




Speech By
Hon. Leeanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

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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. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (5.35 pm): I rise to contribute to the cognate debate and, in doing so, it is important to reflect firstly for just a moment on the history of Jack's Law in Queensland. In May 2021 the former Labor government took decisive action to address the growing concern of knife related violence in our communities. We amended the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 to trial a new set of police powers—powers designed to save lives. This trial was a pilot program that allowed authorised police officers to use handheld metal detection scanners or wands without a warrant to determine whether a person was carrying a knife in designated public areas. The legislation was named of course, as we have heard tonight, in honour of 17-year-old Jack Beasley, whose life was tragically taken during a night out with friends in Surfers Paradise in December 2019, and was designed to prevent similar tragedies from occurring in the future.

At this time the powers were limited to public places within the Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach safe night precincts. The trial ran between May 2021 and April 2023 and was evaluated by the Griffith Criminology Institute. The Griffith report evaluated the impact, effectiveness, efficiency and equity of the wandering trial in safe night precincts. The report concluded that scanning contributed to increased detection of knives in the safe night precinct and key findings suggested that handheld scanning should be targeted at areas with a higher prevalence of knife offences over a sustained period. The report also made recommendations including demographics recording and a formalised audit process to review scanning operations for over-targeting of particular categories of individuals.

In April 2023, informed by the Griffith report, Labor passed the Police Powers and Responsibilities (Jack's Law) Amendment Act 2023. This legislation expanded the areas where handheld scanners could be used beyond the original two precincts. The new powers applied to all 15 safe night precincts across Queensland as well as to public transport. These locations were designated as relevant places under the law and the report ultimately found that the trial had had positive impacts in the detection of weapons.

Since Jack's tragic passing, his parents, Brett and Belinda Beasley, have been tireless advocates for reform to prevent knife related violence and to protect young people. Despite their pain and heartbreak, their dedication and advocacy were instrumental in making Jack's Law a reality here in Queensland and their continuing efforts have seen similar laws introduced across the nation including in the Northern Territory, New South Wales and Western Australia. The establishment of the Jack Beasley Foundation has also focused attention on knife crime education and driving change around youth violence. The foundation has presented in schools, educating youth on the dangers of carrying a knife, and shared how wandering in public areas is a non-invasive activity to reduce knife related violence and enhance community safety. I want to join with all sides of the House in acknowledging and thanking the Beasleys and the Jack Beasley Foundation for their ongoing efforts and advocacy in making Queensland safer in the fight against knife violence.

Since its introduction, Jack's Law has proven effective. Across Queensland, more than 100,000 wandering operations have been conducted, resulting in over 1,000 weapons being taken off the streets—that is 1,000 potential tragedies prevented and 1,000 families spared the grief that the Beasley family knows all too well. In August 2024, the former Labor government went further by building on this progress and passing the Queensland Community Safety Act 2024 which made additional improvements to Jack's Law. This act broadened the definition of relevant places to include shopping centres, retail premises, licensed venues, sporting and entertainment venues and rail lines under the premise that knife related crimes could be reduced further in other public spaces, particularly those that have higher pedestrian density, by allowing a senior officer to authorise the use of scanners if the senior officer believes this would be effective in detecting or deterring possession or use of knives and weapons in that place. The amendments also extended the sunset clause to October 2026, allowing police to continue these important operations across more locations.

I want to especially acknowledge the former police minister, the member for Morayfield, for his leadership and dedication over many years in the fight against knife crime. He did an incredible job. Under Labor and the member for Morayfield, Queensland led the nation in developing strong, evidence-based policies to tackle this issue head-on. Making this law permanent and removing the sunset clause is backed by the evaluation of the past years of this Labor policy, which is why the Labor opposition will be supporting this bill. However, to build on the work of the former Queensland Labor government, the Queensland Labor opposition will move amendments to ban the sale of machetes across Queensland to enhance community safety. Under the opposition's proposed changes, a sale can only occur when an adult holds a permit to buy—an exemption allowing them to acquire one for legitimate purposes such as work. A regulation-making power will be created to prescribe the application, grant and renewal process of a permit to buy. This will enable people who need it for work, such as in the agricultural space, to apply and use it for work purposes.

In the interests of community safety, we call on the LNP to support Labor's amendments. A bipartisan commitment to stamping out knife crime, ensuring our laws continue to evolve to meet changing and challenging times, is not much to ask. Even if one life is saved as a result of these amendments to ban machetes then this is a win for all of us. Most people are absolutely horrified to learn that police are often dealing with people in possession of machetes on our streets. There have been numerous incidents of machete crimes reported by the police in the last six months, including in Scarborough in the member for Redcliffe's seat, in Rockhampton just last month and in Toowoomba the month before. Surely, those LNP members want to see the opposition's amendments pass. The Premier in his own media release said—

From axes to machetes, every knife our police take off the streets is a potential life saved.

The very idea that the LNP government would now ignore the opposition's amendments just because it was not their idea or that they would waste the opportunity as we debate this bill tonight to not capture the sale of machetes is mind-boggling. It is not just Queensland households and people out enjoying the community that they put at risk by not supporting the opposition's amendment; it is also the police on the front line. The police officers who do a fantastic job each and every day on the front line in our communities deserve to have machetes removed too. I know that my own brother, a police officer in Logan, would benefit from that. Surely, the LNP can support our amendments to help keep our police safe and make Queensland safer. The Queensland Labor opposition supports this bill and we do so with the knowledge that it will save lives, prevent violence and uphold the legacy of a young man whose life continues to inspire change across our state, but we should not miss the opportunity to also meet the challenges we face today by including the sale of machetes in this bill.

In the few minutes I have left, I will briefly turn to the Corrective Services (Parole Board) Amendment Bill. This bill aims to clarify and affirm specific decision-making powers of the board regarding the board's ability to review decisions to maintain or revoke parole made by individual prescribed board members in all circumstances. Parole is not a privilege or an entitlement; parole is a method intended to prevent reoffending through providing an incentive for prisoners to participate in programs in custody as well as supporting an offender's reintegration into the community. It is a chance to prove rehabilitation and a chance to contribute meaningfully to the community. The bill aims to clarify and affirm those specific decision-making powers. The bill also aims to retrospectively verify decisions made following the board's review of a decision made by an individual board member. As this bill is of a clarifying nature, the opposition will not be opposing it. I conclude by acknowledging all of the police officers who do an incredible job on our streets. I commend the bill to the House.