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10 Jul 26

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Subject: Submission on the Police Offences Amendment (Knives and Prohibited Weapons) Bill 2026

Introduction. The Launceston RSL Sub-Branch welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the proposed *Police Offences Amendment (Knives and Prohibited Weapons) Bill 2026*.

The intent of the proposed legislation to improve public safety and reduce criminal misuse of knives and prohibited weapons is understood and supported. The Launceston RSL Sub-Branch recognises the importance of measures designed to address violent offending and the unlawful possession of dangerous weapons within the community.

However, we are concerned that the Bill, as currently drafted, may create significant unintended consequences for museums, historical collections, military heritage organisations and private collectors throughout Tasmania. Without clear exemptions and protections, the legislation risks adversely affecting the preservation and display of Tasmania's military heritage while doing little to address the criminal behaviour that the legislation seeks to prevent. As we have seen in the State of Victoria.

The 100 Stories Museum. The Launceston RSL Sub-Branch is the oldest RSL Sub-Branch in Australia and is home to the 100 Stories Museum, a small but highly regarded military museum located within the Launceston RSL Club.

Between December 2019 and November 2023, the museum underwent a comprehensive redevelopment supported through grants, sponsorship and community donations. This work included the complete cataloguing, conservation and redesign of the collection and display areas.

Today the museum is recognised by Arts Tasmania as one of the finest small museums in the State and serves as an important educational and commemorative facility for veterans, schools, community groups and the wider public.

The museum contains a diverse collection of military artefacts representing all three services of the Australian Defence Force and spanning more than a century of military history.

Among the collection are:

- Military swords from various nations and periods.
- Japanese officer's swords from the World War II.
- Bayonets from the colonial period, both World Wars and later modern conflicts.
- Machetes and long-bladed military tools.
- Military fighting knives and utility knives.

Many of these items are displayed specifically to interpret the history of Australian military service and to educate visitors regarding the equipment carried and used by service personnel throughout history.

These items are not weapons in the context of criminal activity. They are historical artefacts preserved for educational, commemorative and cultural purposes.

Concerns Regarding the Bill. The primary concern of the Launceston RSL Sub-Branch is that the proposed legislation may unintentionally classify numerous historical artefacts as prohibited weapons without providing adequate exemptions for museums and heritage collections. Military museums throughout Tasmania contain substantial collections of:

- Bayonets.
- Military fighting knives.
- Trench knives.
- Machetes.
- Ceremonial swords.
- Samurai swords.
- Long-bladed military tools and edged weapons.

These items are commonly found in museums because they form an important part of military history. Many artefacts were brought home by Australian servicemen as war trophies or were retained as examples of military equipment used during campaigns and conflicts.

If possession, acquisition, transportation, conservation or display of these items becomes subject to additional restrictions, permits or prohibitions, museums may face significant administrative burdens and costs. Smaller volunteer-run museums like mine could be particularly affected.

Impact on Tasmania's Military Heritage. Tasmania has a proud military history and numerous museums, RSL collections, historical societies and memorial organisations work tirelessly to preserve this heritage for future generations. The preservation of military artefacts is not undertaken for recreational purposes or personal gain. It is undertaken to educate the public and honour the service and sacrifice of Australian veterans.

Many museum collections have been built over decades through donations from veterans and their families. In many cases these artefacts are the only surviving physical connection to an

individual's military service. The unintended consequence of the Bill could be that museums and collectors are discouraged from preserving these items or accepting future donations.

This would represent a significant loss to Tasmania's historical record.

Impact on Private Collectors. The Bill may also adversely affect responsible collectors of military memorabilia throughout Tasmania. Many private collections contain historical swords, bayonets and military knives that have been legally owned for decades. These collections frequently support museums through loans, donations and research assistance.

Collectors play an important role in preserving military heritage and often act as custodians of artefacts that would otherwise be lost.

Legislation that unintentionally criminalises the possession of historically significant items may discourage the preservation of these artefacts and reduce opportunities for future donation to public collections.

Existing Security and Regulatory Controls. The Launceston RSL 100 Stories Museum already operates under strict security arrangements. The museum's firearms collection is managed under a Museum Firearms Licence and has previously been recognised by Firearms Tasmania as meeting a gold standard of display and security. Display items are housed within secure cabinets and purpose-built displays located within the RSL premises.

The museum operates solely for historical, educational and commemorative purposes.
There is no evidence that museum collections such as ours present a public safety risk. Accordingly, additional restrictions on historical artefacts held by museums would provide little if any measurable community safety benefit.

Recommendations. The Launceston RSL Sub-Branch respectfully recommends that the Tasmanian Government amend the Bill to include specific exemptions for:

- Accredited museums and recognised historical collections.
- RSL museums and veteran heritage organisations.
- Historical societies and community museums.
- Educational institutions holding historical collections.
- Private collectors possessing historical, military or heritage artefacts for legitimate collecting purposes.

We further recommend that the legislation clearly define and exempt:

- Historical artefacts.
- Military memorabilia.
- Deactivated or permanently displayed edged weapons.
- Ceremonial swords and bayonets.
- Collectable military equipment held for historical purposes.

Finally, we recommend that the Government undertake direct consultation with Tasmania's museum sector, veteran organisations, historical societies and collector groups before finalising the legislation.

Conclusion. The Launceston RSL Sub-Branch supports measures designed to reduce violent crime and improve public safety. However, legislation should be carefully drafted to ensure that it targets criminal behaviour without inadvertently affecting museums, historical organisations and responsible collectors who are preserving Tasmania's military heritage.

The 100 Stories Museum exists to educate, commemorate and preserve the stories of Tasmanian servicemen and women. The military artefacts displayed within our collection are historical objects that help tell those stories and connect present and future generations with the service and sacrifice of those who came before them.

We respectfully ask that the Tasmanian Government ensure that the Police Offences Amendment (Knives and Prohibited Weapons) Bill 2026 contains appropriate exemptions and safeguards to protect Tasmania's military museums, heritage organisations and collectors from unintended consequences.

Regards

Peter Williams

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