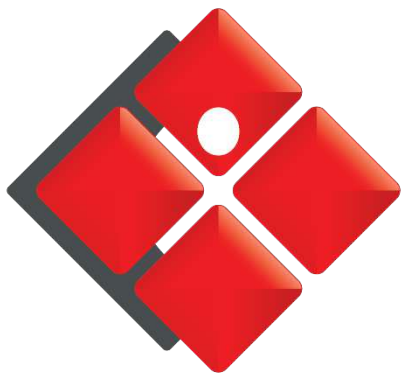


Submission to the

State Development and Regional
Industries Committee

**Summary Offences (Prevention
of Knife Crime) and Other
Legislation Amendment Bill
2023**

18 December 2023



PeakCare
Queensland Inc.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
ABOUT PEAKCARE	3
ABOUT PEAKCARE'S SUBMISSION	3
PEAKCARE'S SUBMISSION	4
CONCLUDING REMARKS	5

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INTRODUCTION

PeakCare Queensland Incorporated (PeakCare) welcomes the opportunity to provide information in response to the Queensland Parliament's State Development and Regional Industries Committee's call for submissions to support consideration of the Summary Offences (Prevention of Knife Crime) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023.

ABOUT PEAKCARE

PeakCare is a not-for-profit peak body for child and family services in Queensland, providing an independent voice representing and promoting matters of interest to the non-government sector.

Across Queensland, PeakCare has more than 50 member organisations which include small, medium and large, local, state-wide and national non-government organisations which provide prevention and early intervention, generic, targeted, and intensive family support to children, young people, adults and families. Member organisations also provide child protection services, foster care, kinship care and residential care services for children and young people and their families who are at risk of entry to, or who are in the statutory child protection system.

A network of registered supporters also subscribe to PeakCare. Supporters include individuals with an interest in child protection and related services, and who are supportive of PeakCare's policy platform around the rights and entitlements of children, young people and their families to safety, wellbeing and equitable access to life opportunities.

ABOUT PEAKCARE'S SUBMISSION

Young people who are supported by Queensland's child and family services sector are particularly vulnerable to being victims of violent crime, including knife crime.¹ In Australia, knife-related crimes, particularly among young people, has been a growing concern. The Queensland Police Service reported a 21 per cent increase in knife crimes over the past financial year and a 33 per cent increase over the past five years, with a significant portion of this increase attributed to young men charged with carrying knives in public. Australian Institute of Criminology statistics indicate that knives were involved in nearly 40 per cent of the nation's murders over the past two decades. The prevalence of knife crimes in public settings, often involving young individuals, underscores the need for effective prevention and intervention strategies.²

Certain groups of young people are more likely to use knives and other weapons. There is a relationship between risk factors such as adverse childhood experiences and poor mental

¹ Bartels, L. (2011), 'Knife crime' in Australia: Incidence, aetiology and responses. Australian Government, Australian Institute of Criminology.

² <https://mypolice.qld.gov.au/news/2021/05/18/new-campaign-to-tackle-youth-knife-crime/>
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-02-26/youth-crime-knife-carrying-police-frustrated-brendan-smith/101959746>

health and involvement with weapon-related crime.³ Given PeakCare's firm position that there is no place for violent criminal acts in our community, we are in support of legislation that aims to reduce the use of weapons in crimes against a person.

PEAKCARE'S SUBMISSION

PeakCare is supportive of the amendments proposed in the Bill, which we believe will be effective in helping to reduce young people's access to knives and other weapons. PeakCare does consider however that prohibiting the sale of knives and other weapons to young people should be complemented by prevention and early intervention strategies to reduce the number of young people carrying controlled items. These include:

1. Consultation with young people in Queensland about the reasons they own or carry knives and the potential impacts of this legislation on their perception of personal safety within the community
2. Viewing the results of the consultation with young people through an exploitation lens and addressing the influence of adults on young people carrying weapons, for example, young people's connection with organised crime networks such as Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs
3. Resourcing the non-government sector to work with young people to develop pro-social strategies to feel safe in the community without carrying a knife
4. Continuing to gather data about the demographics of young people being wanded by police and those found to have been carrying knives on public transport or in safe night precincts under Jack's Law, in order to ensure young people are not being targeted based on any race or cultural identification and to target programs to those most likely to engage in knife crime⁴
5. Exploring evidence-based intervention programs from other locations such as the 'No Knives, Better Lives' (NKBL) program, developed by the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit. This intervention, which targeted young people involved in knife crime, has been linked to an 85 per cent reduction in the number of individuals under 18 convicted of handling an offensive weapon, as well as a wider fall in violent crime⁵

In relation to the amendments allowing a police officer to request to see proof of age if they reasonably suspect a person under the age of 18 has been sold a controlled item, PeakCare is concerned with the implementation of this in relation to young people legally using knives in public. The bill does not include amendments to section 51 of the Weapons Act 1990, which permits people to carry knives in public with a reasonable excuse. Reasonable

³ Haylock et al. (2020). Risk factors associated with knife-crime in United Kingdom among young people aged 10–24 years: a systematic review.

⁴ "Some officers, who were interviewed as part of the review, had 'looked for groups of young people of certain ethnic backgrounds that they believed had been found with edged weapons previously'". [5722T1863-952D.pdf \(parliament.qld.gov.au\)](#)

⁵ Skott, S., & McVie, S. (2019). Reduction in homicide and violence in Scotland is largely explained by fewer gangs and less knife crime. In Applied quantitative methods network research briefing 13. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh.

excuses include carrying a knife on a belt as part of a scout uniform, carrying a knife while fishing, and using a knife to cut food in a restaurant or park. As these are activities young people under the age of 18 are likely to engage in, PeakCare recommends clear guidelines are developed and shared with advocacy bodies about the definition of reasonable suspicion a young person has been sold a controlled item. This will allow the non-government sector to support young people to understand their rights in this area.

PeakCare is of the opinion that the proposed bill does not unreasonably limit human rights.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

While PeakCare commends the Queensland Government on the proposed Bill, we acknowledge that these new laws alone will not be enough to eliminate crime involving knives and other weapons in our communities. It is important that these laws are seen as just one part of a broader strategic approach to understand and address the drivers of youth crime. We believe this Bill is a positive step forward in creating a safer Queensland for everyone, including young people.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on aspects of the Summary Offences (Prevention of Knife Crime) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023.

Yours sincerely,



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