into the Queensland parole system, Walter Sofronoff KC said—

The only purpose of parole is to reintegrate a prisoner into the community before the end of a prison sentence to decrease the chance that the prisoner will ever reoffend. Its only rationale is to keep the community safe from crime.

An effective parole system is fundamental to our community safety. It is fundamental to the integrity of our corrective services system that goes with it. That is why Queenslanders must have confidence in the system. That is why the opposition will be supporting this bill as well, but that support should not be mistaken for congratulations. That support does not extend to the politicking of the minister in her contributions to this bill.

Instead of political pointscoring and pointing fingers, Queenslanders want the minister's attention on the things that matter. They want the minister's attention on the four detainees who have escaped since last month in North Queensland. They want the minister's attention on deaths in custody. They want to know why it has taken until now to put out expressions of interest for vacant positions on the Parole Board. Will the Parole Board even be able to fulfil their obligations while parole applications lag in Queensland?

Turning to the bill, the Corrective Services Act 2006 requires the board to review decisions by individual prescribed board members when a prisoner's parole order is suspended. It is also entirely appropriate that all high-risk decisions, including those to leave a person in the community, should be subject to review by the full board. While there is no explicit requirement under the act, that is exactly what has already been happening.

Since 2022, the Parole Board has been reviewing all decisions made by prescribed members. In that time, only 61 requests were initially not suspended by an individual prescribed board member. Of those, 39 decisions made by an individual board member were confirmed by the full board and parole continued. Twenty-two were overturned by the full board and the person was returned to custody. These are low numbers, particularly compared to the over 5,900 requests made to suspend a parole order in the last year alone, but they represent important decisions for Queensland. That is 22 cases where a prescribed board member allowed for someone to remain on parole only for the full board to decide that it was the wrong call. This reinforces why it is important that all decisions, not just suspensions, can be reviewed. It is not red tape; it is public safety.

We are here to affirm a practice that the Parole Board has already been doing for the last three years. These reforms make a specific head of power explicit in the act. These are clarifying reforms, not reforms resulting from a gap in current legislation. These reforms ensure that the practice to review all decisions is operationally practical. It was confirmed during the committee process that, even without these reforms, the Parole Board could rely on section 205 of the act to make decisions about a parolee's status. The powers are there. The end result is the same. The board can still suspend or cancel a parole order. These changes just ensure that the Parole Board way in which the Parole Board makes that decision—in this case, by reviewing a decision of a prescribed member—can continue.

This is a position conceded to by the Parole Board president during the public briefing on 30 April who agreed that, while not the most practical implementation, there is precedent under section 205 that the power does exist. When pressed further, the president agreed that there was no legislative gap. This point was made so clear to the committee that even the committee chair, the member for Coomera, is on record as saying, 'There are no legislative gaps.' Put simply, this bill affirms the authority of the Parole Board, ensures procedural consistency and means the process can remain practical, rather than needing to use other powers provided in the act, like section 205, to reach the same outcome. This bill also includes a retrospective clause to validate all the decisions made under the board's current practices.

I would like to thank the hardworking corrective services officers and staff throughout Queensland, as well as the staff on Parole Board Queensland. They play an important role in supporting community safety across our state but also ensure that individuals' rights are respected and upheld. I commend the bills to the House.