




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NOOSA

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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 BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (6.10 pm): Today we are debating two bills in cognate, the first being to make Jack's Law permanent. On 29 March 2023, I spoke about the shortfall of the Police Powers and Responsibilities (Jack's Law) Amendment Bill in that it only related to the 15 safe night precincts and that it should be expanded to all of Queensland. In 2024, Jack's Law was expanded to cover all public places in Queensland, however only when strict criteria were met. This bill simplifies those for police and will have the effect of allowing a much broader application of Jack's Law, which is welcomed.

The Queensland Police Union said they were very supportive. The Jack Beasley Foundation also submitted that it had received positive feedback and messages of support from the community. The success of Jack's Law has led to most Australian states and territories adopting similar laws alongside knife control laws. After recent fights in Melbourne, the Victorian government banned the sale of machetes and later this year will also ban their possession and use. These have been banned in Queensland for sale to under-18s since 1 September last year. However, the government needs to extend this ban further.

Some submitters called for an independent review of the exercise of Jack's Law and the committee acknowledged this by including it in their recommendations, with advice from QPS that the bill retains the ongoing reporting mechanisms on the law's operation. The Queensland Victims' Commissioner and QHRC, however, did not support this, arguing that these are 'extraordinary powers' and should be restricted to high-risk environments only. The QPS responded that the oversight control by senior police officers allows appropriate consideration of risk.

The bill also extends preventive detention laws required under Australia's national counterterrorism arrangements and then makes some small administrative amendments to the Marine Rescue Act 2024 and the State Emergency Service Act 2024. It is important that the government continue to focus on ensuring the disaster and emergency management reforms are effective. The Marine Rescue Queensland transition has gone reasonably smoothly, with the marine Vessel Replacement Program allowing the Noosa flotilla to replace its 22-year-old vessel with a modern rigid inflatable rescue vessel, and it has been welcomed into our community.

However, issues raised by rural fires in the transition to the Queensland Fire Department from the start still do not appear to have been addressed. They sought reasonable self-control within the broader Fire Department, including their own commissioner and budget. Our volunteers are vital, and it is imperative that government listen to and accommodate their needs. When the volunteering review is completed, may there be better support for our unpaid workers including to help resolve disputes within and between organisations.

The second bill makes some changes to the legislation governing the Parole Board requiring all single-member Parole Board decisions to be reviewed by the full board. The minister in her introductory speech describes the Parole Board system as ‘a system that has been neglected since its introduction’. However, from the reading of this bill, it appears to be an administrative adjustment as the Parole Board have already been reviewing all single-member decisions since 2022.

The statement of reservation pointed out that the Parole Board has potentially other parts of its legislation to rely on, so this legislation was strictly not necessary. With so many issues that do need addressing in this chamber, this type of administrative bill could have been addressed via the committee itself, as is done in New Zealand. However, we need our committee reform first!

There were only three submissions to the bill. The Justice Reform Initiative said that suspending a person’s parole order and returning the individual to prison is likely to exacerbate disadvantage and increase the likelihood of ongoing criminal justice system involvement including difficulty of obtaining secure accommodation in the community. While the department said this was outside the scope of the bill, it does point to a fundamental flaw in our system—the lack of transitional support for prisoners when released.

If we want to reduce recidivism and crime, we need to remove the reasons for reoffending such as the lack of housing, work or education, financial and social support. As the JRI said, over the last five years the availability of housing for formerly incarcerated people has reduced significantly and, as the prison population increases, this will be exacerbated. In 2023-24, the government spent only \$14 million on community-led re-entry services compared to \$1.4 billion on prisons.

In closing, my community gives gratitude to Brett and Belinda Beasley, the parents of Jack and in memory of whom the Jack’s Law bill is named, for their tireless advocacy to see our community protected from knife crime and prevent other families going through the trauma of losing a loved one from weapons that do not belong on our streets. Also, thank you to the committees, their secretariats and the submitters as well as the departments. I commend the bills to the House.