Submission regarding proposed Police Offences Amendment (Knives and prohibited weapons) Bill 2026

To Submissions at Strategy and Support

Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management

As a concerned resident of the state of Tasmania, I feel it is my duty to oppose this amendment for reasons I will attempt to convey below.

Ineffective control:

As stated in the information sheet the primary purpose of these amendments is to reduce knife-related harm and strengthening regulatory controls around the sale, supply and possession of knives and prohibited weapons.

This first stated purpose 'reduce knife related harm' though noble as a concept, is in no way effectively improved by this proposal. The means by which this change intends to reduce knife related harm is to reduce the availability of knives by making them less convenient to purchase by people under the age of 18.

Knives are incredibly abundant in our society, and for good reason, they are useful, cheap and easy to make.

To suggest the idea that a juvenile human being would be less able to obtain a knife purely by making them inconvenient to purchase does not stand up to scrutiny. I would argue that it would be trivial for any human being over the age of 5 to obtain a knife without buying one if they so desired. I would also argue that most teenagers would be able to make some form of knife or bladed weapon without having to go the trouble of buying one.

I find it hard to be convinced that this legislation will have any effect in reducing the occurrence of knife related harm. In terms of reducing the availability of knives, this amendment will achieve at best a mild inconvenience for target young criminals.

Legitimate uses by youth:

It is an unreasonable idea to suggest that there are a limited and well-defined set of

genuine reasons for a young person to purchase a knife, particularly in the context of young people living out their normal day to day life in the state of Tasmania. The suggested 'genuine reason' provisions overlook completely normal reasons for people, including those under the 18 to purchase, own and carry knives.

Some simple examples:

From 12 years of age a child can obtain a PADI junior open water diver certificate. Carrying a dive knife is an essential part of their safety equipment in case of emergency, e.g. entanglement in fishing line. Similar considerations should be given to free diving or snorkelling which is a far more accessible and popular pastime. It is not unreasonable for someone under the age of 18 to partake in this sport unsupervised by their parents. However they will not be allowed to purchase the required safety equipment.

Kayaking and rock climbing are very popular youth sports in this state. Both sports typically include some form of safety knife for emergency rescue situations.
A person under the age of 18 can independently buy all their kit for these activities except for a safety/rescue knife. There is no legal requirement for anyone to be supervised or under instruction to participate in these sports, but there will be a legal restriction on anyone under the age of 18 being able to purchase the equipment to participate safely.

It is likely that the crimination of purchasing knives by youth will result in dangerous and potentially fatal situations where a rescue knife should have been carried, but wasn't for fear of legal consequences.

It is not unusual in Tasmania for teenagers to live away from home and family when attending college and university. They will have no legal avenue under this amendment to purchase the knives they require to live independently. It is unreasonable that someone can be trusted to live independently, can legally rent a house, but cannot purchase a set of knives for use in that home.

Economic Impacts

This proposal also builds in a significant economic impact that will be an ongoing financial penalty for both the business and residents of this state. It is my assertion that the second stated aim of this amendment 'strengthening regulatory controls around the sale, supply and possession of knives' has far more negative consequences than the inconveniences applied to those under the age of 18.

The complex requirements for gathering, verifying and storing the documentation under

the genuine reason clause are burdensome enough that very few retailers would have the financial benefits of sales to under 18s to justify the expense.
This will have the effect of narrowing competition in the retail market, to the benefit of a small number of large players.

As an example, it is less likely that low margin retailers such as second hand shops / market stalls would have the capacity to implement effective systems for compliance with the genuine reason requirements under section 34F.(4) . As such the most affordable retailers of tools for the targets of the 'genuine reason' clause - students, apprentices etc, will be largely unwilling to sell them any product. Small specialist and independent retailers will struggle to implement suitable record keeping systems to be compliant with 34F.

Section 34I will impose unnecessary costs for all businesses that sell any form of knife. These businesses will need to purchase, maintain and display mandatory signage throughout their stores, websites will need to be redeveloped, advertising reworked. These are all ongoing costs that will need to be borne by a significant cross section of retailers across the state.

Section 34J imposes even more expense and regulatory burden across almost all retailers. Large retailers of the likes of woolworths and coles likely already have implemented systems for compliance, however small retailers will not. Again, it is likely that many small local retailers will judge that the cost of compliance with this regulation is prohibitive of them providing the service of selling knives. It would be my expectation that many small corner stores, charity shops, tip shops, market stall holders etc will simply stop selling knives.

Tasmania is famous for its artisan stall markets spread across the state. Many of these stalls sell some version of a knife product, fancy cheese knives with matching huon pine cheese boards, whittling knives etc. Is this trade something we want to bury under regulatory burden to mildly inconvenience youth criminals?

No definition of machete

There is no clear definition of a machete in this amendment, a broad range of similar and equally useful and common tools could be interpreted as a machete,
An enforcement officer may consider a brush hook, parang, hori hori, combination bush saw, sickle, bushcraft axe or hatchet to be a machete, or similar enough to be a machete and apply the relevant penalties to innocent people.

All of the tools listed above are somewhat variations on the design and use of a machete, they are bladed tools for cutting. All with completely legitimate uses and relatively common.

Legitimate uses of machetes

Prescribing machetes as a prohibited weapon unfairly impacts their many legitimate users.

Machetes are gardening and agricultural tools that are useful, affordable, easy to use, low maintenance and very common both in Australia and globally.
Machetes are not designed to be weapons.
Machetes are excellent for slashing undergrowth, vines and bushes.

I am not an agricultural professional. I will have no provided exemption under this amendment.

I have used a machete multiple times recently, for the purpose for which a machete is designed, and the purpose for which I purchased it.

Myself and others have volunteered performing track maintenance in mount field national park. The machete was an excellent, lightweight, quiet and efficient tool for clearing undergrowth from boardwalks and hiking trails within the national park. This was done under the supervision of park rangers as part of co-ordinated volunteer activities. At no point was any human harmed in this activity. We could clear scoparia and cutting grass from trails in a single swing instead of painstakingly cutting each frond and stick with secateurs.

Though we are volunteers doing work for free to help maintain state assets, this amendment would views us as criminals that deserve a $20k fine and or 3 years in prison.

I regularly use a machete to trim dense bushes in my suburban yard, it makes almost no noise. The likely alternative would be to use an electric or petrol hedge trimmer, which I would need to buy and maintain, produces awful noise pollution in my suburban neighbourhood.
I would consider it being a polite neighbour, using a quiet tool in my yard, I have never had a complaint from anyone using my machete. I would argue that I am far less likely to cause harm using my machete in my garden than I am with a hedge trimmer.

I have used a machete while hiking established trails within wilderness areas of Tasmania. I have been recommended by professional tourism operators to take a machete on some trails, while being advised that the tourism operators themselves use machete's to perform track maintenance. Tourism operators are not agricultural professionals. Under this law, they would need to revert to using secateurs and saws to slowly clear tracks at significant expense to their employers.

I have used a machete while volunteering with the Derwent catchment project under the supervision of professional arborists. I have been volunteering in the rehabilitation of the Tyenna river removing willow trees. Blackberries and willows are great friends, having a cutting tool long enough that the operator can cut blackberry vines without being repeatedly stabbed with thorns is essential. Having a tool that is not destroyed if it is accidentally dropped in a river and never runs out of fuel or batteries is also very helpful. The volunteers, and the professional arborists involved in that project are provided no exemption in this legislation under section 14F.(2) as none of us fall within the narrow bounds of the definition of an agricultural professional.

I apologise for labouring the point here. I'm just attempting to make it clear that I as one individual, that lives in suburban Hobart have multiple valid, safe, reasons to use this specifically targeted tool. I also have had several interactions with other professionals and volunteers using the same tool both recreationally and professionally.

I am certain that there would be a significantly larger population of Tasmanians that would be penalised by the banning of this tool than the number of criminals that would be mildly inconvenienced by having to select a different weapon.

Summary

If implemented this proposal will be expensive, unfairly restrictive and have widespread negative impacts within our community. No evidence has been presented that these controls will be in any way effective at achieving their stated goals.

Thanks for your time and consideration.

Peter Higgins