




Speech By
Hon. Laura Gerber

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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. LJ GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Youth Justice and Victim Support and Minister for Corrective Services) (11.58 am): The Crisafulli government made a promise to restore safety to our communities and to put victims first. These bills are part of delivering on that promise. I will first turn to the Corrective Services (Parole Board) Amendment Bill 2025.

This bill fixes a legislative oversight from those opposite. It ensures that all urgent decisions made by a single Parole Board member, whether to suspend a parole order or not, are subject to full board review within two business days. Under Labor's laws, if a single Parole Board member decided to suspend a parolee's order, issue a warrant for their arrest and return them to custody, then that decision must be reviewed by the full board within two business days. That is a safeguard that exists for the prisoner. If that same board member disagreed with QCS's risk assessment and allowed the parolee to remain in the community, there is no equivalent safeguard for the community. That is a dangerous legislative gap. It was called out by the Parole Board president, and Labor left it wide open.

The stakes are high here. Suspension decisions are often made in the early hours of the morning by a single Parole Board member about people with serious histories of violence, domestic abuse, armed robbery, weapons offences and more. I note the Justice Reform Initiative provided a submission which suggested that mere technical breaches of parole conditions should not result in parole being revoked. Allow me to assure the House that these are not the people we are talking about here. QCS does not ask the board to suspend a parolee's parole order over a trivial matter. QCS community corrections officers make every attempt to manage prisoners safely in the community. It is only when there is an unacceptable risk to community safety or the parolee poses a potential harm to someone in the community that QCS requests the board to suspend a parole order. That is why it is so important that the Corrective Services Act includes a safeguard for the community.

This is not about questioning the professionalism of board members; it is about ensuring consistency, accountability, proper oversight and protecting the rights of victims to ensure the community can be kept safe, because the consequences of an incorrect decision not to suspend parole—to leave that person in the community—can be devastating. Lives can be up-ended, victims retraumatised and communities put at risk. This bill ensures that every urgent parole decision is properly scrutinised. That is how you protect public safety.

Since the Parole Board began operations in 2017 there have been more than 38,000 urgent requests to suspend parole. Since 2022, only 61 of those were rejected by a single board member. Yes, that is a small number, but this is a high stakes group because in every single one of those cases QCS officers—professionals with firsthand knowledge of the offender's behaviour—have assessed that the

person is no longer manageable in the community and they pose a risk. This bill will not add cost or delay to the Parole Board. It adds a safeguard for community safety. It gives the community the same protection that Labor afforded to the prisoner. Community safety matters to us on this side of the House.

During the committee process the opposition raised the case of Foster v Shaddock. This is a decision that dates back to when QCS had the ability to suspend parole orders. This is no longer applicable. Furthermore, this case was before the current Parole Board framework was even established and before the introduction of section 208C, which is what relates directly to this bill. What is more, prescribed board members were not even in existence when Foster v Shaddock was decided. The case those opposite are relying on is not relevant to the Corrective Services (Parole Board) Amendment Bill we are debating today. It did not empower the board to review a decision of prescribed board members. Labor doubled down on this argument, suggesting that section 205 of the Corrective Services Act would suffice.

We would not be in this House today debating this bill if section 205 already did the job. Section 205 of the act provides the board with broad powers to amend, suspend or cancel a parole order, but it is sections 208A to 208C that relate to the specific power of a single board member to suspend a parole order. Under Labor's laws, section 208C provided a review safeguard to the prisoner. Labor put the rights of the offenders before the rights of victims and the community. This bill ensures the board has the power and obligation to review individual board member decisions in the interest of community safety, putting the rights of the community back in front.

This bill also provides legal certainty that, when the board reviewed past decisions to leave a parolee in the community, those decisions are valid. This is especially important when the full board disagreed about the risk they posed to the community. At the end of the day, these are decisions that were made by a full board, including a professional board member, a Queensland police officer and a Queensland Corrective Services officer. In these circumstances, the full board disagreed with the decision to leave that offender in the community. As a result, they issued a warrant for their arrest and made the decision to return them to custody. They made these decisions in the interests of community safety and it is important they are upheld.

Throughout the committee process Labor tried to suggest that the retrospective section of this bill is not justified. This is simply not true. There is a clear legislative gap and the president of the Parole Board called it out. It has existed in the past. The affected prisoners are people the full board determined needed to be returned to prison because of the risk they posed to the community. I addressed this in my introductory speech. It was addressed in the bill's explanatory notes and the statement of compatibility. For Labor to suggest otherwise is a desperate attempt to hide from their failure to give the board these community safety powers. The question is whether those opposite will stop dancing around the truth. Will they admit they failed to consider the rights of victims when they introduced a safeguard for prisoners but failed to introduce the same safeguard for the community? Will they support the Corrective Services (Parole Board) Amendment Bill to keep Queenslanders safe?

I will now turn to the Police Powers and Responsibilities (Making Jack's Law Permanent) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Knife crime has stolen lives, devastated families and shaken communities across Queensland. Behind every weapon seized is a story of tragedy narrowly avoided or heartbreak that came too late. That is Jack Beasley's story. Jack was just 17 when, in 2019, he was murdered in Surfers Paradise. His parents, Brett and Belinda Beasley, turned unimaginable grief into a powerful force for change. Through the Jack Beasley Foundation they have tirelessly campaigned to educate young people and pushed for tougher laws to stop knife crime. They are guided by their motto: Detect Knives, Save Lives. These laws are Jack's legacy.

Under Labor, knife crime spiralled out of control. It was up over 40 per cent between 2014 and 2019. Despite warnings from frontline police, Labor introduced a framework so complex and riddled with red tape that it actively discouraged wanding operations. Police needed to tick boxes and satisfy layers of bureaucratic criteria, turning what should be a frontline tool into a back-office burden. We are fixing that. The Crisafulli government is cutting the red tape and making Jack's Law permanent. We are removing the sunset clause, expanding police powers to include more public spaces, and streamlining notification and reporting requirements so officers can get on with the job of keeping Queenslanders safe. We are backing police with the tools they need to put victims and community safety first. Jack's Law complements our broader reforms, including Adult Crime, Adult Time, and our commitment to holding serious youth offenders to account. It is all part of restoring safety in the places Queenslanders live, work and raise their families. I thank the Beasley family for their courage. Because of them this law is saving lives; now it will be able to continue.

I stood in this place on 29 March 2023, more than two years ago, and told the House why Jack's Law should be permanent. I will say it again. This life-saving legislation, which was sidelined under the former Labor government, will strengthen the police's ability to keep our community safe and act as a

strong deterrent for youths who are carrying knives. Police must be given the ability to maintain community safety, and the community must have the assurance and confidence to go out in public without the fear that knives could be wielded against them. Today we are making Jack's Law permanent. Two years ago I called that out. I called for it to be made permanent. For those opposite to stand up now during their contributions to this debate and try to claim it as theirs is just playing politics with this issue because they could have done it in 2023 when we called it out, but they failed to do so. Additionally, I note that amendments to the Corrective Services (Parole Board) Amendment Bill will be introduced relating to the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994. I commend these bills to the House.