




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

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

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (7.40 pm): I rise to express my support for the Police Powers and Responsibilities (Making Jack's Law Permanent) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. This important legislation builds on a foundation of bipartisan work to prevent knife crime and, more importantly, protect public safety, and marks another meaningful step in Queensland's ongoing effort to ensure that our streets, our public spaces and our transport systems are safer for all to use.

The tragic death of 17-year-old Jack Beasley in 2019 shocked Queensland and the nation. Since that time, Jack's parents, Brett and Belinda Beasley, have campaigned with extraordinary resolve to ensure no other family endures such a senseless loss. Their tireless advocacy has catalysed reform and inspired changes across multiple jurisdictions including here in Queensland, New South Wales, the Northern Territory and also in Western Australia.

It is a credit to the former Labor government that in May 2021 it first trialled the use of handheld metal detection wands under the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000. This trial, initially limited to the Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach safe night precincts, demonstrated that proactive detection tools could make a real difference. The Griffith Criminology Institute's evaluation of the trial was unequivocal. Targeted wandering led to what we all knew—increased knife detections—and supported the case for expanding this intervention to other high-risk areas.

Following the Griffith report's findings, the Police Powers and Responsibilities (Jack's Law) Amendment Act 2023 extended these powers to all 15 safe night precincts and public transport hubs. I can tell you that when this happened, the people of Cairns were very happy. I heard from a number of publicans and retailers in and around our city centre that this was something they had been waiting for. In 2024, the Queensland Community Safety Act took this further by including shopping centres, sporting venues and rail lines. As a result, more than 1,000 weapons have been taken off the streets in Queensland, with over 100,000 wandering operations conducted to date. These are not abstract numbers. They represent potential tragedies averted, lives protected and, more importantly, community safeguarded.

The 2025 amendment bill rightly proposes to make Jack's Law permanent and introduces practical efficiencies to enhance its implementation. It was a process and it had to be observed at every point, and that was the case. Allowing senior officers to authorise wandering in additional public areas, based on credible intelligence or risk assessment, adds necessary flexibility. Removing duplicative paperwork, such as the provision of printed information notices that merely restate verbal advice, will allow police to operate more efficiently while maintaining that very important transparency.

Critically, the bill also maintains strong oversight mechanisms, which is vitally important. While annual reports will no longer list specific locations—an important privacy safeguard—the requirement to report on the overall use and effectiveness of these powers remains very much in place. This ensures accountability while recognising the operational realities of modern policing.

Equally important is the proposed amendment to prohibit the sale of machetes without a permit. Machete related violence has risen alarmingly in recent years. Media reports document horrifying attacks involving machetes across the state—in Toowoomba, Rockhampton, Moreton Bay, Brisbane's south side and the Gold Coast, just to name a few. These are not isolated incidents. These point to a growing subculture of youth crime in which machetes are being glamorised, brandished and unfortunately being used tragically. The proposed 'permit to buy' scheme strikes the right balance, we believe. It recognises that legitimate uses for machetes exist, particularly in agricultural and land care areas. My father-in-law and two brothers-in-law are canefarmers. They have very much a need for machetes. However, when you have these discussions with them, closing off easy access to these dangerous weapons for those with no lawful reason to possess them is something that they do agree with. This complements the 2024 ban on the sale of knives and machetes to minors, and aligns with Queenslanders' expectations that strong, sensible steps be taken to prevent violence before it occurs.

This legislation is not a political gesture. It is a practical, evidence-based, community informed response to a real and present challenge. The law enforcement community overwhelmingly supports it and it enjoys broad public endorsement. Importantly, it honours Jack Beasley's legacy by continuing the work he never got the chance to finish—making Queensland safer for young people.

I also wish to acknowledge the former police minister and member for Morayfield for his leadership in championing this reform. It took a lot of work and I know he did a fantastic job. It is essential that we recognise this as a bipartisan achievement, regardless of the palaver we are hearing from some. It was Labor that launched the initial trial, it was Labor that expanded it and it was Labor that continues to support its refinement and responsible implementation. In this spirit, I urge all members of the Queensland parliament, regardless of their party affiliations, to support the 2025 amendment bill and the accompanying changes proposed by the opposition. Community safety should never be a political contest. It should be a shared commitment.

Jack's Law reflects the best of what our institutions can achieve when they listen to the community and respond with empathy and act with determination. Making these powers permanent and giving police the tools they need to deter and detect weapons will not only reduce harm but also send a clear signal that knife crime has no place in our state. Let this legislation be a beacon for further reform, continued cooperation and enduring vigilance.

With the time I have left, I turn to the Corrective Services (Parole Board) Amendment Bill. As has been stated, parole is not a privilege or 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 offenders' reintegration back into the community. That is why Queenslanders can have confidence in the operation of our independent Parole Board. The 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 members in all circumstances.

The bill also aims to retrospectively verify decisions made following the board's review of a decision which has been made by an individual board member. It is 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.

Finally, the bill provides explicit legislative clarity, not because of any fault in the existing framework, but to confirm and strengthen the board's ability to review the decisions of immediate suspension requests, whether upheld or denied. This bill guarantees that the additional review process by the Parole Board, which they have used since 2022, can continue, meaning community safety is not left to the call of a single member. The bill affirms the authority of the Parole Board Queensland and ensures procedural consistency across its decision-making processes. I support the cognate bill.