

Media Release



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AFPA WELCOMES NATIONAL APPROACH TO KNIFE AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS LAWS

The Australian Federal Police Association (AFPA) welcomes the proposed legislation announcement outlining knife offences, bail and telecommunication laws made by Leader of the Opposition Peter Dutton during his budget reply address last night (Thursday, 16 May).

During his address, Mr Dutton said that a Coalition Government would work with the states and territories to develop uniform knife laws across all jurisdictions. The AFPA would support and fully endorse this proposal, which would allow the introduction of consistent and uniform knife laws across the country.

“In New South Wales, South Australia, and the ACT, a 16-year-old can purchase a knife, yet in Victoria and Queensland, the legal age is 18. Should we be at ease with the fact that 16-year-olds can walk into a retail store, purchase a 30cm knife and then walk out into the community?”

“Regulatory compliance also needs to be addressed. In the ACT, it’s a requirement of the *Crime Act 1900* that retailers ensure that there is visible signage in-store to advise that it is an offence to sell a knife to a person under the age of 16, with a maximum penalty of five penalty units (\$800). Who is ensuring this regulatory requirement is being adhered to? And an \$800 penalty is a laughably insufficient deterrent for a retail outlet,” Mr Caruana said.

The AFPA also supports Mr Dutton’s suggestion of rolling out “Jack’s Law” across the rest of Australia after it was introduced in Queensland in March 2023. The law allows police officers to use metal-detecting wands to conduct random searches of people for knives at specific locations, usually where people congregate, such as public transport hubs and night precincts.

AFPA President Alex Caruana said that it was only yesterday the Canberra Liberals raised a similar motion in the ACT Legislative Assembly calling for the ACT Government to explore the introduction of “Jack’s Law” in the ACT.

“Laws such as “Jack’s Law” are usually a state and territory matter, but if there is assistance and a willingness from the federal side of politics to make it universal across Australia, then I’m confident it will happen, and we support such a proposal.

“The introduction of legislation like this could potentially be funded by proceeds of crimes seized by the Commonwealth, which the AFP has significantly contributed to over the last few years.

“There are many benefits to allowing police to ‘wand’ people who may be in possession of a knife. From a human rights perspective, a ‘wand’ search isn’t as invasive as a frisk search and would mean that police can search a person quickly and with more dignity.

“From a safety perspective, a ‘wand’ search may reduce the risk of needle stick injuries to first responders. We often hear stories from members who received a needle stick injury while attempting to apprehend an alleged offender. In my opinion, reducing risks for police officers is always a good outcome,” Mr Caruana said.

The AFPA also supports the call for tighter bail laws and new legislation to create the offence of using a mobile phone and computer network to cause an intimate partner or family member to fear for their safety, track them using spyware, or engage in coercive behaviours.

Mr Caruana said that family and domestic violence incidents were on the rise and that every level of government needed to do more to support victims, educate the community, and reform perpetrators.

“We know that people use devices such as mobile telephones and computers to torment and threaten partners or family members in a family or domestic violence situation. We would welcome and support Commonwealth laws that specifically target these offences, including stricter bail laws.

“Bail was once a privilege, but now it seems that you can practically commit any offence, and you’ll have a presumption for being bailed. Bail is an incredibly important aspect of judicial processes and overall human rights considerations, but it needs to be balanced so that the rights of the victim and community are balanced equally and fairly against the rights of the alleged offender,” Mr Caruana said.

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