




Speech By  
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**MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY**

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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 PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (12.44 pm): I rise today to speak in support of the Police Powers and Responsibilities (Making Jack's Law Permanent) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. All members of this House would agree that this is a crucial piece of legislation, one that our side of the House champions. We were instrumental in bringing the original Jack's Law into the parliament. This bill is a testament to what can be achieved when the safety of our community transcends political divides, and it is a clear demonstration of our shared commitment to ensuring Queensland remains a safe place for all. As we have said before in this place, all Queenslanders deserve to feel safe and be safe in their homes, in their streets, in their places of work and, of course, when they are enjoying a night out.

From the outset, let me be clear: the opposition backs this bill. We recognise its importance. This bill at its heart is about protecting lives, preventing tragedy and empowering our hardworking police officers with the tools they need to combat the scourge of knife crime that has sadly impacted too many families in our state and around our country. We all remember the tragic circumstances that spurred the introduction of the original Jack's Law. I want to pay tribute to the Beasley family and their ongoing determination to turn the tragedy of their son's death into an ongoing positive for all of Queensland.

It is every parent's worst nightmare that their child's night out ends with them not coming home due to a violent crime. As the mother of a teenage boy, I simply cannot imagine having the strength to go on after an event like that with its impact on my family and, of course, the ongoing impact on the community. I am in awe of the Beasleys and their ongoing commitment to making a positive difference right around Australia by championing legislative reform. I am sure that all members of this House are very proud of the results of their advocacy.

Jack's Law was born from collective community outcry, a shared grief and an urgent need to act. As the opposition, we are listening intently to the voices of Queenslanders. We have heard the pleas from the community shattered by senseless violence and we understand that reactive measures after an event are not enough. We need proactive tools to disrupt the insidious trend of knife crime. As I said earlier, I am incredibly proud of the original legislation that laid the foundation for what we are now debating today. This side of the House is very proud of our role in putting forward the original framework and understanding the critical need for a preventative measure that could genuinely make a difference on our streets. What is that difference? It is the judicious and targeted use of handheld scanners, often referred to as wanders, to detect knives and other dangerous weapons. This simple but incredibly effective tool has certainly proven its worth. It has intercepted weapons before they could be used to inflict harm. It has deterred individuals from carrying weapons in the first place. For both of those reasons it has quite literally saved lives.

This bill, introduced by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, makes the original laws permanent. Its primary objective, as outlined in the explanatory notes, is clear: to enhance community safety and security through the expansion of Jack's Law by authorising police officers to use handheld scanners to detect knives and other weapons in certain places. This is not about infringing on civil liberties. It is about preventing violence and creating a safer environment for our children to grow up in and families to enjoy.

In my speech on the original Jack's Law, I reflected on the fact that wandering is generally considered to be a relatively minor incursion on a person's privacy relative to the harm that it could prevent. Almost every Queenslander has consented to wandering or scanning, whether it is at an airport or somewhere else. This legislation, firstly and fundamentally, makes Jack's Law permanent by removing the sunset clause that scheduled its expiry. To allow such a vital piece of legislation, one which has saved lives, to simply expire would be unthinkable at this juncture. The threat of knife crime is not temporary, therefore our response must not be either. Making this law permanent sends a clear message: Queensland is serious about preventing weapon related violence and we will not disarm our police in the face of this ongoing challenge.

Secondly, the bill improves operational efficiency and police responsiveness by allowing a police officer to use a handheld scanner in a relevant place without the need to obtain authority from a senior officer. This ensures that our officers can act swiftly and decisively when they encounter situations in high-risk areas. These are places like public transport hubs, entertainment precincts and declared event areas where the congregation of people can unfortunately lead to increased risk. This amendment empowers frontline officers to use their professional judgement based on their training and experience when a matter is time critical.

Thirdly, and significantly, this bill expands the application of Jack's Law to include all public places provided police officers first obtain authority from a senior officer. This is a carefully considered expansion. It acknowledges that weapons related crime is not confined to specific relevant places but can occur anywhere. The safeguard of requiring senior officer authorisation for these broader public spaces ensures that power is exercised responsibly and proportionately. It strikes the right balance between proactive policing and protecting individual rights—a balance that we as the opposition insisted on in the original legislative framework and continue to uphold.

Finally, the bill improves policing efficiency by streamlining the legislative framework underlying Jack's Law, including the removal of certain notification and reporting requirements. This of course is not about reducing accountability; it is about reducing the administrative burden on our police officers, ensuring that they can spend more time on the beat actively policing. My community says to me every day that that is exactly where they want our frontline officers and we know that to support them effective policing requires pragmatic legislation, and these amendments contribute to that goal.

The committee's consideration of the bill, including the receipt of 18 submissions and briefings from the Queensland Police Service, has been thorough. We acknowledge that there were several key issues raised such as the impact of permanence, the scope of powers without senior officer authorisation and the expansion to all public places. These discussions are vital in a democracy and are a really important part of the committee process. The committee has recommended that the bill be passed and we as an opposition will be supporting that.

Let me reiterate: as an opposition our commitment to this legislation stems from our foundational belief in community safety. We were the creators of the original Jack's Law legislative framework and we have consistently advocated for the tools and the powers necessary to keep Queenslanders safe. We understand the complex challenges our police force face every day and we know that we need to empower those officers to do their jobs effectively. It is important to recognise that what I am hearing from my local police officers is that the job that they now do has evolved significantly over time and we need to ensure that the laws that support our police officers are also evolving with those changing responsibilities.

This bill is not just about legislative changes; it is about sending a powerful message to those who would seek to inflict knife violence on our streets: we will not tolerate knife crime. We will equip our police with the means to detect it and, critically, to deter it and we will ensure our laws reflect the community's desire to make our streets safer. To the families who have lost a loved one to knife violence, we stand with you. This law made permanent is part of an ongoing effort to prevent such tragedies from reoccurring. We want our young people to be able to go out at night and have a good night and for parents or carers to not worry about getting that knock at the door or that heartbreaking phone call that the Beasleys know all too well. This bill is aimed squarely at preventing that. I thank the hardworking police officers who put their lives on the line every day. This bill is aimed at making their work a little bit safer as well.

In closing, I want to speak briefly to the proposed amendments from the member for Gladstone regarding machetes. As the daughter of a chef, I know that there are many Queenslanders who genuinely need access to high-quality knives. These amendments do not target those people; they target people who use knives, specifically machetes, to threaten and cause harm in our community. These amendments are sensible and I urge all members of the House to back them. This is a good bill. I commend it to the House.