

Consultation on Police Offences Amendment (Knives and Other Weapons) Bill 2025 February 2025

Executive Summary

The Australian Retailers Association (ARA) welcomes the opportunity to provide input on the proposed *Police Offences Amendment (Knives and Other Weapons) Bill 2025*.

The ARA is the oldest, largest, and most diverse national retail body, representing a \$430 billion sector that employs 1.4 million Australians – making retail the largest private sector employer in the country. As Australia's peak retail body, representing more than 120,000 retail shop fronts and online stores, the ARA informs, advocates, educates, protects, and unifies our independent, national, and international retail community. We represent the full spectrum of Australian retail, from our largest national and international retailers to our small and medium-sized members, who make up 95% of our membership. Our members operate in all states and across all categories - from food to fashion, hairdressing to hardware, and everything in between.

We strongly support the proposed amendments as an important step toward enhancing public safety and reducing knife-related crime in Tasmania. In addition, the ARA advocates for further measures to address gaps in current legislation, particularly in the regulation of knife sales, and recommends the inclusion of retail precincts as designated areas for enhanced enforcement. We urge Tasmania to adopt best-practice knife sale regulations from other jurisdictions, with the inclusion of an 18+ age requirement, prescribed signage obligations, restricted advertising, secure storage, and staff training. Our submission outlines these recommendations in detail and highlights the importance of collaboration between government, police, and retailers to achieve shared safety objectives.

Introduction

The Australian Retailers Association is the leading industry body representing retailers in Tasmania and across Australia. Our members include major retailers, small businesses, and independent operators who collectively employ thousands of Tasmanians and contribute significantly to the state's economy.

Retail precincts are key public spaces that attract large volumes of people daily. The ARA supports measures to ensure these spaces remain safe for customers, employees, and the broader community. Knife-related crime poses a significant threat to public safety, and we commend the Tasmanian Government for its proactive approach through this Bill.

Support for the Proposed Amendments

The ARA strongly supports the core provisions of the Bill, which include:

Increased penalties for unlawful possession of knives: Raising fines to 100 penalty units and imprisonment to up to three years reflects the serious nature of knife-related crime and serves as a strong deterrent. Evidence from Queensland's *Jack's Law* demonstrates the effectiveness of such penalties, with over 1,000 weapons, including knives, axes, and machetes, seized from Queensland streets. This enforcement action has resulted in more than 2,100 individuals being charged with nearly 3,800 offences across over 8,000 wandering operations ([source: mypolice.qld.gov.au](https://www.mypolice.qld.gov.au)).

Warrantless metal detection searches: Enabling police to conduct searches using electronic metal detection devices in prescribed areas provides an effective tool for preventing knife-related offences in public spaces.

Designation of prescribed areas: Establishing areas where enhanced police powers can be exercised will increase the effectiveness of these measures in high-risk locations.

Recommendations for Further Action

While the ARA supports the proposed amendments, we believe further action is necessary to comprehensively address knife-related risks. Our recommendations include:

3.1 Inclusion of Retail Areas as Designated Areas

Retail precincts are high-traffic environments where knife-related incidents pose a significant risk. The ARA recommends:

- Explicitly including retail precincts and shopping centres in the list of prescribed areas where warrantless searches can be conducted.
- Prioritising these locations in regulations to maximise the preventative impact of the legislation.
- Designating retail areas will not only protect customers and employees but also act as a deterrent to carrying knives in these busy spaces.

3.2 Regulation of Knife Sales

Tasmania currently lacks specific legislation governing the sale of knives, creating a regulatory gap compared to other Australian states. The ARA recommends adopting best practice knife sale regulations from other jurisdictions, which include the following specific measures:

Age Restriction: Prohibit the sale of knives to anyone under the age of 18, without exception. Businesses must verify age through acceptable identification (e.g., driver's licence, passport).

Signage Requirements: The Department should provide prescribed prohibition signs, allowing retailers to display them at point-of-sale or display areas. Digital signs (e.g., self-serve checkout prompts) should be permitted. This requirement should also apply to online vendors, including direct and marketplace sellers (e.g., Gumtree, Facebook Marketplace).

Advertising Restrictions: Prohibit advertising that promotes knives as suitable for combat or violence. This includes banning terms like "zombie knife" or any language that glorifies their use in threatening contexts. This should also extend to advertising restrictions to online direct and marketplace platforms.

Secure Storage: Retailers are required to implement appropriate measures to prevent unauthorised access to high-risk knives, such as storing them in restricted areas or requiring staff assistance for access. A tiered system should be considered, accepting packaging as secure storage for lower-risk items.

3.3 Collaboration with Retailers

The success of these measures depends on close collaboration between the government, police, and the retail sector. The ARA recommends:

Adequate Time for Implementation: A minimum of 6 months should be allowed to operationalise policy reforms.

Sector-Wide Responses: Avoid distinguishing between large and small businesses to prevent unintended transference of compliance burdens.

Clear Legislation: Ensure clarity to minimise confusion in implementation and compliance checks by police in the future.

Evidence of Compliance: Clarify what evidence is required for correct compliance checks.

Mandatory Acknowledgement: Require team members to acknowledge they understand legislative changes.

Clear Knife Definition: Explicitly exempt dull, blunt, rounded, and cased blades (e.g., standard razor blades, butter knives, plastic/wooden utensils).

Designated Contact: Provide a Business Liaison Officer within the department to support business transitions.

Avoid Peak Periods: Implementing legislation during peak retail times (e.g., Christmas) could lead to confusion, delays, and increased aggression against team members.

Public Awareness Campaign: Couple any change with a public awareness campaign to inform the community of changes at the time they come into force.

Conclusion

The ARA supports the *Police Offences Amendment (Knives and Other Weapons) Bill 2025* as a significant step toward addressing knife-related crime in Tasmania. We encourage the Tasmanian Government to build on this foundation by introducing specific legislation regulating the sale of knives, using best-practice models from other jurisdictions, and ensuring retail precincts are included as designated areas under the new laws.

We remain committed to working closely with the government and other stakeholders to implement these measures effectively and ensure safer communities for all Tasmanians.