


~~and, even then, the Coordinator General only acquires land after the proponent has made all reasonable efforts to acquire land voluntarily. The IFS provisions in the act require substantial and rigorous assessments to be made both of the significance of infrastructure for the Governor in Council's IFS decision and also of the steps taken by the proponent to acquire land by agreement for the Coordinator General's land acquisition decision.~~

~~The complexity and scale of the infrastructure projects is now greater, requiring the application of significant resources by the Coordinator General, including for staff and also for a greater requirement for expert technical advice on aspects of innovative private sector infrastructure. Currently, there are \$47.5 billion worth of private sector projects under various stages of evaluation in the Coordinator General's environmental impact assessment process. Given the government's strong encouragement for private sector involvement in infrastructure and the greater interest by the private sector in such infrastructure, interest in the IFS provisions by the private sector, in particular for land acquisition measures for commercial or economic infrastructure, is only expected to continue.~~

~~Given the scale and complexity of the workload in processing IFS applications, it is only reasonable that applicants are charged the cost of processing their applications, with the fees to recover the departmental staff and on costs of processing applications, and with the cost recovery to recover the other costs incurred by the Coordinator General such as the costs of expert reports through to costs such as advertising the applications and decisions. This proposed new fee schedule for IFS and the proposed power to recoup costs for IFS is consistent with the Coordinator General's existing powers under sections 25A and 25B of the SDPWO Act introduced in 2008 in relation to fees and the power to recoup costs for the Coordinator General's environmental coordination environmental impact statement program, provisions which commenced from 1 January 2009.~~

~~The IFS fees will be subject to CPI escalation every year on 1 January, with the first escalation being on 1 January 2012, and is at an appropriate level to ensure cost recovery from a proponent. This is in keeping with the approach taken for fees and cost recovery for the environmental impact assessment also undertaken by the Coordinator General. The amendments also provide for the Coordinator General to appoint persons to assist the Coordinator General, providing a more efficient process than the existing provisions which requires Governor in Council appointment. Other amendments address minor issues to improve efficiency of processes and clarify intent. I commend the bill the House.~~

~~First Reading~~

~~ **Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot tha ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade) (11.13 am): I move~~

~~That the bill be now read a first time.~~

~~Question put That the bill be now read a first time.~~

~~Motion agreed to.~~

~~Bill read a first time.~~

~~**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Wendt): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Finance and Administration Committee.~~


WEAPONS AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 12 May (see p. 1465), on motion of Mr Roberts—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Surfers Paradise, I would like to acknowledge in the gallery student leaders and teachers from Ipswich State High School in the electorate of Ipswich West.

~~ **Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (11.13 am): I rise to speak to the Weapons Amendments Bill 2011. As legislators, whether that be Labor or the LNP, the safety of Queenslanders is one of our top priorities. Ensuring community safety is of the utmost importance. However, the Bligh government also proposes that amending the current regulatory framework to further restrict and tighten gun ownership and licensing is the way to ensure this safety. This is incorrect and fails to address the root cause of the issue of illegal gun and weapon use in Queensland.~~

As a nation we have a troubled history with regard to gun control. The Port Arthur massacre is still fresh in our minds when we think of regulating civilian gun use. In 1996, Martin Bryant, armed with a semiautomatic rifle, changed the way Australians viewed such regulation as did later events at Hoddle

Street. The federal government's response to the massacre which killed 35 people was swift and controversial.

The Australian police ministers' council convened a special meeting in May of that year. After several subsequent resolutions and meetings, the National Firearms Agreement was formed. All Australian states and territories were committed to a uniform system of firearms licensing and registration. This included banning military style automatic and semiautomatic firearms, introducing the registration of all firearms, including strict requirements to prove reasons for ownership, and restrictions on sales and storage of firearms. The government's firearms buyback scheme was implemented to provide compensation to owners of certain automatic weapons, and approximately 660,000 firearms were surrendered.

The government faced a great backlash from gun advocates and members of the public who felt that changes were a restriction on their personal liberty. Many feared for their own safety without a means of protecting themselves. In the 15 years since these radical reforms were introduced, it is clear that there has been success in controlling gun use. There has not been another massacre like that which occurred at Port Arthur all those years ago. Statistics vary but the general consensus is that gun related deaths have lessened in the last decade.

Queensland has some of the strictest laws governing gun use resulting from the national firearms agreement. In 2006, Queensland then went one step further, beginning a comprehensive review of weapons regulation in Queensland. The Weapons Review Committee came up with a raft of changes to the Weapons Act to further restrict Queensland's weapon laws, including the doubling of the penalties for misuse of weapons offences to up to \$15,000; tougher knife laws, including an expanded definition of bladed weapons to include daggers such as fantasy knives, in line with national standards; regulating the use of laser pointers; the introduction of an approved safety training course as a prerequisite for registration; and exemptions for off-duty members of the Queensland Police Service and special constables to possess service weapons and exhibits.

These changes are reflected in the bill. Particularly, these issues are covered by the first stage of the amendment process, which we will not be opposing. The second stage of the amendment process will focus on policy issues which arose during the community consultation. Suggestions and submissions were considered by the Weapons Review Committee and amendments regulating imitation weapons, such as those kept by RSLs, will be considered in the second stage of the process.

The Queensland Police Service also established a committee to identify issues relating to the administration and enforcement of the legislation. Key recommendations to address these issues include introducing online processing of licence applications and permits and introducing new fees for selected weapons transactions.

When we talk about the weapons laws we must never forget the greatest threat is from criminals with illegal or unlawful weapons not the law-abiding gun owners who are regulated and who pay significant amounts of money to the state to lawfully own and lawfully operate certain weapons. We on this side of the House know that weapons related crime is a serious issue that should never be allowed to go off the radar. Previous research has found links between weapons and drugs. Illicit drugs have been linked to weapons, particularly firearms, in a number of ways, including that violence with or without weapons can be an integral part of the drug trade; dependent drug users may commit crimes to finance their drug habit possibly with weapons; drug users may commit crimes of violence when under the influence of drugs, possibly with weapons; and firearms and other weapons may be exchanged for drugs and drugs for firearms.

When it comes to drug crime and weapons, it has been suggested that while dependent users may resort to the use of weapons and firearms when committing crimes to get money for drugs, research suggests that this is not the most common reason for property crime but that the principal link is the role of firearms in the illegal drug trade, including protecting shipments of drugs, intimidating customers or competitors, enforcing debts, resolving disputes, eliminating competition and punishing informants.

012 Criminologists reported that, in July 2001, five per cent of the Australian adult population had a firearms licence, whereas 20 per cent of police detainees in 2002 reported owning a firearm in the previous year. The proportion is much higher than the general population, and very few of the police detainees reported holding a firearms licence—about 10 per cent did. This is not surprising, as a prior criminal record would automatically exclude a person from legally obtaining a firearms licence.

Research on the licensing and registration status of firearms used in homicide also finds a very low rate of compliance with firearms licensing legislation. In a recent study, from 2006, 16 per cent of all detainees reported using a weapon to commit crime at some time in their lives—data was not collected on the types of crimes committed with these weapons; nine per cent reported using knives; seven per cent had used firearms; and five per cent had used some other weapon to commit a crime. One in 50 used a syringe to commit a crime. Similar proportions were found in the United Kingdom sample, with 14 per cent of arrestees ever using a knife to commit an offence and five per cent ever using a firearm to commit an offence. So it is clear from the research that there is no doubt a linkage between weapons

and crime and, as such, we should never shy away from doing everything in our power to ensure the safety and security of every Queenslanders from such crime.

In speaking to the particular amendments being put forward in this bill, the key changes are—

- increases the penalties for behavioural offences involving weapons;
- extends the current definition of bladed weapons to accord with national standards;
- regulates the possession and use of laser pointers with an output greater than 1 milliwatt;
- regulates the possession and use of high capacity magazines for category B firearms;
- defines an approved safety training course and what the Commissioner of Police ... may consider in approving such a course for the purposes of obtaining a firearms licence;
- clarifies that a person may have physical possession of a knife in a public place, other than a school, for a genuine religious purpose;
- removes licensing and registration requirements for permanently deactivated public monuments;
- exempts off-duty members of the Queensland Police Service ... and special constables required to possess service issued weapons and exhibits;
- clarifies that incorporated shooting clubs must nominate a representative;
- clarifies that range officers cannot be minors;
- permits range officers from another State or Territory to officiate on ranges;
- introduces additional genuine reasons for the possession of a weapon to include medieval re-enactments, paint pellet sports and for the collection, preservation and study of weapons;
- allows an exemption from a provision of the Act to be revoked if the exemption is breached;
- adopts the Australian Federal Police Firearm Deactivation Standards;
- amends the *Weapons Categories Regulation 1997* ... to better define body armour; and
- amends Schedule 2 of the *Weapons Regulation 1996* ... to reflect changes to government service entities and prescribed functions.

I note that this last amendment clarifies a potential gap between the Corrective Services Act and the Weapons Act for companies such as Serco and GEO which run some of our corrective services facilities. I take this opportunity to thank the minister and his staff from the department for the briefing I received in relation to this bill.

In every state of Australia, the debate over gun control ignites considerable passion and it is important to dispel some myths. There has never been an unfettered right for Australians to possess firearms for any reason including self-defence. Even the United States Constitution, which is often misquoted by proponents of gun ownership, does not confer such a right. The second amendment to the US Constitution states—

A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

That is a very different proposition from the belief that every individual should have the right to possess whatever weapons they wish. What the Howard government set out to achieve—and what these amendments we are debating attempt to continue—was to remove from the community all weapons with the capacity to inflict mass casualties or injury. Even licensed, they serve no useful purpose in a civilised society. They may have their use in formed, regulated bodies like the Defence Force or the police, but they are neither necessary nor appropriate in the general community.

I acknowledge that there are those people who enjoy shooting exotic weapons either recreationally or competitively, and there are provisions in the legislation for them to do so. Their concerns about restrictions on owning and operating firearms have been heard. In preparing for this debate I have had feedback from numerous stakeholders—the Shooters Union Queensland, firearms dealers in Queensland, the Law Abiding Firearm Owners Inc., the Queensland Rifle Association, and pistol clubs and constituents of many members, as I am sure all members of parliament have.

I would like to make the point that what Labor fails to grasp is that, in the debate on guns and weapons crime, we need to be focusing on the criminals who commit crimes with weapons. We believe that the priority concern for the state government, rather than the Weapons Act, should be to overhaul components of the Penalties and Sentences Act so that tougher laws are focused on the actual criminals. Under Labor, convicted armed robbers continue to escape jail sentences. In the two years from 2005 to 2007 alone, 30 per cent of all convicted armed robbers did not spend so much as one night behind bars under Labor's so-called justice system. That meant that a total of 172 armed robbers were released back onto our streets and into our neighbourhoods without one night behind bars. These failed sentencing laws are the ones that are in urgent need of review, yet the Premier and Labor refuse to take any action. This bill before the House does nothing to address criminals committing crimes against innocent people with black market weapons.

Several proposed changes in this bill raise questions as to what objectives they would have when passed. I note that there are 22 behavioural offence penalties, and I will address my concerns with some of those when we reach the committee stage. I do question where the explanatory notes to this bill

say that the existing penalty regime has not had the required deterrent effect. I ask the minister to outline why we have these increases in penalties in the bill and how many offences have been committed against some sections that would necessitate a doubling of penalties and in some cases even more than a doubling of penalties. I am talking about clause 24, 'Responsibilities of person attending an approved range'; clause 25, 'Theatrical ordnance suppliers to be licensed'; and clause 27, 'Obligations of security organisation in relation to the possession or use of a weapon'. These are organisations often that are already licensed and already complying with the law and there is no reference to criminal intent, so I would ask the minister in his response to deal with some of those matters that have really concerned a lot of constituents who are trying to do the right thing.

Clause 47 deals with an amendment to section 73, 'Modifying firearm to make it permanently inoperable'. I understand that this is a national provision but there are concerns by many genuine owners of old style weapons that it is going to make it virtually worthless to try to collect old style weapons. I will deal with that in the committee stage.

I acknowledge that the remainder of the bill brings about some clarifications in the act: ensuring that a person undertaking the duties of a range officer must be an adult, there is a restriction on laser pointers, there is a removal of licensing requirements for deactivated monuments et cetera. These amendments also attempt to make the conduct of range practices safer but also more flexible between different state jurisdictions. I acknowledge that professional, recreational or competitive shooters who observe weapon control legislation do not necessarily pose a risk to the community at large, but that does not give them an automatic right to possess whatever weapons in whatever quantity they wish.

As I have reiterated, the majority of violent crimes involving firearms are carried out by individuals who are not licensed with weapons that are not registered and have been illegally obtained. The amendments we are debating seek to increase penalties for the unlawful possession of certain categories of weapons, and that part is supported, but as I have already said they also double penalties for 22 offences, supposedly as 'a strong message of deterrence'—and that quote is from the explanatory notes. Some of these smack of revenue raising by a cash-strapped Labor government, adding to the cost-of-living issues already facing Queenslanders.

Where the Bligh Labor government has failed the people of Queensland is in ensuring that penalties applied for violent crime involving weapons reflect the seriousness of the offence and meet the expectations that all Queenslanders have that violent criminals will receive appropriate sentences. That is not happening in Queensland. If the Bligh Labor government was serious about dealing with violent crime then we believe that a priority, as I have said already, should be to overhaul the Penalties and Sentences Act so tougher laws are focused on real criminals.

013 These amendments also seek to increase controls on certain categories of knives, as equally a deadly weapon in the wrong hands as a firearm. Tragically, we have seen an increase in the incidence of knife related violence, most disturbingly in our schools. As these amendments acknowledge, the possession or carriage of a knife has absolutely no place in the school environment. Again, under this Bligh Labor government there is a great disparity between what penalties should apply for unlawful knife possession and what penalties are imposed. Repeated questions from the LNP in an attempt to discover the number and type of knife incidents in Queensland schools have met with a blank. The Premier and Labor do not take the knife culture seriously enough in our schools to keep records of the number and type of knife incidents in schools. As for the possession of knives in public, between 2008 and 2010 1,365 people were found guilty or pleaded guilty to possessing a knife in a public place. Of those, only 122 were sentenced to a period of imprisonment. Yet again under this government actions do not match the rhetoric. There is also a real concern that this bill could unintentionally make criminals of thousands of law-abiding Queenslanders who routinely carry a small folding pocketknife. Under this bill, the definition of category M knives includes folding pocketknives. The majority of people who routinely carry such knives do so as a matter of convenience and the great majority of them do not consider them as weapons and nor do they intend to use them as such. The LNP does not believe it was the intention of this bill to make such knives and their possession illegal.

In my introduction I dealt with some historical elements with regard to this bill, and I want to return to that now. The then Beattie government announced its intention to undertake a comprehensive review of the Weapons Act, including the Weapons Regulation 1996 and the Weapons Categories Regulation 1997. The then police minister, the Hon. Judy Spence, established a Weapons Review Committee and invited public comments. Stakeholders including dealers, shooters associations, firearms collectors and the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties were represented in those deliberations. The Queensland Police Service, as I have already said, established a separate committee to identify any issues impacting on the administration and enforcement of the legislation. I want to acknowledge the work of both committees which was reflected in the Weapons Bill 2010, which was released for further consultation between August and September 2010. Over 2,500 online comments and submissions were received and from these the bill progressed to the two separate legislative stages, the first of which is before parliament now.

I also want to acknowledge the deliberations of the Queensland Police Service committee, whose recommendations largely led to the separation of the bill into its two stages. However, this bill is now a very different document from the draft discussion document that was circulated for comment in 2010. That also means that it is not breaking new policy ground on weapons control but rather it is increasing penalties already available in Queensland, supposedly to bring them in line with national standards. It also means that this bill has not been circulated for discussion because it is a totally different document from the one that was circulated last year.

I now want to read into the record some very important comments from some stakeholders whom I have consulted in the preparation for this legislation being debated. In a written statement to me it has been said that members continually express concerns over matters associated with firearms licensing and recent changes to system procedures within the Weapons Licensing Branch have left many members shaking their heads in disbelief. A new computer system has been introduced which has slowed licensing matters processing to, in some cases, many months. Members are now required to manually complete a form for a permit to acquire—or PTA—whereas with the old system it was computer generated. Delays in the issue of PTAs have extended to months and a prerecorded telephone message was used by Weapons Licensing to advise callers that they should expect delays and not to call. At the police stations the system appears to be driving officers on counter duty crazy with backwards steps in processing that take up valuable time for sworn officers. Matters involving group licences covering firearms held by some of these stakeholder groups have also extended to many months and most recently they have been advised that the statutory report of members meeting compliance requirements for the minimum number of shoots for each firearm category has been suspended for this year. It would not be surprising to find that the new computer system is unable to produce the necessary reports on which this return is based.

When we talk about amendments to the Weapons Act we get caught up in the debate on guns. But what is clear is that knives now are potentially as big a threat to public safety as any gun. The Australian Institute of Criminology reports that knives are the most common weapon used in armed robbery, accounting for 47 per cent. Where the armed robbery was against a business, the use of knives jumped to over 50 per cent. The same report concludes that it is far from clear what actually works with regard to reducing knife carrying and knife offences. The key offences relating to knives in Queensland are contained in section 51 of the Weapons Act 1990, which prohibits possession of a knife in a public place or school without a reasonable excuse. In studying the response here, we should turn to the United Kingdom and its response to knife crime which has, on some reports, reached epidemic proportions under the former Labour government there. The Institute of Criminology wrote—

There has been extensive discussion on and regulation of knives in the United Kingdom in recent years.

The AIC also notes—

The fact that data on illegal knife possession offences are not routinely collected makes it difficult to establish the impact of strategies aimed at deterring young people from carrying such weapons, including searches and detectors, public safety education campaigns and knife amnesties.

The UK House of Commons Home Affairs Committee concluded that its findings ‘convinced us of the need to target knife-carriers and violent offenders separately’. The committee called for increased education in schools and measures to help young people feel safer, as well as the adoption of a long-term violence reduction strategy that focuses on prevention. I agree totally with research out of the Australian Institute of Criminology in its conclusions. Specifically, better data sharing about knife violence at a local level, early intervention with children born into dysfunctional families and a more strategic approach to providing diversionary activities and support for excluded young people were amongst recommendations. Finally, whether or not legislative measures prove to be effective, these should be accompanied by improved data collection, especially by health agencies, and program evaluation as well as public education about the carriage and use of knives.

Researchers have drawn analogies with campaigns for drink driving, speeding, the use of seatbelts and smoking, arguing that the education campaign against a knife culture needs to target young people who might be in the next wave of potential weapon carriers as well as those who currently carry them. This approach is consistent with the observation that community and education based early intervention initiatives across a diverse range of levels and settings offer the most promise in addressing the long-term factors underlying youth weapon carriage. Overall, when it came to stakeholder feedback on this bill, this is what is said—

The ... problem is that these amendments were introduced into Parliament without any consultation or notification to user groups at all. Whilst the Minister says the items are non-contentious, he did not give anyone the opportunity to comment. As above, many of the items are certainly contentious. The consultation last year was on the draft bill, which is a completely different document to this one.

It continues—

The increase in penalties makes no reference whatever to criminal intent and are all aimed specifically at those who are already obeying the law.

Comments from a stakeholder continue—

The fact that the Minister clearly won't allow any comment is a cause for concern. It means that the other changes that were planned but 'shelved' because of the 2,500 submissions may very likely be introduced by stealth—just like this.

Mr Roberts: Member for Surfers Paradise, all of these provisions were in the draft bill that was released.

Mr LANGBROEK: I take the interjection from the minister. As I say, I have had extensive consultation with stakeholders and I am happy to put their comments on the record. Another submission said—

If amendments are to be considered they should be prefixed by three statements:

- what are the changes requested,
- what is the need for the changes,
- what are the justifications for the changes.

They are some of the answers that I have sought from the minister today. They are the sorts of questions that our new committee system is designed to analyse, scrutinise and criticise and it is disappointing that this bill was not referred to the Legal Affairs, Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services Committee instead of the bills that are before that committee, of which I am a member, and they are the property agents and motor dealers and auctioneers bills.

014 May I say that tackling weapons related crime is important in tackling and addressing the undercurrent of fear in our community. It was reported recently that the number of new gun licences issued on the Gold Coast has risen 36 per cent in the past two years—nearly double the increase across Queensland—with one criminologist attributing the rise to fears over home invasions. There are currently more than 155,000 firearm licence holders in Queensland, 14,622 of whom are in the Gold Coast region. In a report from the *Brisbane Times* it was found that the number of new gun licences issued across Queensland increased 19 per cent from 12,818 to 15,260. However, the number of charges laid for the possession of illegal firearms in the Gold Coast region decreased 20 per cent over the same time, from 138 to 110. The latter figure includes charges laid in the newly formed Coomera police district as well as the Gold Coast and Logan.

The respected criminologist Professor Paul Wilson was quoted in that *Brisbane Times* article. The article states—

...the increase in gun licences on the Coast was 'disturbing'.

While 'self protection' is not a valid reason to obtain a firearm licence in Queensland, Professor Wilson suggested residents concerned about the rate of home invasions on the Coast—

and crime overall—

may feel the need to arm themselves.

'I suspect that once you get a feeling that a place is dangerous, then people are more likely to arm themselves,' Professor Wilson said.

'And the analogy would be young people with knives ... the major reason [young people] say they carry knives is for self defence. And I believe the same might well go for guns.'


Professor Wilson said the increase in gun ownership was worrying. He said—

The evidence is fairly clear; the more guns a community has, the more chances there are of crimes.

I think it is important to reinforce that there is no suggestion whatsoever that law-abiding gun owners are in any way contributing to the spike in violent crime in the south-east. I note with disappointment the recent incidents of armed robberies at the Gold Coast. There have been three incidents in the last couple of days.

When it comes to managing the Weapons Act it seems that Labor is more interested in tightening the screws on law-abiding Queenslanders than doing something real about tackling serious crime in Queensland. Gun control laws have addressed issues surrounding gun possession and gun related crime in Australia and in Queensland. However, further changes to these laws and regulations will not address the causes of current gun related crime. The legislation is as restrictive and all-encompassing as it can be before it begins to seriously hamper the law-abiding citizen's ability to register and maintain a gun licence for appropriate purposes. It is not these citizens—those who will reluctantly follow whatever new processes are put in place to register their guns—who should be targeted when reviewing gun control in Queensland; it is those who possess guns illegally through underground or criminal operations who need to be targeted. This means there needs to be a shift in focus, energy and money. The shift needs to be towards increasing police operational capabilities and resources in problem areas. The shift needs to be towards effective punishment of offenders and addressing the social issues that lead to illegal gun use. The doubling of behavioural penalties in the bill for some offences is a small step in the right direction. However, for others there does not seem to be any justification except the desire of this government for more revenue. There needs to be a much greater increase in penalties for violent gun related crimes. Deterrence cannot be achieved by restricting access to guns and weapons. If a person desires to use or possess a weapon there will always be a way. Deterrence needs to focus on the consequences of their decision to possess a weapon and their decision to use it in an illegal way.

Then we as legislators will convince Queenslanders that among our top priorities is the safety and security of our Queensland community.

 **Mr GIBSON** (Gympie—LNP) (11.44 am): I thank the shadow minister for his very in-depth coverage of this bill. Since its introduction in Queensland gun control has been a high-profile political issue. That stems in large part to philosophical differences on gun control between various stakeholder groups and amongst the political parties. Gun control in Australia is not new. Indeed, the book *Guns in Australia* records that in January 1796 David Collins wrote—

... several attempts had been made to ascertain the number of arms in the possession of individuals, as many were feared to be in the hands of those who committed depredations; the crown recalled between two and three hundred stands of arms, but not 50 stands were accounted for.

One can easily be tempted to frame the debate on gun control as simply a question as to whether the government should regulate the ownership and operation of firearms. In this context one might identify two basic positions. There is the laissez faire approach that holds that a government should not interfere in an individual's ability to bear arms. Such a position would frown upon any attempts by a government to regulate one's possession of firearms. In contrast, there is a restrictive approach that holds that a government should tightly regulate the ownership and operation of firearms. In its most extreme form, an advocate of this position may go so far as to suggest a complete prohibition on gun ownership. In practice, however, gun control is rarely ever framed in these extreme terms. Most western countries permit citizens to own and use firearms, be it for sporting activities, recreation, hunting or collection. Nevertheless, governments still impose regulation on the use of firearms. Most gun advocacy groups recognise that some regulation is desirable. Even in the US, for example, the National Rifle Association recognises that some government intervention, such as prohibiting the possession of firearms by certain groups such as convicted criminals, the prohibition of the sale of firearms to juveniles and the requirement for criminal record checks, are necessary. As such, the debate on gun control tends to centre not on the question of whether firearms should be regulated but the sorts of regulations that should be imposed and to what extent.

At this time we have the most recent report released in December last year by the Australian Institute of Criminology, the *Homicide in Australia: 2007-08 National Homicide Monitoring Program annual report*. It shows that on trend—

firearm involvement in homicide remains at an historical low.

The majority of firearms used in homicides in 2007–08 were unregistered and/or unlicensed.

It is in this context of historical lows and data showing that the majority of homicides are with unregistered or unlicensed criminal use of firearms that we see this government introduce the Weapons Amendment Bill 2011. Let us be very clear: this debate is not about the draft Weapons Bill that the government put out for discussion last year. From that bill we clearly understand the policy position of this Labor government regarding gun and weapons control. There was, I am told, an overwhelming objection to the 2010 draft Weapons Bill where I am advised that over 2,500 submissions opposing the bill were presented. Notwithstanding that draft bill and the community objections, this bill has resulted in amendments that are different from what the public were led to believe. The government's own explanatory notes indicate that this bill was introduced into parliament without any consultation or notification to user groups. While the minister says these items are noncontentious he did not give anybody the opportunity to comment. The consultation last year was on a different bill, which is a completely different document from this one. I note the minister's interjection earlier on the shadow minister indicating that the provisions contained in this bill are the same as those in the draft bill from last year, but I would like to highlight some of those inconsistencies to the minister and seek some explanation in his summing-up as to those inconsistencies.

Clause 24 amends section 110, which relates to the responsibilities of a person attending an approved range. This section relates to licensed shooters using approved ranges. Clearly, these people are not criminals. There is no reference even to criminal intent in that section. It is clearly directed at people who are already obeying the law and may make a simple error. We see within the current act that the number of penalty units relating to this section is 20. Within the draft bill put out for consultation last year the number of penalty units for this section was 20. But this clause contains a penalty of 40 penalty units. This clause relates to people who are already obeying the law and may be at risk of offending due to a simple error. I would ask the minister to explain why this government is doubling the penalty units.

015 Clause 25 amends section 115, which requires theatrical ordnance suppliers to be licensed. This clause doubles the penalty for people who are already obeying the law. I note that there was some difference between the current act, which provides a penalty of 60 penalty units and the draft 2010 bill, which proposed a penalty of 100 penalty units. But again, the 2011 bill has increased the penalty to 120 penalty units. I ask the minister to explain why the penalty units have been increased for theatrical ordnance suppliers.

Clause 27 amends section 127 relating to the obligations of security organisations in relation to the possession or use of a weapon. The penalties are doubled for an organisation that is already licensed and complying with the law. Both the draft bill put out last year and the current act provide for

100 penalty units, but again this bill doubles that penalty to 200 penalty units. I cannot believe that the minister can say that he has had consultation when this bill includes such major increases that impact upon security organisations.

Clause 44 inserts new section 68CA, titled 'Prohibition on possession of particular magazines—category B weapons'. Again I ask, where is the reference to criminal intent in this section? What is the problem with large-capacity magazines for licensed shooters who are already obeying the law? I note that the explanatory notes indicate that this amendment is 'to give effect to AMPC resolutions by restricting the possession of detachable magazines'. I ask the minister to explain why the bill does not make reference to detachable magazines. I believe this is a very important issue and may be an oversight in the drafting of the bill, because it can potentially impact on a different range of firearms.

Furthermore, in researching this bill I attempted to obtain a copy of the AMPC resolutions so that I could better understand the intent of the resolutions. I discovered that neither any member of the public nor a member of parliament is permitted to obtain a copy of the AMPC resolutions. I was advised that in order to release resolutions from the ministerial meeting the secretariat is required to write to all police ministers and seek their permission for the release of those resolutions. That would need to be based on a request from the Queensland police minister. I would ask the minister, when relying upon the AMPC resolutions from 2005, why did he not seek permission to release those resolutions so that as legislators we could be better informed as to the provisions of the resolutions?

I note from this clause that the bill allows a registered owner of a category B weapon to possess a magazine with a maximum capacity of more than 10 to 15 rounds if the condition on the holder's licence authorises that. I ask the minister to provide to the House information about the current number of firearm licences that have this condition available to them and on what grounds would it be permissible for an owner to apply for that condition. I have spoken to locals in my area about this matter and they are concerned that, whilst the clause permits the magazine to be held, it may be next to impossible to gain the necessary condition on their firearm licence. There is also concern, which the shadow minister highlighted quite effectively, that because of the failure of the weapons licence management system and the increased delays to obtain a permit to acquire there may be an unnecessary time delay for those individuals who have grounds to obtain a magazine with a capacity of more than 10 to 15 rounds, but that they will be unable to use that magazine until such time as the condition has been processed and placed on their current firearms licence.

Clause 47 amends section 73, which relates to modifying a firearm to make it permanently inoperable. This clause inserts new conditions into a section that is many pages long and relates to making firearms permanently inoperable. In my view, it is nothing more than explaining how to suck an egg. It is entirely unnecessary and completely destroys the very reason for keeping a deactivated firearm. The existing provisions are very detailed and have been perfectly adequate to cover individuals who wish to collect firearms and make them inoperable, but to do so keeping the character of the firearms intact. The minister needs to explain to this House why this new section is so important.

The remainder of the bill brings about some clarifications in the act that should be supported, such as ensuring that a person undertaking the duties of a range officer should be an adult, the restriction on laser pointers, removing the licensing requirements for deactivated monuments and measures to enhance community safety by increasing the penalty for the possession of a knife in a public place or school. Let us be clear: this bill does little to address criminal activities involving firearms and is nothing more than Labor targeting law-abiding gun owners. I fail to see how getting tough on performing arts groups or replica firearms owners does anything to address the issue of illegal firearms used in crimes. I will be opposing those parts of the bill that do nothing more than target law-abiding gun owners.

The LNP has a strong record of supporting law-abiding gun owners such as farmers and sporting shooters. We have long opposed the wasteful and inefficient systems introduced by this government, such as the weapons licensing management system that has seen a cost blowout of \$7.5 million so far and, more importantly, a blowout in the time it takes to obtain a permit to acquire. We must stop targeting law-abiding gun owners and, instead, focus our resources on real criminals. We should not be afraid to look at wasteful and inefficient processes within government that provide no benefit. The current system has proven to be a costly and ineffective way to reduce the number of guns on our streets. I believe that enhancing law enforcement is the way to ensure that we reduce illegal gun usage, particularly gun usage involving gangs. As has been said many times, guns do not kill people; people kill people.

With the money saved by eliminating the current waste, more focus can be spent on cracking down on criminals who use guns instead of insisting on heaping penalties and bureaucracy on farmers, theatrical arts groups and sporting shooters. The choice is clear: only a can-do LNP government can be trusted to protect law-abiding gun owners by eliminating the current wasteful and inefficient processes, whilst dealing with criminals who use unlawful firearms. Labor has already flagged its future plans, should it be reelected. Only a majority LNP government can be counted on to deliver suitable reforms.

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Mr WETTENHALL (Barron River—ALP) (11.58 am): I rise to speak in support of the Weapons Amendment Bill 2011. At the outset I acknowledge the work of the review committee, which has been referred to by other speakers, in identifying these important reforms. Like much of the work of government in this area of legislation, the aim is to strike the right balance between the rights of individuals and the protection of the community. At its core, in my opinion the aims of these amendments strike the right balance. We know that many people in our community—if not most—who are in lawful possession of weapons of various types and categories have those weapons in their possession for a perfectly legitimate purpose. When that is the case, those people have nothing to fear from this legislation.

It is very important to recognise that, notwithstanding the comments made by the member for Surfers Paradise and the member for Gympie, there is a high level of concern in our community about people who may carry weapons for an illegitimate or unlawful purpose. That community concern is very clearly reflected in the statistics, which show that in a great many cases of criminal offences that occurred weapons were involved. In 2009-10 knives were used in the following offences: 36 per cent of all homicides, 22 per cent of all assaults, 23 per cent of all sexual offences, 53 per cent of all robberies and 30 per cent of all offences against the person. So why would there not be a high level of community concern about the use of weapons and the role that they play in the commission of serious criminal offences? That is why I support the increased penalties provided for in these amendments. It is important that we send a very strong message to the community that the carriage and possession of weapons for illegitimate and unlawful purposes is unacceptable and that, through the increase in these penalties, we provide a strong deterrent against the commission of those offences.

As I said, achieving the right balance is a task that we as legislators face in framing legislation such as this. I reject the assertion that has been trotted out today by members opposite in respect of the question of whether it is people or the weapons that do the harm. It is a simplistic assertion to make and it ignores the objectives of these amendments, which are to strike that right balance.

I note that the categories of knives that it is unlawful to possess have been expanded. That reflects what we now understand to be a more widespread use for illegitimate purposes those categories of knives. That is a proper purpose of the bill and it reflects the widespread and thorough consultation that was undertaken in connection with the bill. Of course, the increased penalties, as I have said, will act as a strong deterrent.

It is important to note also that there are provisions in the bill that make it lawful for people to be in possession of certain weapons for legitimate religious purposes. However, that concession does not extend to the possession of such weapons in schools. I think it is quite correct that we take a very strong view of the possession of weapons in schools not only in the policy of the department of education, which is quite clear, but also in the legislation. We certainly do not want students in schools carrying knives.

I want to conclude by mentioning one point. As I understood the remarks of the member for Surfers Paradise, he was suggesting that there was something in the legislation that criminalised or rendered people liable to prosecution when carrying folding pocketknives, as we commonly call them, in consequence of this legislation. I do not think that is a correct statement at all. It has always been the case that possession of that type of knife is lawful if the person has a reasonable excuse. I think it is a misstatement and a misunderstanding of the legislation to make that assertion. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs SCOTT (Woodridge—ALP) (12.04 pm): In rising to speak to the Weapons Amendment Bill 2011, I would first of all like to say how glad I am to live in a country where the ownership or possession of guns and knives is restricted. This amendment bill is part of an ongoing set of changes and represents the first of two stages. The bill deals with the further restriction of weapons, particularly knives and lasers, and also doubles many of the penalties.

While far fewer people possess guns in our community, knives have become far more prevalent and are now used in many criminal offences such as 36 per cent of all homicides, 22 per cent of all assaults, 23 per cent of all sexual offences, 53 per cent of all robberies and, finally, 30 per cent of all offences against a person. In line with the national prohibited weapons agreement, the following knives are now to be recognised as category M weapons: ballistic, butterfly, flick, push, sheath, star, trench and the so-called credit card knife. It will also be an offence to have a concealed knife or sword—the 'James Bond' type—concealed in a walking stick, cane or other apparel and includes anything capable of causing bodily harm. The description does not include a dagger since this would encompass such items as fishing or hunting knives. There is an exemption for a type of knife to be carried for religious purposes. However, they may not be carried on to school premises.

Unfortunately, in Logan City some years ago we saw the tragic result of young people carrying knives and then with tempers raised a life was lost. This incident was an absolute tragedy not only for the family and friends of the young man who lost his life but also for the families of the young men convicted of the crime. Young men who go out with a knife on their person need to consider that they are

not only breaking the law but also, should they get into an altercation causing injury or death, their lives will be affected irretrievably as well as their victim and all connected to both parties.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mrs SCOTT: No, that is true. The use of lasers has now increased and there are legitimate reasons why someone may use a laser, such as in astronomical organisations, and they generally have less than a 20 milliwatt output. However, in recent times we have seen individuals using a high powered laser to shine at traffic and even into the cockpit of aircraft. This can have disastrous outcomes and is clearly either idiotic or evil with malicious intent. This is clearly a criminal offence. These regulations will bring Queensland into line with other state jurisdictions. There are also restrictions on the importation of lasers of a certain strength for any purpose not exempted.

Anyone who is applying for a firearm licence now has to complete a safety course. However, the content of that course is not prescriptive. It will now be a requirement that those conducting such courses must use course components approved by the commissioner.


Wherever you go throughout our country you will see war memorabilia on the walls of RSL clubs, in war memorial parks and on display in public areas. These weapons have been rendered permanently inoperable and there is no requirement for these to be licensed. The bill also makes it clear that a police officer is exempt from prosecution when off duty for possession and storage of a weapon while complying with the directions of the commissioner. There will also now be a requirement for all shooting clubs, both incorporated and unincorporated, to nominate a representative who will be responsible for the conduct of all activities in a clearly safe and diligent manner. There may be events at our shooting clubs involving interstate clubs where an insufficient number of range officers are available. This amendment will allow interstate approved range officers to also officiate, thus ensuring the safety of all involved.

I have smiled at the antics of medieval knights in their armour clashing swords or riding their horses in for a jousting duel and hoped there would be no serious injury and bloodshed on the ground.

Mr Schwarten: I think they're mad myself.

Mrs SCOTT: However, I do believe they are well rehearsed—yes. This sport is growing, as are sports such as paintball and similar war games. This section of our public entertainment and sports are now exempt from licensing, as are serious collectors and those who preserve and study weapons.

Within this amendment bill there are 22 offences where penalties have been increased. With so much at stake and such serious crimes now being committed, particularly using knives, I believe these increases are warranted. However, this bill now clarifies a number of areas which clearly are of no concern. I commend the bill to the House.

017  **Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (12.10 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Weapons Amendment Bill 2011. The stated objective of the bill is to amend the Weapons Act 1990 and relevant regulations to give effect to issues identified through the protracted review of the weapons legislation which commenced all the way back in 2006 and resulted in the exposure draft Weapons Bill 2010 being circulated.

The bill before the House was introduced on 12 May 2011. This bill proposes to do quite a number of things, including increase the penalties for behavioural offences involving weapons; extend the current definition of bladed weapons to accord with national standards; regulate the possession and use of laser pointers with an output greater than one milliwatt; regulate the possession and use of high-capacity magazines for category B firearms; define an approved safety training course and what the Commissioner of Police may consider in approving such a course for the purposes of obtaining a firearms licence; clarify that a person may have physical possession of a knife in a public place, other than a school, for a genuine religious purpose; remove licensing and registration requirements for permanently deactivated public monuments; exempt off-duty members of the Queensland Police Service and special constables required to possess service issued weapons and exhibits; clarify that incorporated shooting clubs must nominate a representative; clarify that range officers cannot be minors; permit range officers from another state or territory to officiate on ranges; introduce additional genuine reasons for the possession of a weapon to include medieval re-enactments, paint pellet sports and for the collection, preservation and study of weapons; allow an exemption from a provision of the act to be revoked if the exemption is breached; adopt the Australian Federal Police Firearm Deactivation Standards; amend the Weapons Categories Regulation 1997 to better define body armour; and amend schedule 2 of the Weapons Regulation 1996 to reflect changes to government service entities and prescribed functions.

From the outset it must be emphasised that many of the proposed changes to the Weapons Act that were canvassed in the exposure draft Weapons Bill 2010 have not found their way into the Weapons Amendment Bill 2011, which is now before the House. The Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services stated in his second reading speech that he has divided the proposed changes to the Weapons Act that were identified during the review process into stages that will be contained in two different bills.

It must be said, however—indeed, it has been acknowledged by the minister—that many of the more controversial proposals that were in the exposure draft appear to be left out of this first bill to be implemented in the second bill that has been foreshadowed. The remaining matters that are contained in this bill, which I have mentioned, by and large have not resulted in a great deal of resistance from the general public or from stakeholder groups. Therefore, as the shadow minister for police, corrective services and emergency services, the member for Surfers Paradise, has already indicated, the LNP will not oppose the bill, although we will be registering concerns about some specific issues.

Before I register some specific concerns that I have, I want to identify some proposed amendments that I welcome and that I think we have waited far too long for to see in a bill in this place. Firstly, I welcome the amendment that proposes to regulate the possession and use of laser pointers with an output greater than one milliwatt. I have observed several sets of circumstances during which the irresponsible use of one of these laser pointers has caused problems for individuals or sometimes groups of individuals. There are a number of legitimate uses for laser pointers, and that is why the amendment proposes to regulate their use rather than prohibit it.

Secondly, I very much welcome the amendment that removes the licensing and registration requirements for permanently deactivated public monuments. This has been a silly, unjustifiable and onerous requirement that has adversely impacted on many communities across Queensland since it was introduced. There have been some really outrageous examples of this ridiculous regulation by government being unduly applied to and interfering with local communities, usually in relation to historical displays in RSL clubs or public memorials dedicated to our defence forces.

I turn now to a concern that I have about the bill. My concern relates not specifically to an amendment that is contained in the bill but to an amendment that ought to be in the bill. It has already been established that this bill has gathered up most of the non-controversial, common-sense amendments that came through the consultation process that occurred during the review of the Weapons Act and the feedback submitted after the release of the exposure draft. I believe it would have become obvious through the review of the Weapons Act and the feedback received during consultation on the exposure draft that there were some unreasonable restrictions being placed on primary producers trying to renew their licences for category C and D class weapons when seeking to retain possession of those weapons for good reason. I think it is unfortunate that the bill before the House does not take the opportunity to address this issue, given that it would have been a common-sense, reasonable amendment that ought not have been seen as controversial.

I have had cause to make representations on behalf of primary producers in my electorate on more than one occasion to question why they have been denied a renewal of their licences for category C and D weapons. In the first example, I objected on behalf of a constituent who was a primary producer in my electorate to him being denied a renewal for his category C and D weapons licence by the Weapons Licensing Branch for the control of feral pigs on his property. I was very surprised indeed that the Weapons Licensing Branch had accepted advice from another state government department that did not accept the reason that my constituent put forward—that the levels of feral pigs in the rural farming area where he farmed warranted the use of a category C or D weapon. I have on many occasions spoken in this parliament about the serious problem of increasing feral pig numbers in North Queensland but acknowledge that that is the case across many areas of the state.

I have spoken on many occasions in this parliament about the failure of the state government agencies to control feral pig numbers on state controlled land such as national parks and state forests. The complete failure to control feral pig numbers on state controlled land has created serious problems for adjacent private property owners, especially farmers, because feral pigs cause such extensive damage to crops—that is a financial loss—and they can cause some serious environmental damage as well. It is a disgrace that the government continues to fail to effectively control feral pig numbers on state controlled land.

I was alarmed not only that state government departments were not adequately addressing feral pig numbers on state controlled land but that they were now interfering with the legitimate efforts of private land owners to control the increasing numbers of feral pigs causing extensive damage to their crops and, indeed, the environment. So I was concerned that the Weapons Licensing Branch was taking advice from state government agencies who themselves were failing completely to meet their own obligations to control feral animals on state controlled land, and now they were ignoring the impact that the growing number of feral pigs was having on adjacent primary producers.

The second example involving another constituent of mine was very similar to the first. Again, the Weapons Licensing Branch would not accept my constituent's proposition that the reason he needed to renew his class C and D weapons licence was that he needed to control feral pigs on his property. Again, it appears that the Weapons Licensing Branch was relying on advice from another state government agency that had absolutely no idea about the reality of the growing numbers of feral pigs in North Queensland.

Category C weapons are semiautomatic. In a rifle they will have a capacity of no more than 10 rounds. In a shotgun they will have a capacity of no more than five rounds. Category D weapons are

self-loading weapons which can have integral or detachable magazines. In a rifle they can have a capacity of more than 10 rounds while in a shotgun they can have a capacity of more than five rounds.

The reason primary producers may have a valid and legitimate reason to retain a licence for a category C or D weapon for the control of feral animals on their property is that not only are the feral pigs growing, they are being observed in larger and larger mobs that have not previously been encountered, hence the need for weapons of these classes to undertake effective control efforts. As a result of feral pigs not being controlled properly, they are also getting bigger. Many feral pigs now being caught weigh several hundred kilograms. Primary producers can often encounter these large mobs of feral pigs, including large feral pigs, in isolated areas of their properties. For safety reasons, as well as for the effective control of feral animals, some primary producers require a category C or D class weapon rather than be confined to a category A or B weapon.

Category A and B weapons are largely limited to single- or double-barrel rifles or shotguns. So I appeal to the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services to at least try to understand the circumstances of a primary producer who encounters a feral pig weighing several hundred kilograms on their property and needs to have available to them a weapon that can effectively and immediately control a feral animal of that size.


Similarly, I appeal to the minister to at least try to understand the circumstances of a primary producer who encounters a mob of feral pigs of up to 15 or 20 or 25 animals and wants to attempt to control those feral animals on their property. In those circumstances, a primary producer needs to have available to them a weapon that can effectively and immediately control that number of feral pigs.

Primary producers are putting forward these reasonable and legitimate propositions to justify the reason they require a category C or D weapon to undertake the control of these types of feral animals. I appeal to the minister to at least try to understand the circumstances of primary producers when they encounter these feral animals on their properties, when they are driving up a headland on a sugarcane farm or moving up rows on a horticultural property and only have a limited opportunity available to them to take measures to control those animals at that time. If those primary producers do not have an effective weapon available to them to control feral animals in those circumstances, the opportunity will be quickly lost as those feral animals will disappear into the cane or disappear into another row on a horticultural farm.

The most frustrating aspect of this matter is that one of the principal reasons primary producers in North Queensland need access to category C and D weapons to control feral animals is that the government agencies are failing to control those feral animals on state controlled land such as national parks and state forests. I appeal to the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services to allow primary producers to try to minimise the financial losses that they suffer from crop damage caused by feral animals because of the failure of state government agencies to control those feral animals on adjacent state controlled land. It is not fair that, because those government agencies are failing to do their jobs and because they do not understand the circumstances facing farmers on their properties, the Weapons Licensing Branch is refusing to renew their licences for category C and D weapons.

Of course, it is not the fault of the Weapons Licensing Branch that this is occurring. The Weapons Licensing Branch is required to seek the advice of those state government agencies in considering licence renewal applications when this reason is submitted by applicants. The government might not think that this is an important issue, but it is an important issue for many primary producers.

The opportunity should have been taken in this bill to provide for a better process to ensure applicants who have a genuine and legitimate reason to retain a category C and D weapon can do so and are not disadvantaged by the failure of state government agencies to do their job properly or even be aware of what is going on in the real world where primary producers face these practical challenges. It would have been wonderful if this reasonable, legitimate reason to improve the process of application by primary producers for category C and D class weapons was taken up in this bill. I believe it would have been a common-sense, straightforward and non-controversial amendment to make.

 **Mrs STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (12.25 pm): I rise to join the debate on the Weapons Amendment Bill 2011, introduced into the House on 12 May by the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services, the honourable member for Nudgee. This bill proposes amendments to the Weapons Act 1990, the Weapons Categories Regulation 1997 and the Weapons Regulation 1996 with minor or consequential amendments to the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989, the Explosive Regulations 2003, the Security Providers Act 1993 and the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994.

The Weapons Amendment Bill 2011 has been introduced following a lengthy review process initiated by the Beattie government in 2006. Not surprisingly, this topic has attracted a high amount of interest from the public, particularly the many recreational shooters across our state. It is worth mentioning that these members of the public generally operate weapons in a correct and disciplined manner. They respect and understand the use of weapons while minimising the danger to others.

The minister mentioned in his second reading speech that over 2,500 online comments and submissions were received in response to the draft consultation legislation circulated by the government from 4 August to 14 September 2010. Having seen a large majority of these submissions come through my office, as many members in this House would relate, there was an overwhelming level of opposition to the proposed changes—changes that were considered to be highly onerous on law-abiding shooters and offering little in the way of increasing public safety as they were purported to do. As a result of the numerous issues arising from the public consultation process, the minister advised that this bill will contain the first stage of the review amendments while the second tranche, to be introduced at a later date, will focus on the more contentious policy issues such as the regulation of imitation weapons.

In what is becoming typical behaviour from this tired, toxic Bligh Labor government, it would appear that yet again it has been forced to back down on its unpopular direction following the backlash from the very vocal gun lobby. As it stands, no-one has any idea what this second tranche of laws will contain or whether or not they will do anything to reduce weapons related crime in Queensland. It will be interesting to see the response from the public when the second stage of the weapons review legislation is introduced through the new parliamentary committee system where open and transparent debate and consultation can take place.

As honourable members have heard from the shadow minister, the honourable member for Surfers Paradise, the LNP will not be opposing this bill. However, we hold strong reservations about the Bligh government's inaction and inability to reign in dangerous crime involving guns and knives. Under Labor's countless years of soft attitude to crime and the introduction of legislation with inadequate sentencing for convicted criminals, crime levels have been permitted to spiral out of the control. According to the minister, the Weapons Amendment Bill 2011 aims to further enhance community safety and sends a strong message of deterrence to would-be offenders. But, I am sorry to say, it fails to address the serious issue of illegal firearms. A large number of clauses would amend existing offence provisions in the Weapons Act and weapons regulation, largely by doubling the maximum penalty for offences. The LNP welcomes moves to combat illegal firearms, but some of these penalty increases contained in this bill are grossly unfair.

As I stated earlier, there was an overwhelming negative response to the draft legislation circulated in 2010. The main cause of public outrage was the proposed increased cost of compliance, licensing and registration for law-abiding licensed shooters as well as the added burden of storage and locking requirements for weapons and, similarly, for replica weapons.

019 Also of concern with the draft proposal was the requirement for members of shooting clubs to have compulsory affiliation with one or more shooters associations in Queensland. Law-abiding shooters expressed their complete outrage at this suggestion and the additional cost to be imposed on them, the inability to police such a requirement and the fact that in no way would it contribute to the overarching objective of increasing community safety.

Provisions in this bill expand the current definition of bladed weapons, including more types of knives under category M weapons, as well as accessories used to conceal knives, in line with national standards. However, as with any legislation introduced by this out-of-touch government, it has to be asked whether it will have any impact on the levels of dangerous activity involving knives or whether this soft-on-crime Bligh government will again fail to deliver legislation with any teeth and the penalties needed to deter these cowardly offenders.

Honourable members would be aware of the spate of armed robberies that plagued the city of the Gold Coast in the first half of this year, many involving knives as the primary weapon. At the height of the epidemic in June, some 82 armed robberies had occurred since the start of the year—an average of one robbery every 1.82 days. A breakdown of figures provided in a recent question on notice asked by my colleague the honourable member for Gaven for the period from 1 January to 12 June shows that nine out of 13 armed robberies reported to the Palm Beach Police Station were hits on retail businesses. Armed robberies can have devastating effects on small businesses and their staff. Businesses in my electorate of Currumbin were not spared from these terrifying ordeals. I can only begin to imagine the intense fear experienced by innocent victims in armed robberies and the ongoing post-attack anxieties, nightmares and insecurities.

I attended the first armed robbery awareness symposium run by the Queensland Police Service in conjunction with the Gold Coast Police District Crime Prevention Unit held in Currumbin in July. Unfortunately, a relatively low turnout really highlighted the dire situation facing our small business sector, many of them micro businesses, with business owners and managers unable to spare the time or the resources to attend and hear vital tips on protecting their own businesses.

A wave of armed robberies that were reported across Australia and beyond had the potential to damage our reputation as a safe tourist destination. The Bligh government sat on its hands while this spate of frightening crimes wreaked havoc through our Gold Coast suburbs, and only when the public pressure and media hounded them did they allocate more police resources. And guess what? The robberies stopped.

A common response in the many submissions received through my office was that gun crimes such as those I have just mentioned are not committed by licensed shooters and, furthermore, the already strict regulations they must comply with make legal shooting a relatively safe sport and pastime. Despite the minister's sentiment in his second reading speech, nowhere in the stated purposes of this bill does it say that gun-toting criminals are the target for these reforms.

One submission from a concerned Queenslanders stated in relation to the draft legislation—
One would believe that it is the people that shoot lawfully that are the criminals in this instance.

He further mocked the government's intentions, stating—

A better course of action may be to ask the criminals to register their firearms and to keep them locked safely away. Surely if this were a successful tactic then gun crime may be reduced.

While tongue in cheek, this comment goes straight to the heart of the issues surrounding this controversial debate. Consider these facts: the number of unregistered firearms in Queensland that came into police possession for 2006, 2007 and 2008 were 3,231, 3202 and 2,727 respectively, yet the number of persons charged with possession of an unregistered firearm in these years was only 760, 634 and 545 respectively. Mike O'Connor commented in the *Courier-Mail* on 6 June 2011—

What the wave of gun-related crime that has swept through the Gold Coast in recent months has made plain, however, is that criminals have absolutely no trouble getting their hands on a firearm.

We have some of the toughest gun ownership laws in the world but the only people they prevent from owning them are those who have no intention of using them to commit crimes.

Mr O'Brien interjected.

Mrs STUCKEY: A number of incidents occurred in my electorate at the height of the crime spree, including an armed hold-up at a corner store—

Mr O'Brien interjected.

Mrs STUCKEY: I would appreciate member not interjecting while I talk about a very traumatic incident in my electorate. A number of incidents occurred in my electorate at the height of the crime spree, including an armed hold-up at a corner store on Galleon Way—

Mr O'Brien interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs STUCKEY: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. There is obviously no sympathy from the member for Cook for the people in my electorate. There was an armed hold-up at a corner store on Galleon Way in Currumbin Waters and an attempted armed robbery at Sticky Buns bakery in Tugun—a well-known, popular local business where the owner and baker literally took matters into his own hands, scaring off the knife-wielding thieves with some much bigger baker's knives of his own. If anyone remembers *Crocodile Dundee*, then they will know what I mean. Whilst the actions of this owner are not recommended, one can hardly blame him for protecting his hard-earned money from cowardly opportunists like these. Then there was the robbery at the Kirra Sports Club, one of the initial eight crimes to be investigated by Task Force Resolve, the special major squad the Bligh government was dragged kicking and screaming to initiate. The government finally yielded to the continuous public pressure from the Gold Coast community who had pleaded for the state government to do their job and step up to the plate to protect our streets.


But where do we see any genuine effort from the Bligh government to support our dedicated police force who face growing dangers as criminals run amok? The shooting death of Detective Senior Constable Damian Leeding finally shook this government into some action. On many occasions during the past 7½ years that I have been a member of the Queensland parliament I have commended our police officers for their bravery and commitment to defeating crime and keeping our community safe. Today is no different, and I once again wish to place on record my appreciation for the incredibly tough work and inhospitable hours they put in to protect us.

I will also take this opportunity to highlight a particular area of concern, the increasing aggression and violence against Queensland ambulance officers while they perform their daily duties of saving lives and caring for those in distress. The Department of Community Safety's own figures reveal assaults on paramedics have climbed from 107 in 2008-09 to 229 in 2010-11. How is it that people in one of Queensland's most trusted professions increasingly have to question their safety each time they enter a scene?

An ambulance spokesperson has advised that, while it has always been the case that ambulance officers use a common-sense, safety-first approach as some scenes have the potential to be dangerous, it has now become increasingly commonplace for ambulance officers to be unable to enter particular scenes or locations without first waiting for Queensland police officers to provide an escort due to persons at these scenes having a previous history of aggression against ambulance and police officers, particularly when they are known to the Queensland Police Service for possession of weapons. These types of people are not limited to adult males. They also include women and children, with some as young as 12 years old, as was the case only recently on the Gold Coast. Delays to access injured or

ill individuals can be extensive, sometimes for hours, which can critically compromise patient care and are potentially fatal in some cases.

Ambulance delays due to potential violence against these officers have previously been reported in the media. In fact, the United Voice, formerly the LHMU, Labor's own union that represents ambulance officers industrially, has for years been calling for tougher penalties against violent offenders who assault Queensland ambulance officers. While there have been some wins for our ambulance officers through self-defence and situational awareness training, to date the constant calls from the LNP and the union movement for tougher penalties against violent offenders seem to have fallen on deaf ears. As honourable members have heard from the shadow minister, the honourable member for Surfers Paradise, the LNP believe the state government should focus on overhauling sections of the Penalties and Sentences Act so that tougher laws are directed at actual criminals. Instead, the government will send the Queensland Weapons Licensing Branch chasing after performing arts groups and replica firearms owners instead of tracking down the thousands of illegal firearms used in crimes.

020  **Mr JOHNSON** (Gregory—LNP) (12.38 pm): In rising to speak to the Weapons Amendment Bill 2011, I do not intend to speak for too long but want to commend the shadow minister, the honourable member for Surfers Paradise, for his very detailed and well-thought-out and scripted speech on behalf of the opposition. This is a very sensitive issue—an issue that touches the minds and hearts of people right across this great state and across this great nation. I was a member of this parliament and a member of the government in 1996 when that awful event happened at Port Arthur in Tasmania. As a result, we have been very cautious of gun laws and legislation in not only our own state but right across the nation. Whilst this legislation is paramount to keeping our community safe from the criminal element, it is also paramount that this legislation recognises that honest, law-abiding citizens do the responsible thing in terms of upholding the law. The member for Surfers Paradise canvassed this issue very well when he spoke of the court and justice system. When people who break the law are apprehended and brought to court, it is then up to the courts to ensure that they face the full brunt of the law because they have violated the rights of citizens in the community and have violated their own rights by not upholding the law that the rest of us uphold.

I am a gun owner and am proud of that fact. I have been brought up with guns and rifles all of my life and they are something that are very precious to me. Like other people who have hobbies and possessions that they take pride in, I am one of those people who take pride in the weapons they possess. Those weapons, I might say, are licensed weapons in a secure venue. My point is that this bill is not about the 150,000-odd legal gun owners who have licences for their weapons which are confined to a secure place in their workplace or their homes; it is about those who do not have licences at all. Contraband is still coming into this country on a daily basis. This is a scourge to our police services and to the security of our communities right across this nation. This is something that the federal authorities have to take more responsibility for in conjunction with the Australian police council and the recommendations that it makes. If we are going to be fair dinkum about unlicensed weapons, we have to be fair dinkum about the surveillance of this type of element that is going under the radar of secure systems.

Many issues have been canvassed today very precisely by the shadow spokesman, so I am not going to go into detail. As a pastoral operator and as someone who works on the land, I need to have the ability to carry a weapon. The member for Hinchinbrook, the shadow minister for agriculture, canvassed the issue very well when he spoke about the eradication of feral pigs and feral animals that cause a great degree of damage to crops and to the flora of this state. With regard to category C weapons and above 10-shot magazines, many people use those magazines in that capacity. I say to the minister and his support staff that this area needs to be given particular attention because a single-shot rifle is virtually useless in the eradication of feral animals, especially pigs. Sometimes there can be 15 or 20 in a lot, and they are prominent everywhere now with the wet season we have just had. They are out of control. A 10-, 15- or 20-shot magazine is very appreciated in that type of environment. This issue is again about law-abiding citizens who are in possession of these weapons. They are law-abiding citizens who use those weapons all of the time. They are licensed operators. I can assure members that this is not about trying to get a concession for people who break the law; it is about trying to get a rightful concession for people who uphold the law for a rightful reason.

The legislation also covers the issue of knives, and I would be very disappointed if everybody did not support the inclusion in the bill of provisions relating to knives, especially given the terrible event that happened at a north side school some months ago. Again, the knife issue is not going to go away. Some religious sects want to be able to carry knives, and I have spoken with the minister's staff about that and got an appreciation of that in that those people cannot carry a knife or a blunted knife as they are supposed to carry as a part of their religious belief or their baptismal vows into a school. I understand that stockmen and others carry a pocketknife on their belts, and I do so myself from time to time, and can do so with a reasonable excuse for having to do so. I trust that the minister will further clarify that issue, and I know that the shadow minister has raised that issue.

Another issue I want to raise relates to the famous tool called the Stanley knife. The Stanley knife is only about six inches long and has a blade that protrudes probably about an inch and a half or so.


Many carpenters and tradespeople use that tool and probably every home handyman kit in kitchens or workshops probably has a Stanley knife. I seek the minister's clarification on that matter, because that is an issue that people will certainly question. I hope that tradespeople are not going to be disadvantaged by not being able to carry one of those tools on their belts or in their kits when they go into public places to carry out their work duties. This is an issue that needs addressing.

I turn now to the issue of licensing and being able to get a licence. People in rural and regional areas do not have access to registered licence processes like people do in major centres along the coast like Brisbane. Recently I tried to get a licence renewed and I had to get somebody in Winton, which is 180 kilometres away, to do the test for me. When I went to do that, that person had gone and no longer resided there and there was no longer a registered processor for licensing. I would say that many people in the regions have had the same experience. I would suggest to the minister that I think the best people qualified to do this are the police themselves. There would be many off-duty police who could do that perhaps for an extra few dollars as a service to the community. That would be well within the guidelines of licensing—that is, the police doing that licensing and not taking it away from private enterprise. Police do driver's licensing in some of those areas. It is important that we recognise the need that that service be made available to those people.

I turn to the issue of security organisations. The explanatory notes refer to a security organisation that allows an employee to possess or have physical possession of a weapon if the organisation is not licensed. This concerns me. I would be very interested if the minister in his summary could make comment on how many of these organisations are not licensed as that is a concerning factor. Some of the people who work within these organisations are just like the element of thuggery that we are trying to eliminate in this state. We have seen that thuggery across the nation where somebody has met their end or has been seriously injured by these people. It never ceases to amaze me to think if these blokes are trained properly and professionally and if they are licensed, but licensed for what? At the end of the day this is a situation that we have to be fair dinkum about. I have seen blokes pull knives, and I saw one happen in a hotel out west when I was a young bloke growing up. Later on in life that bloke who pulled the knife died by a knife. Somebody got him. I have always been told that a person who pulls a knife will use a knife. It is different with a weapon, because most times people are talked out of it. But knives are dangerous objects and this is an issue that we will never get rid of because every household has knives and everybody has access to them, whether it is to cut foodstuffs or to use them for some other reason. This is a situation that is not going to go away. I believe we need to make certain that we do not overregulate and destroy the fabric of our society because of a criminal element. They are the reason we need a police force in this state. If we did not have that criminal element we would not need a police force.

In closing, we do not need any repeats of the Damian Leeding tragedy. I hope that we never have any. I hope that our police can go about their business in a safe way so that we can enjoy an environment where our kids can safely go to school and people can go about their business in rural, regional or large coastal cities. We have heard the member for Currumbin speak about the armed robberies and the crime element that is escalating and exploding on the Gold Coast. I know the great work Assistant Commissioner Paul Wilson and his team are doing to eliminate that element.

Coming back to the licensed operators, you can bet your bottom dollar that most of those armed robberies are carried out by unlicensed thugs. The fair dinkum law-abiding citizens are not the ones breaking the law. With those few words, I support this legislation but hold reservations on a couple of areas and await the minister's summary.

021  **Mr RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (12.51 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to the debate on Weapons Amendment Bill. It is generally accepted that firearm ownership, possession and use should be regulated, not only in Australia but in communities that wish to be safe and that value the safety of the people within them. Accordingly, it is an acceptable proposition to say that firearm ownership, possession and use should be regulated to restrict access to people who should not have access to firearms, to control access to juveniles, to protect vulnerable people and to prioritise community safety. I think that is a fair and reasonable proposition in a community that values the safety of the people who live within it.

This Queensland government has a very proud record of enhancing community safety, a very proud record of contributing to safer communities and of reducing crime. Members might be interested to hear that I am the patron of the Murrumba Pistol Club, which is located in the Caboolture region.

Ms Boyle: I am sure you take it very seriously.

Mr RYAN: I do take that role of patron of the Murrumba Pistol Club very seriously, and I must say that I am very proud to be the patron of an organisation that not only values responsible gun use, possession and ownership but also encourages its members and members of our community to value community safety and to value responsibility in respect of firearm ownership, possession and use. It probably follows that it was appropriate for me to discuss with the members of the club their views in respect of this bill. As I said, I am very proud to be the club's patron. The people from the club that I have met are good people. They enjoy their sport. They are strong advocates for firearm safety. They support

restrictions on access to firearms. Like me, they know that controlling access to firearms and other weapons through administrative restrictions and through possession offence penalties is one way that we can make our communities safer places. I received very positive feedback from the members of the Murrumba Pistol Club about the proposed amendments contained in this bill when I discussed those matters with them.

This bill is about getting the balance right. It is about respecting people's rights, both their right to be a firearm owner where appropriate and their right to live safely in a community where access to firearms is restricted and controlled. Those people who do the right thing, those people who act responsibly, have nothing to fear from this amending legislation. I particularly welcome the changes contained in this amending bill that relate to increasing the penalties for behavioural offences involving weapons, particularly those penalties that relate to the bringing of knives onto school grounds. Whatever we can do to deter people from carrying weapons onto school grounds I think is a positive thing. That particular amendment is very welcomed in my mind.

I also welcome the expansion to the definition of bladed weapons. I welcome the regulation of laser pointers with an output greater than one milliwatt and also the regulation of the possession and use of high-capacity magazines for category B firearms. The other thing that I think is a very important amendment, which has not necessarily been covered too much by previous speakers, is the changes to licensing and registration requirements for permanently deactivated public monuments. In the Caboolture region there are a number of clubs, particularly the RSL clubs, that have faced some financial and administrative burdens in respect of their public monuments that have been deactivated. I am very pleased that that burden on those clubs from a financial and administrative perspective has now been removed by this amending legislation. I am sure that the members of those RSL clubs will also welcome these changes with open arms.

As I said, this legislation is about getting the balance right. It is about keeping our community safe and respecting the rights of individuals. I would like to commend the review committee on its hard work in respect of this amending legislation. I would particularly like to thank the Queensland Police Service for providing me with a briefing on this amending legislation a couple of months ago. I also thank members of the department for their hard work. I would also like to thank all those groups and people who participated in public consultation on this bill. It is important to get people's perspective in respect of amending legislation like this and I am very pleased that people were involved. I commend the bill to the House.


Debate, on motion of Mr Ryan, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 12.57 pm to 2.30 pm.

022

~~PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS~~

~~Currumbin Estuary~~

 ~~Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin - LNP) (2.30 pm): With the annual dredging campaign in Currumbin Creek approaching, a much hyped state government report to investigate risk mitigation options in the dangerous bar has gone largely unnoticed. Dredging is carried out by council, in its limited capacity, for flood mitigation and water quality purposes, as the state government refuses to accept any responsibility for the channel. Until a proper research and development program is undertaken, this will continue to be a temporary fix. For years our community has been crying out for the state government to step up to the plate and provide proper funding to address the worsening situation.~~

~~In May an investigation was announced into the tragic death of a surfer. However, the maritime report was quietly released in June without the usual Labor spin and fanfare. That is no surprise, though, as from reading the report it seems the government has no intention of undertaking any further investigation, stating an inability to manage sand for navigation without adversely affecting surfing. Furthermore, the report states~~

~~... the value of boating activity is relatively small and unlikely to warrant the substantial level of investment that would probably be required.~~


~~Yet on average over 6,400 boats cross the bar each year. That is a significant amount. Labor's stubborn position that the Currumbin bar is not a navigable channel is a cop out given this level of boating activity, which is enough to warrant a volunteer marine rescue operation and a maritime groyne. If anything, the dangers presented by the mixed use of this estuary should be more than enough justification to support further investigations.~~

~~This short sighted Bligh government has neglected the bigger picture. The Gold Coast needs a sand management program along our foreshore, from the border through to the Broadwater. I call on the minister to notify the community of the outcome of this report and whether any or all of the recommendations to leave the situation as is are to be adopted. The Bligh Labor government's failure to address long standing issues with the management of the Currumbin bar is shameful. Sadly, this report~~

~~After three years of hard work, the unveiling of this moving memorial is a fitting monument to the sacrifice of the Australian veterans in the Australian Navy, Army and Air Force who together with 22 nations fought and died as allies under the UN banner. As a result of their sacrifice, South Korea is now a peaceful democracy, a major world power and a significant trade and tourism partner to Queensland. Our veterans are forgotten no more. They are remembered for all time by Queensland's first ever Korean War Memorial which stands so proudly within the grounds of Cascade Gardens close to the memorial recognising the Kokoda campaign.~~

~~On behalf of the organisers, I thank the generous financial contributions from the Queensland and federal governments, the government of the Republic of Korea and the donation of a site by the Gold Coast City Council at Cascade Gardens. It has been a very long labour of love for many people who have worked so hard to see the memorial come to fruition. In particular I would like to thank Mr Joseph Ahn, President of the Australian Korean War Memorial Queensland, Retired Colonel Maurie Pears and liaison officer Mr Richard Hetherington for their determined efforts in never giving up on seeing that our Korean Veterans receive the recognition they deserve. 'They sacrificed yesterday for our tomorrow.' Lest we forget.~~

~~Mental Health Services, Fraser Coast~~

~~ **Mr FOLEY** (Maryborough—Ind) (3.57 pm): I rise to bring to the attention of the House the provision of mental health services on the Fraser Coast. In recent times a significant amount of money has been spent on the Hervey Bay Hospital, which has been necessary to bring its standards up to date.~~

~~Historically, Maryborough Hospital has always had the acute mental health facility. New funding has been announced for 17 acute beds in Maryborough and 18 acute beds in Hervey Bay. I am calling on the health minister today to ensure that those funds actually come to that Maryborough area and keep it as the centre for acute mental health services. There is a number of reasons for that.~~

~~Hervey Bay Hospital is quite land locked and a brand new multi hundred million dollar private hospital is being built literally across the street. As I said, the existing major health facilities are at Maryborough and, therefore, there would be no staff relocation requirements. People in the city are used to driving long distances, but people in the country like to work close to where they have been working. I believe that this would also significantly restore confidence in the Maryborough community that their hospital has a future.~~

~~I call on the federal member, Warren Truss, to support that. I ask that the minister revisit that decision. We have support from the combined chambers of commerce, the council and also the planners and clinicians within the health district. Maryborough is already specialising as a subacute hospital with psychogeriatrics, renal, rehab and medical subacute. Maryborough is the place to centre all of that expenditure.~~

~~**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kilburn): Order! The time for private members' statements has finished.~~


031

WEAPONS AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from p. 2938, on motion of Mr Roberts—

That the bill be now read a second time.

~~ **Hon. KL STRUTHERS** (Algeria—ALP) (Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women) (4.00 pm): I rise to support the Weapons Amendment Bill 2011. This government, the Bligh government, and Labor governments before us have actively supported a very tough stance on weapons, their use and their accessibility in Queensland. We take a very tough stance on violent criminals, and we have some of the toughest penalties in this nation in relation to violent crime and in relation to weapons. I commend the police minister and his colleagues and staff for the good work that they have been doing in this process of strengthening provisions around access to weapons and penalties for misuse of weapons.~~

~~I support this Weapons Amendment Bill because it doubles the penalties for behavioural offences, such as discharging a weapon in a public place, dangerous conduct with a weapon and shortening or modifying a firearm including the altering of its identifying details. These offences will be reclassified from simple offences to indictable offences, and that is a good thing. Additionally, the penalty for possession of a knife in a public place or school increases from 20 units, or six months imprisonment, to 40 units, or one year's imprisonment.~~

~~We need to make it abundantly clear, particularly to young people, that we are not going to cop access to knives and their use in schools. We are not going to tolerate that sort of bullyboy behaviour that we are starting to see creep in to some of our schools. We are not North America. We do not want~~

to go down that path, and we are certainly not. We are taking a very tough stand. I commend the minister for his efforts in this regard.

The bill also contains an amendment to tighten regulations on the possession of high-capacity detachable magazines. The amendment will reduce the overall firepower available on the market and ensure Queensland is consistent with the very strong national standards.


Another amendment relates to the Queensland Police Service and special constables who possess service-issue weapons and exhibits. This is a keen area of interest of mine in relation to domestic violence orders. People who have domestic violence protection orders against them are not able to get access to weapons. Where police and others in their work have had exemptions around some of this in terms of being able to get a licence, this is certainly putting a stop to that. So police will not be able to get a licence to hold a weapon if they have a domestic violence protection order against them. These amendments clarify the position in relation to their access and their ability to get a licence.

Sadly, there have been about 49,000 incidents or occurrences of domestic violence in the last year. We have to take a tough stand on domestic violence. We have to take a tough stand on the use of weapons in relation to domestic violence. I recall stories from women when I was working as a social worker. They would say things to me like, 'He never used that gun, but he would sit at the table and he would clean it in front of me and he would say to me, "If you do not do such and such ..."' I cannot use expletives, but you can imagine what was said. It was very intimidating, harassing and bullyboy behaviour.

Ms Grace: And threatening.

Ms STRUTHERS: It was threatening. So it is important that people who violate their partners and who have domestic violence orders against them do not get access to weapons. That is the position we have held in our domestic violence legislation, our weapons legislation. These amendments tighten up those arrangements in relation to police.

It is important that we continue to take a tough stand. I recall, again in a former life as a social worker at the Domestic Violence Resource Centre at Woolloowin, a knock on the door—it was quite a surprise visit. It was one of the executive members of one of the shooters or rifle associations. He was offering me \$1,000 to stop my campaign on gun laws. That is the sort of intimidation some of these people were using at that time to resist these laws. The Liberal and National parties at the time were resisting strong laws in relation to weapons. I am pleased in general to see that we have more bipartisan support, but they do squirm when we try to toughen up these laws. So I will be pleased to see their support for these weapons amendments.

 **Mr DICKSON** (Buderim—LNP) (4.04 pm): I rise to speak on the Weapons Amendment Bill. In recent years a review into the current weapons legislation was conducted. We are told that this bill seeks to amend the Weapons Act and regulations as a result of key issues identified through the review of that weapons legislation.

I will address a number of issues mentioned within the bill. Firstly, the bill extends the current definition of bladed weapons to accord with national standards. I note that under section 51 of the Weapons Act a knife includes a thing with a sharpened point or blade that is reasonably capable of being held in one or both hands and being used to wound or threaten to wound anyone when held in one or both hands.

Within this bill before the House section 7A is amended, and that section deals with category M weapons and includes any clothing, apparel, adornment, accessory or other thing designed to disguise any weapon or other cutting or piercing instrument capable of causing bodily harm. The section cites the examples of a Bowen knife belt or a credit card knife, which is a sharpened metal object the size, as its name suggests, of a credit card which can be easily carried in a wallet or purse. The bill goes on to encompass other bladed weapons such as flick knives, star knives and even walking sticks or canes that contain a secreted sword blade.

In September 2010 the Queensland Nurses Union provided a submission to the Weapons Act review. In particular, the union's submission noted the changes regarding knives, bladed weapons and offences relating to the possession of them in public places. The union highlighted the situation of nurses in our hospital emergency rooms regularly being called upon to offer treatment to injured individuals who are carrying knives—and often these individuals are intoxicated, under the influence of drugs or both. This is clearly an unacceptable situation.

The bill also restricts the possession and use of a laser pointer with an output greater than one milliwatt to persons with a genuine reasonable excuse. Within the bill, a reasonable excuse is defined in clause 18 and allows members of recognised astronomical organisations, people who have genuine occupational reasons to have possession of a laser pointer, and firearms licensees under certain circumstances which are to do with the power output of the pointer.

All of us on both sides of this House, and I am sure the community, understand that the need for the restrictions pertaining to the possession has arisen over the years as a result of the actions of a

number of deliberately negligent individuals. The actions to which I refer relate generally to these fools shining laser pointers into the cockpits of aircraft and have occurred not only here in Queensland but across most Australian jurisdictions. In that regard I want to highlight one recent incident.

On 29 June this year, a man from New Farm—who must best be described as an ‘irresponsible dope’—pleaded guilty in court to shining a laser at the Channel 9 helicopter on 29 May. A media article described the laser he had used as being ‘high-powered’, and that highlights this bill’s intention to limit the power output of laser pointers in terms of possession and use. The man in question did not point the laser at the helicopter once, twice or even three times. This gold plated idiot pointed the laser at the helicopter at least five times over a half-hour period—yes, five times from his apartment in the city.

Fortunately, a cameraman, having seen the green laser in the cockpit, was able to zoom in with his camera on the offender’s apartment and on a nearby street sign, and the information was passed on to police. The next day police raided the apartment and he was arrested for the laser offence and also a drug offence. I say well done to the pilot and well done to the cameraman and particularly well done to the police.

But—and there always seems to be a but when we start talking about sentencing of criminals in Queensland—under section 26 of the Summary Offences Act in Queensland, the offence of endangering the safe use of a vehicle by directing a beam of light from a laser carries a maximum penalty of two years imprisonment. Similarly, section 58(2) of the Weapons Act carries a sentence of 100 penalty units or two years imprisonment. Guess what the offender’s penalty was for shining a laser at the helicopter on five occasions? Not two years in jail, not one year in jail, not six months in jail, not three months in jail. On this occasion the offender received a measly \$1,000 fine and walked free from the court. How is that for justice, Queensland style?

I find this most ironic as I am just about to speak briefly about increases in the penalties for behavioural offences involving weapons. In line with the national prohibited weapons agreement and the national prohibited weapons list, the bill is in line with other behavioural offences and doubles penalties for offences involving knives.

The amendment of section 58, ‘Dangerous conduct with weapon prohibited generally’, does double the penalty from 100 penalty units or two years imprisonment to 200 penalty units or four years imprisonment. But, as I highlighted earlier in relation to the offender who pointed the laser at the Channel 9 helicopter, the government can double, triple or increase maximum penalties tenfold or as much as they like, but unless the increases in the penalties are supported by the courts they count for nothing. This government does not really care about serious crime. It sits back and lets it happen. It lets it go to the keeper. Perhaps some other people could do with some time in jail.

Mr FOLEY (Maryborough—Ind) (4.10 pm): I rise to participate in this very lively debate. Everyone is getting excited—

Mr Schwarten: Not about you.

Mr FOLEY: We are all getting excited about the member for Rockhampton, but we are not sure whether that is because he is leaving—

Mr Schwarten: He is getting excited about that too.

Mr FOLEY: I rise to participate and make a short contribution to the debate on the Weapons Amendment Bill. Obviously, it makes good sense to restrict the use of lasers. As a private pilot I know full well the perils of young people pointing high-powered lasers at aeroplanes. That can cause a lot of problems. Young people using them in a stupid manner run the risk of causing serious damage to people’s eyesight.

Violence involving knives is a whole other issue. I have raised a number of issues about the knife situation in this parliament over the last couple of years. The statistics show that violent crimes involving knives are nine times that of guns. I have asked the police minister in recent years why is more not being done? With this particular bill more is being done to restrict violence involving knives.

I could not speak too strongly about the fact that the use of guns compared to knives is nowhere near as bad a problem. Anyone who does not realise that has never been out on the streets and seen the alarming number of young people carrying menacing weapons. They are not only carrying them but when someone pulls out a knife they all pull out a knife and then what in the past would have been a good old-fashioned brawl becomes a knife fight. Young people are losing their lives in incredibly horrific numbers. They are not only losing their lives but are being inflicted with significant slashing and stabbing injuries.

I would ask the minister to clarify the issue of Swiss army knives or those things that have pliers and bits and pieces in them. I certainly have a Swiss army knife that carry around with me and I have used it on all sorts of occasions.

Mr Schwarten: Can you open it with one hand?

Mr FOLEY: No, I cannot.

Mr Schwarten: Well, therefore it is not illegal.

Mr FOLEY: There you go. With the knife situation we have to be careful because there are many things that can be sharpened to a point. If a screwdriver is sharpened it is capable of causing just as much damage as a knife. We need to be fairly careful.

I want to move on to the ownership of handguns. I would like to pay tribute to the minister who has listened to my ruminations on this subject many times. He has always leant an open and friendly ear to discuss these issues. I am a target shooter and am a member of the Sporting Shooters Association. I am a handgun owner and I own rifles. I store them within all of the legal requirements.

The number of requirements that one has to comply with to participate in the sport of target shooting is quite onerous. To get a weapons licence one has to undergo very serious checks, which I support 100 per cent, and also a significant amount of training to use and maintain those licences—none more so than a concealable weapons licence. By the time one actually gets to own a firearm to participate in shooting one has done safety courses, been supervised at the range and been subject to very long cooling-off periods.

I would urge the minister to recognise that people who participate in target shooting as a sport are the good guys. They get very frustrated when it seems like the restrictions on them keep increasing whereas bikies and crime lords seem to be able to turn up and buy any old weapon as a throwaway and use it with impunity, with no training and always for illicit purposes. I know that the minister is well aware of the course components that are required to own and operate handguns as a sport. I have spoken to him about those on a number of occasions.

One of the things that I will be raising in future debates is the participation rules. I have spoken to the minister about this as well. In the Fraser Coast sporting shooters we have many elderly people—lots of them on pensions and very limited income—who enjoy going out and doing a bit of target shooting for the day and participating in matches that are scored, judged and supervised by range officers. It is a nine-kilometre drive down a dirt road to get to the shooting complex. Members can imagine that it is quite an expensive exercise. It is not like people can just catch a bus there on the day.

People might shoot in a number of categories of handguns in matches. They might shoot in a centre fire match with one particular gun and then in a rimfire match with another. Under the current legislation they can record only one of those categories on their participation card for the shoot for the day, which is absolute madness when they could go back the next day and use the same two classes of weapons and again only be able to record one. There is no logical basis for that. If people travel to participate in licensed, registered public matches they should be able to record what they have done quite legally and within all the participation rules on their participation card.

I am sure most people would not even realise that sporting shooters who take part in target matches actually record each category that they shoot in on a participation card. That card is handed in at the end of every year to their local chief range officer. It is tallied up to make sure they have complied. If they do not comply or do not do the requisite number of shoots they no longer have a reason to own a handgun. I fully support that. What I am saying is that if these people are regularly shooting they should be able to claim those components.

I will move away from target shooting to the issue for rural people. Feral animals have become a huge problem. The *Fraser Coast Chronicle* today has yet another picture of a stock owner with an animal that has been mauled to death by wild dogs and other predators. The member for Hinchinbrook spoke about feral pigs and the damage they do. Feral pigs are a massive problem in sugarcane areas. They can get in and destroy a crop in no time at all. There are very sensitive environmental issues. The issue is getting bigger.


The destruction of Australia wildlife by feral goats, feral camels, feral pigs and feral cats is absolutely phenomenal. I have said to previous environment ministers that there is a simple solution. There is a whole group of shooters out there who like hunting and will hunt feral animals and feral animals only. In Victoria there is a conservation shooting division. What they do is go out and say, 'We want to shoot, but we will restrict our shooting to killing only feral animals.' They are doing the environment a huge favour by getting rid of feral pigs and feral goats and other things that destroy the Australian wildlife. They are doing the environment a favour and, at the same time, they are participating in an activity that they enjoy. It is a win-win. I think the environment minister in Queensland could support something like that which has not yet been established.

033 People travel to places like Roma and way out west to participate in the shooting of feral animals, but the feral animals are really getting closer and closer to the cities. I live about six kilometres from the post office in Maryborough and we regularly have foxes at our place that get in and kill backyard chickens and so forth, so there is a need to be able to do that.

One of the big problems we have is with state forestry land. When a farm or a property adjoins state forestry land, you could do all the baiting and all the work that you like to keep your property clear of feral animals but those animals are able to shelter and hide in state forestry land and move in and out. We have landowners who are continually losing stock to marauding feral animals and other problems

like that. There is a good case here for allowing sporting shooters to go in and cull the feral animals; that would do everybody a favour.

With those reservations about the sporting shooters and the participation cards and a couple of other things like that, I will support the bill. I am not happy with those couple of things that will need to be changed.

 **Mrs PRATT** (Nanango—Ind) (4.21 pm): I rise to speak to the Weapons Amendment Bill 2011. I am not sure how many people have mentioned this or have thought about it, but it was events in late 1997 and early 1998 that gave me the impetus to come into this parliament when John Howard proposed his infamous, at the time, gun laws. It had people up in arms—left, right and centre.

As a country girl, I grew up with guns; I learnt to shoot a .22 when I was 12 years old. When I was growing up, country girls and boys were very familiar with the use of weapons and we were trained pretty solidly with them. I was even trained later in life, as an adult, with a handgun. That was quite interesting because it was at a time when I was part of One Nation and there were a lot of threats around and I was advised that I should learn to protect myself with a handgun. I did find that I am very proficient with a handgun and my trainer was very pleased with me.

The point is that I do not believe guns are what kill people, hurt people or endanger people; it is the person holding the gun. To combat that, yes, the government has brought in licensing and one thing and another, but the only people who have licences and who endeavour to obey the laws are the people who do not use guns in a criminal fashion—and most people do not. That is not to say that you do not get the odd person who loses all touch with reality and has an incident.

We know that Martin Bryant is a perfect example of someone who lost it, but we could find that in any instance. We heard recently of someone who said he had a bomb in his backpack; he had lost touch with reality. We cannot regulate for that type of activity. Those people threaten others and that is a sad state of affairs. We cannot abolish axes, for instance, when they are used in anger. We cannot abolish most things. I have broaches which are quite substantial and have quite large pins on them. Technically, I should not wear them on a plane under this legislation. I probably should not wear them in public; I should not even wear one in here under this legislation. Maybe I should not even have a pen or a pencil with me. During our self-defence course, we were taught how to use and inflict incredible damage with a pen, a pencil or any sharp object in our hand. The truth is your own hand can be a pretty lethal weapon.

This legislation has caused a lot of angst. As I near the end of my term in parliament, I find that again we are debating weapons and the tightening of the legislation. I feel like I have done a 360 here and have come right back to where I started, and I guess that seems to be an appropriate time to leave. I feel like I have completed my circle and perhaps others should think about that too.

In saying all of that, I now say that this legislation has started to raise a lot of issues for people. In November I received my first correspondence from people in regard to delays in getting their permits processed. We had quite a lengthy spiel because people were saying that they had applied for permits back in October and November and they still had not got them in January, February or March and they were getting concerned. I put a question on notice then, question No. 359, asking how many firearm owners had actually lodged applications and we got an answer back. The people who had asked me the question believed that those who processed the licences were in breach of the Weapons Regulation. The minister replied—

Section 56 states that the minimum waiting period is 28 days; however, under that regulation if the person already holds a firearm or there are exceptional circumstances the Authorised Officer may issue the permit within the 28 day period.

If you then refer to the Weapons Regulation, you see that the minister or his advisers left out something. The Weapons Regulation says—

However, if—

- (a) the applicant already holds a firearm under a licence; or
- (b) an authorised officer is satisfied there are exceptional circumstances;

the period is the remainder of the day on which the applicant lodges the application for the permit.

So there it is in black and white, and that is the bit that the minister or his advisers left out of the answer. People who have weapons are very familiar with the Weapons Regulation because they try to abide by those regulations, but they are also very suspicious when bits and pieces are left out to serve the government's purpose. People are asking why they are having such trouble getting their permits. I have been told that one of the reasons is that the Queensland police installed a new computer program on 1 November 2010 that cost \$6 million. I was also told that the people who apply for the permits are being slugged an extra 126 per cent increase in licence fees to pay for this new computer program. Unfortunately, the computer program is playing up—just like the Health payroll system. This government is not having a lot of fun with computers; things are not going right.

A constituent raised another issue: if the register is not being kept up to date properly, surely the Police Commissioner who is responsible under the act to keep the register is not complying and is

therefore committing an offence. You have to wonder about that—one law for some, another law for others. If the gun sellers are not keeping their registers properly, they are committing an offence. If the people do not keep their guns properly, they are committing an offence.

034 If those responsible for keeping the police register are not keeping it up to date, surely they are committing an offence, too. One has to ask: who is paying the penalty for not keeping these registers correct? That is enough about that part of this legislation.

People are up in arms about the size of the increases in the penalty units. They believe that this is basically a revenue raiser given that there has been no justification for these increases being applied. I and other people have asked, but nobody seems to be able to give an exact reason these great rises are being put in place.

I turn now to the issue of bladed weapons. I note that in the explanatory notes there are exceptions for religious purposes. I was approached by a lady whose religion is classed as Wiccan and their ceremonial knives would technically not be suitable because they are double-edged blades. They use two knives. One is called an arthame and the other has a curved blade and is sharp on one edge. Do these knives technically come under this legislation? Are they going to be approved for use for what they deem to be their religious ceremonies? These are all of the little issues that come into question.

Right here and now I must confess that I have had a laser incident. Roughly two years ago I went to see an astronomer at the Maidenwell Observatory, which is one of the best in the country. In Queensland it is the nearest and the best that one can ever possibly see. If members have not been there, I suggest that they go. The gentleman who runs that, Jim Barclay, does tours of the night sky in which he uses a green laser pointer. A green laser pointer, as members know, has a very strong beam. It is visible from the point of the laser virtually way up into the sky. He marked all of the constellations such as Pisces and Aquarius. He outlined all of these things.

Being a person with a great interest in astronomy and watching the stars, I thought to myself, 'This would be a great thing to get to teach my grandchildren what is in the sky.' I must have had a blonde moment, I guess, because I ordered one online. After a few months or so, I thought to myself, 'Gee, that's taking a long time to come. I better just check whether or not it's arrived and I've missed it.' However, within a week or so I got a letter from Customs saying that I was trying to import an illegal item. Quite honestly, I felt very embarrassed there and then because it just did not occur to me that I was trying to import an illegal weapon.

For years and years I have had, like many people, a red laser pointer. Since my grandchildren were little I have played a game with them at night where we go outside and every now and then they will say, 'Oh, what was that?' and there would be little red lights darting here and there. They thought I had fairies in my garden. That was a very simple activity, and it really has spoilt that childhood game for my grandchildren. I can definitely understand why green laser pointers are banned. I find it abhorrent that anybody would point a laser pointer at an aircraft. As members know, my husband is a pilot. However, I know that we cannot differentiate between people who would not do such a thing and people who would. So it is obvious that we have to put some sort of ban and restriction in place. Therefore, I can totally understand that.

I turn now to the issue of knives. I know an awful lot of people in the roo-shooting trade and other trades who wear a blade on their hip. I do not know a farmer who does not carry a knife or a pocketknife of some description. Admittedly, they do not carry flick-knives or anything like that. However, one farmer I know has only one arm and does in fact carry a flick-knife because he cannot open a pocketknife. He has to get the strings off bales of hay. What do these people do? Do they have to carry scissors? I know that in some of those multiple-tool knives there are little scissors, but they cannot get them out because they only have one hand. So it becomes a difficult situation. Do they apply for an exemption? What do they do? I am not sure how such people will cope on their farms.

I refer to feral animals on farms. Being in a rural area, we see these animals all the time. I note that there was a big to-do about one magpie swooping on people in a little park in an urban area and people wanted it killed, whether that was right or wrong. We have magpies around our place all the time. We make friends with them. They do not attack us. A family just down the road has magpies living near them. They do not attack anyone—not the five young boys or the wife or any woman who goes there, but one particular bird attacks the head of the household, the man, because he is the tallest with black hair. This particular bird hates people with black hair. They are nice animals. They are doing what nature expects them to do. We would not expect to be killed for protecting our own young. The bird that is causing those issues in that urban community just needs to be respected and people need to take appropriate measures to avoid the area or cover their heads in some way, but do not shoot the poor thing for doing what comes naturally!

If people are concerned about one poor magpie doing what nature intended, what do they think about crop growers, cattle graziers and sheep graziers when they lose stock day after day after day because they have been brought down by wild dogs and foxes, or when their crops have been ploughed into the ground from the pigs and decimated because of the roos? We do not protect the locusts and other such animals that wipe out crops. We have to be more realistic. We spray the locusts in huge

swarms and the same should be done for other animals, because we put the water and the grain there for them to eat and they can come in plague proportions. Farmers need to be able to do that, but most of the time animals are not dumb. They are smart and therefore the farmers have a lot of trouble trying to bring the bits and pieces of their weaponry together to get rid of such animals.


There was one instance that I heard about three or four years ago where a woman on a farm had a snake in her house. She got the key and went to the gun cupboard to get the gun and went to the ammo cupboard to get the ammo and shot the snake. She was telling people what had happened. That got back to the local police officer. He came around to her house and said, 'Have you got the key to the gun cupboard? We would like to check your gun cupboard.' She got the key and opened the cupboard for them. However, she was not licensed and she got into trouble. I find that perhaps a little bit over the top on the part of that particular officer, but he had a job to do and he did it. There is no doubt about that.

035 There is no place for knives in schools. Children should not have knives. I do not know how we are going to stop them. Are we going to put metal detectors on the gates? We know that they often have little pocket knives and big pocket knives. I think Crocodile Dundee had a lot to answer for when he said, 'You call that a knife?'

Mrs Cunningham: That was a good movie.


Mrs PRATT: It was a good movie. The kids thought it was a bit of a joke. They would all try to outdo each other. It was not just the kids, it would be the adult men as well. I often saw them doing the same thing. Recently I saw in a bunch of weapons that were confiscated at airports one instrument that was actually plastic. It was a plastic triangular stiletto. Half of it was handle, the other half was blade. It was not picked up on any scanners or anything else. The only reason that it was picked up was because the child said, 'What about the plastic knife, dad?' Everybody said, 'What knife?' He did not have a plastic knife as in a picnic knife, he actually had this stiletto which was confiscated. How do you combat that type of thing? Gun regulation is a huge issue. I do not agree with the massive increases in—

(Time expired)

 **Mrs KIERNAN** (Mount Isa—ALP) (4.41 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to the Weapons Amendment Bill 2011. I want to thank the minister for his time and advice and the detailed explanation that he gave to me when I was asking questions on this bill. I thank him for his time. I also had a number of discussions with police officers and also that terrific group in the Weapons Licensing Branch who are so helpful and always ready to explain and give detail as to any aspect and any question that you ask of them.

This bill covers a number of other areas relating to the capacity of people to possess certain kinds of knives and making it an offence to possess a hand-held laser pointer. I note that other speakers have gone into great detail about laser pointers. There is no doubt that they are incredibly dangerous in the hands of idiots. The bill covers the increasing of penalties for weapons offences which are designed to express community condemnation for offences involving weapons and to send a clear message that the misuse of weapons will not be tolerated. It also ensures tighter regulation of high capacity detachable magazines that are able to be used in pump action, lever action or bolt action centrefire rifles. The bill introduces a consistent approach to training by defining what the commissioner may consider in approving safety training courses under both the Weapons Act and the regulations. The bill will amend section 51 to clarify when a person may physically possess a knife in a public place, other than a school, for a genuine religious purpose.

A significant area of the bill covers the licensing and registration of public monuments. The bill will alleviate the requirement for organisations such as the Returned Services League, which collects and displays items such as artillery in public places, to register each item. The bill reclassifies these items as public monuments. A public monument will be clearly defined as an item within the categories regulation that is permanently incapable of being discharged and permanently and lawfully displayed in a public place for memorial or commemorative purposes. There are many items classified. They are all detailed and spelt out. The requirement for public monuments to be permanently deactivated will not create any additional impost on RSLs or other organisations that collect and display these items. The amendment is intended to reduce the ongoing financial burden on organisations that require and display these items. On that note, I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr O'BRIEN** (Cook—ALP) (4.44 pm): I rise to support the bill that is before the House. I congratulate the minister on the process that has been undertaken in getting to the final bill that we are debating here this afternoon. I know that when the draft exposure bill was released to the public there was a lot of concern amongst some gun holders and gun dealers on how some of the technical aspects of the draft exposure were going to work. To his credit the minister has listened to the community and realised that there is more work that needs to be done on that; more consultation that needs to be done on those particular aspects to improve community safety regarding what are quite sensitive matters in the community, particularly in the rural communities that I represent like Mareeba and Cooktown. I did have a number of people from Mareeba and Cooktown in particular raise concerns with me about the gun storage provision and the participation rules of the draft exposure bill. I think that they will be

pleased that there will be more consultation and more work on those to make sure that we get the policy right and, just as importantly, that we get the balance right as well.

I do not particularly want to dwell on some of the details in the bill. I think everybody who has spoken on the bill so far has agreed that the laws that will pass here today on hand-held, battery-operated laser pointers and the possession of a knife for a genuine religious purpose are worthwhile and will receive the wide ranging support of the House. There was some discussion about the tighter regulation of high-capacity detachable magazines. Certainly, as I said, people in Cooktown and Mareeba raised this issue with me. It comes from a meeting in 2005 between the then Australian Police Ministers' Council which resolved to tighten weapons law to restrict the availability and possession of high-capacity detachable magazines that are able to be used in pump action, lever action or bolt action centrefire rifles. As a minimum standard, the Australian Police Ministers' Council resolved to restrict detachable magazines with a greater than 10-shot capacity for pump and lever action centrefire rifles and detachable magazines with a greater than 15-shot capacity for bolt action centrefire rifles.

The bill gives effect to those resolutions by prohibiting the possession of high-capacity detachable magazines for category B weapons under 68CA—Prohibition on possession of particular magazines, category B weapons—of the Weapons Regulation 1996. Section 68CA will restrict the possession of magazines for pump action or lever action centrefire rifles with a greater than 10-shot capacity and possession of magazines for repeating action rifles with a greater than 15-shot capacity. These amendments are aimed at reducing the overall firepower of weapons on the market. The introduction of this provision will not affect a person's capacity to possess and use high-capacity detachable magazines when the person is licensed to do so.

The legislation makes minor amendments around specific training courses which again I think has received the support of everybody who has taken the time and effort to debate the bill here this afternoon. Finally, I want to talk briefly about the licensing and registration of public monuments. I want to talk about this matter because an RSL in my electorate at Cooktown was caught up in the furore that erupted when it was found that these monuments may not have been lawful.

Mr Cripps: It is a very nice RSL, too.

Mr O'BRIEN: It is a great RSL and I will happily go in there very soon to tell them the good news and have a shandy. The member for Hinchinbrook is welcome to join me there for a shandy when we break the good news to the Cooktown RSL that the bill will alleviate the requirement on organisations such as the Returned Services League, which collect and display items such as artillery in public places, to register each item. The bill reclassifies these items as public monuments. A public monument will be defined as an item mentioned in section 8(1) (a), (c), (i) or (j) of the categories regulation that is permanently incapable of being discharged and permanently and lawfully displayed in a public place for memorial and commemorative purposes.

036 Items that will be classified as public monuments are a machine gun or submachine gun, including a replica of those items—which we have in Cooktown—a firearm capable of firing 50-calibre BMG cartridge ammunition, a rocket launcher, a recoilless rifle, an antitank rifle, a bazooka, a rocket propelled grenade launcher, mortar, artillery and inflammable devices that are not designed for vegetation management. The requirement for public monuments to be permanently deactivated will not create any additional impost on RSLs or other organisations that collect and display those items. The amendment is intended to reduce the ongoing financial burden on organisations that acquire and display these items for public display.

In my time in the Navy, I was a member of the HMAS Nirimba Pistol Club. I am a proud supporter of all pistol and rifle clubs in my electorate. It is a great sport. Many people in my electorate participate in this sport. There are two shooting clubs in Cooktown and one in Mareeba. They are very serious about weapons. They are very serious about weapon safety. They would be very happy with the changes that the minister has put forward today. They would be happy with the final bill currently before the House, which I commend.

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (4.50 pm): Like the honourable member for Woodridge, who spoke earlier today on the Weapons Amendment Bill, I am proud to live in a country such as Australia that has strong laws prohibiting weapons. We all remember the horror of the Port Arthur massacre. I place on record that I think the only decent thing the Prime Minister of the time, John Howard, ever did was to take on board the gun laws and pass legislation through the federal parliament. This parliament also passed similar legislation.

Mr Rickuss: You always have your pistols fully loaded.

Mrs MILLER: I take that interjection. My pistols are always fully loaded, but they are water pistols; they are nothing better than that. I think the worst thing John Howard did was bring in Work Choices and, of course, he suffered because of that. He was thrown out of government and thrown out of his seat.

In relation to these weapons laws, I congratulate John English, the chair of the Weapons Review Committee. I note that his committee included representatives of the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia. There is a sporting shooters club in Ripley. It is a highly honourable group.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mrs MILLER: Honourable member for Lockyer, I think it is in my area. I have been out there on a number of occasions. In fact, the Ripley sporting shooters club received funding from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund. They were appreciative of that funding. I hope they apply for further funding through our government. It would be great if the member for Lockyer could come to the club in my area. I know that we share common boundaries at Ripley.

I congratulate the Queensland Police Service for its review committee. The officers worked very diligently, identifying 440 proposals for change in the legislation. In my electorate the police officers do a tremendous job to keep our community safe and on the straight and narrow. Greg Shaw and his team at Goodna and Geoff Nolan and his team at Springfield are all hardworking, dedicated officers on the front line of community safety. I do not want people with dangerous weapons in our community, nor do I want our hardworking police officers facing crime scenes where there may be shootings, knifings or even worse. Prevention is better than crime scenes, prevention is better than tragedy and prevention measures mean that our community is safer. I place on record the thanks of my community for our hardworking Queensland Police Service officers—for their partnerships with our community organisations, our schools, our churches and our multicultural groups such as our Samoan and Sudanese groups. They are a real part of our community. Their efforts in our community are truly valued.

This bill doubles the penalties for behavioural offences, for example discharging a weapon in a public place. There is an increased maximum penalty from 100 penalty units or two years jail to a maximum penalty of 200 penalty units or four years jail. Of particular concern to me are the knife offences, because knife offences are a real worry. I know that they are a worry in all communities across the state. The explanatory notes to the Weapons Amendment Bill 2011 state—

In 2009/10, knives were used in the following offences where those offences involved the use of a weapon:

- 36% of all homicides;
- 22% of all assaults;
- 23% of all sexual offences;
- 53% of all robberies; and
- 30% of all offences against the person.

Those statistics are horrifying to me and I know they would be horrifying to many law-abiding citizens. That is why we need to take this action.

Clause 32 of the bill facilitates this commitment by amending section 7A, which relates to category M weapons of the Weapons Categories Regulation. It includes the following knives and knife related items, in line with the national prohibited weapons agreement. To be honest, I did not know that there were so many categories of knives. I know the knives that we eat with, but that is about it. The categories are the ballistic knife; the butterfly knife; a flick-knife—I know what a flick-knife is; a push knife; a sheath knife; a star knife; a trench knife; a riding crop that contains, conceals or disguises a knife; a walking stick or cane that contains, conceals or disguises a sword; and any clothing, apparel, accessory or other thing designed to disguise any cutting or piercing instrument capable of causing bodily harm. Many law-abiding people, particularly those in the Bundamba electorate, would be horrified to know that there were—

Mr Lawlor: They've got the whole cutlery set.

Mrs MILLER: Member for Southport, I take that interjection. The people in the Bundamba electorate would not have the whole cutlery set of knives. Most of us in the electorate of Bundamba are, in fact, law-abiding citizens. I should say to the law-abiding members of my community that perhaps they should not go to Southport for their holidays anymore, because they might learn a thing or two about knives from the member's constituents!

This bill increases the penalty for the possession of a knife in a public place or in a school from 20 units or six months jail to 40 units or one year jail. I am very pleased that that will come into place. I am also pleased that there are amendments to remove the requirements to license and register permanently deactivated public monuments. I agree with the member for Cook: I am very sure that Vivienne Stanbury, the president of the Goodna sub-branch of the RSL, and members of that club, Rick Gross, the president of the Redbank RSL sub-branch, and the Bundamba Naval Association, of which I am very happy to be the patron, would support this move.

The Goodna RSL sub-branch is slowly getting back on its feet after the flood, and the services club that operates the RSL club has a close association with it. They had a very good display of RSL memorabilia in the big clubhouse near the station. I very much hope that that club can be rebuilt and opened soon. I understand that plans are well underway to begin the rebuilding of that club. It should be open before February, which would be very good.

I thank the minister for bringing this legislation into the House. I thank the many Queensland Police Service officers who I know spent many months working on this legislation. I thank the ministerial staff, who have done a great job in relation to this legislation. I place on record my thanks to the Queensland Police Commissioner, who does a wonderful job across Queensland, and to those people in our community who respect the police officers in our area, who also do a fantastic job. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mrs Miller, adjourned.