AFPA

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ACT Knife Retail Safety and Violence Prevention Package

Submission by the Australian Federal Police Association
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Australian Federal Police Association (AFPA) proposes a targeted package of amendments to the ACT's knife retail laws to reduce avoidable access to bladed weapons, particularly by children and opportunistic offenders.

This proposal is deliberately limited to matters where the Territory can make a practical regulatory difference: the sale, display, storage, online supply and commercial marketing of knives, together with clear obligations for sellers and an effective inspection regime. The AFPA does not suggest that tighter retail controls will, on their own, prevent youth offending or eliminate knife violence. They are one achievable component of a wider community safety response, and should not create another routine compliance task for ACT Policing.

The need for a measured response is evident from recent incidents and policing data. ACT Policing reported a stabbing at Lanyon High School on 22 October 2026 and two alleged stabbings in the Lake Tuggeranong College car park on 2 November 2026.

Police also reported confrontations involving young people and knives at Canberra shopping centres earlier in 2026.

In 2024–25, ACT Policing seized 471 knives and charged 90 people with possessing a knife without reasonable excuse, including 23 people under 18. These figures demonstrate an operational concern, but should not be misrepresented as proof that all violent offending or knife offending is increasing. Indeed, several broader ACT assault indicators fell in the latest reporting periods.[1]

The AFPA has repeatedly warned that the ACT is not immune from the patterns of weapon-related youth violence seen in other jurisdictions. The Territory should learn from the regulatory approaches adopted in Queensland, Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia without assuming that every measure will be appropriate or effective locally.

Current sections 383 and 384 of the Crimes Act 1900 principally establish an under-16 sale prohibition and retail signage duties. They do not create a general secure-display requirement for ordinary sharp knives or a tailored statutory framework for online supply and routine retailer compliance.

A 2025 Legislative Assembly response reported no charges under those provisions over the period reviewed and no specific ACT retailer guidance on machetes or similar products. This does not establish widespread retailer non-compliance, but it contributes to an opportunity to modernise both the duties and their administration.[2]

The first seven recommendations are proportionate and operationally realistic.

They would raise the general commercial purchasing age to 18 with a narrow work or training pathway for eligible 16–17-year-olds; establish reasonable age-verification duties; require secure storage or tethering of prescribed knives; improve safeguards for online orders and deliveries; update signage, staff instructions and violent marketing controls; review the retail treatment of machetes and comparable high-risk bladed products; and place ordinary business education and inspections with a properly authorised and funded Access Canberra regulator.

Legitimate household, trade, agricultural, sporting and educational uses must remain protected through careful product definitions and exemptions.

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1 ACT Policing, Teenager charged after allegedly stabbing student at school, 23 October 2026. Official source
ACT Policing, Witnesses sought to Tuggeranong stabbing incident, 2 November 2026. Official source;
ACT Policing, Teenagers charged following armed confrontations at shopping centres, 3 April 2026. Official source;
ACT Policing, Two teenagers arrested following city disturbance involving knives
5 April 2026. Official source; ACT Policing, Annual Report 2025–26, Our Challenges; crime prevention. Official source

2 ACT Attorney-General, Answer to Legislative Assembly Question on Notice 647, 26 September 2025. Official source

The eighth recommendation recognises that retail controls do not operate in isolation. It proposes a joint school and community safety protocol and an assessment of existing youth intervention capacity, led by the relevant ACT Government agencies.

The Government should agree in principle to develop the regulatory package, identify the lead agency, and consult on costs, enforceability, privacy, human rights, and retailer impacts.

ACT Policing should retain criminal investigations and operational responses to serious weapon offences, while ACT Government inspectors deal with routine retail compliance. This division of responsibilities is central to the AFPA's proposal. It would strengthen preventive controls while allowing police members to concentrate on protecting the community and investigating crime.

To assist the ACT Government, Attachment A sets out model operative clauses for the proposed retail controls, together with consequential regulation and explanatory material. The draft legislation is a starting point for consultation and is not an introduced Bill or an official draft prepared by Parliamentary Counsel.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT DECISION

- Raise the ACT minimum commercial purchasing age for knives to 18, subject to a narrowly confined occupational, education or training exception for 16–17-year-olds.
- Introduce explicit age-verification duties and retailer due-diligence standards, without routinely requiring copies of customers' identification.
- Require secure storage or tethering of prescribed sharp knives in customer-accessible areas, with carefully defined low-risk exemptions.
- Regulate relevant online and remote sales, including age checks at ordering and age-appropriate delivery controls.
- Update point-of-sale signage, require proportionate staff instruction, and restrict marketing that promotes knives as suitable for violence.
- Review machetes and other high-risk bladed items, including prohibited-weapon definitions, specialist seller safeguards and lawful-use exemptions.
- Assign routine compliance, education, inspection and infringement functions to a properly funded Access Canberra regulatory unit, retaining ACT Policing's criminal-investigation role.
- Establish a joint school and community safety protocol and review the capability of existing youth intervention services.

PURPOSE, SCOPE AND POLICY TEST

This proposal concentrates on the retail supply of ordinary and high-risk knives, because commercial access can be regulated directly and inspected routinely. It also identifies complementary school safety, youth intervention and policing measures, but does not present retail controls as a complete answer to serious youth offending.

The policy test is whether reforms can reduce unlawful sales and unsupervised access to sharp products, while remaining lawful, proportionate, enforceable, affordable and practical for legitimate businesses. Measures must avoid transferring the bulk of regulatory activity to frontline police.

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CONFIRMED ACT CONTEXT AND EVIDENCE

Recent Incidents

- Lanyon High School, 22 October 2026: ACT Policing alleged a 14-year-old student stabbed another student in the hand after producing a 20–30 cm knife. The accused was charged and reported to be subject to bail conditions.[3]
- Lake Tuggeranong College car park, 2 November 2026: police reported two people allegedly stabbed during an altercation. Both received hospital care for non-life-threatening injuries. Police did not confirm the participants' ages or whether they were students in the release.[4]
- Kaleen, 20 October 2026: ACT Policing alleged a 21-year-old man threatened another man with a knife during an arranged second-hand phone sale, forced him into a vehicle and assaulted him. He was charged on 23 October. The knife's source was not identified.[5]
- Ginninderra Drive, Belconnen, 13–14 October 2026: A 23-year-old man was allegedly stabbed multiple times after stopping near a group reportedly throwing objects at passing vehicles. ACT Policing announced on 31 October that two 14-year-old boys and a 16-year-old boy had been charged, while a 12-year-old boy was referred to the Safer Youth Response Service.[6]
- Calwell Shopping Centre, 2 October 2026: ACT Policing reported that two teenage boys, aged 16 and 17, sustained stab wounds following an altercation involving several people near the shopping centre. They were taken to hospital with non-life-threatening injuries. Police were investigating when they sought witnesses.[7]
- Kippax bottle shop, 8 June 2026 (charges reported 3 August): ACT Policing alleged a 17-year-old boy returned to a bottle shop armed with a machete, threatened an employee and stole alcohol. The boy was to be summonsed for alleged aggravated robbery and weapon offences. This illustrates risks associated with high-risk blades, although their source was not identified.[8]
- Braddon and Oxley, 15 April 2026: ACT Policing arrested three 14-year-old boys following separate knife-related incidents. Police allegedly found a knife concealed in one boy's clothing in Braddon. In Oxley, two boys allegedly threatened people with knives, with one of the boys reportedly on bail.[9]
- Westfield Belconnen and Canberra Centre, March 2026: ACT Policing reported confrontations involving young people, knives and hammers. Four teenagers were later arrested while a further City Walk incident involving knives was reported in April.[10]
- Fyshwick retail incident, 2 January 2026: ACT Policing alleged a man stole two large knives from a shop and shortly afterwards threatened members of the public with them. This is a documented example of knives allegedly being obtained from a retail display, not evidence of the prevalence of knife theft.[11]

These incidents are illustrative police reports, not a representative sample or proof of a rise in knife offending. Except for the alleged Fyshwick retail theft, the available releases do not establish where the knives were obtained or whether any retailer-related control would have prevented the conduct.

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3 ACT Policing, Teenager charged after allegedly stabbing student at school, 23 October 2026. Official source
4 ACT Policing, Witnesses sought to Tuggeranong stabbing incident, 2 November 2026. Official source
5 ACT Policing, Man charged after allegedly forcibly confining and threatening another man, 23 October 2026. Official source
6 ACT Policing, Charges laid following Ginninderra Drive stabbing incident, 31 October 2026. Official source
7 ACT Policing, Witnesses sought to stabbing incident in Calwell, 5 October 2026. Official source
8 ACT Policing, Teenager charged, another summonsed following armed bottle shop robbery, 3 August 2026. Official source
9 ACT Policing, Three youths arrested following alleged knife incidents in Braddon and Oxley last night, 16 April 2026. Official source
10 ACT Policing, Teenagers charged following armed confrontations at shopping centres, 3 April 2026. Official source; ACT Policing, Two teenagers arrested following city disturbance involving knives, 5 April 2026. Official source
11 ACT Policing, Man charged following Fyshwick knife incident, 3 January 2026. Official source

ACT Policing described knife crime and weapon-related incidents as an emerging safety concern in its 2025–26 annual report. The same annual report recorded a 5.5 percent decrease in offences against the person overall, so it would be unsound to present the cited incidents as proof of an overall increase in violence.[12]

Knife Seizures and Possession Offences

An AFP-released ACT Policing ministerial brief records that police seized 471 knives during 2024–25 and charged 90 people with possessing a knife without reasonable excuse. Of those charged, 23 were under 18, or approximately one quarter. The figures relate to knife possession charges and do not establish that the 23 young people had obtained knives through retailers.[13]

In the three months from 1 July to 30 September 2025, ACT Policing seized a further 125 knives and charged 23 people with possessing a knife without reasonable excuse. Seizure counts are not a measure of unique offenders or incidents, and may vary with police activity. The brief also states that ACT Policing had not observed a noticeable change in knife-crime trends at the time.[14]

ACT youth offending and recorded violence

In 2024–25, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) recorded 325 ACT offenders aged 12–17 proceeded against by police, down 19 from the previous year. For 140 of those young people, or 43 percent, the principal offence was an act intended to cause injury. Across all ages in the ACT, 971 of 2,658 offenders (37 percent) had an act intended to cause injury as their principal offence, the highest such count in the available ABS time series. These offences are not synonymous with knife offending.[15]

The ABS recorded 2,436 ACT assault victims in calendar year 2025, down two percent on 2024. In 89 percent of those cases (2,163 victims), no weapon was used. Separately, ACT Policing reported 3,184 assault offences in 2025–26, down 4.4 percent from 2024–25, and a 5.5 percent reduction in offences against the person. The ABS victim series and ACT Policing offence series have different definitions and reference periods and should not be compared directly.[16]

National context and the need for targeted prevention

Across Australia in 2024–25, the ABS recorded 44,583 alleged youth offenders aged 10–17, down five percent from the previous year. Acts intended to cause injury were the principal offence for 11,609 youth offenders (26 percent). This demonstrates the continuing significance of youth violence while showing that national youth offending overall did not increase in that year.

The ACT figure covers ages 12–17 because its minimum age of criminal responsibility changed in November 2023.[17]

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) recorded 21,952 assault-related injury hospitalisations nationally in 2024–25.

Assault by a sharp object, a category that includes knives, razors and glass, was among the three most common specified assault types leading to hospitalisation.

These national figures illustrate the consequences of weapon-related violence but do not identify how a weapon was obtained or demonstrate the effectiveness of a retail sales restriction.[18]

12 ACT Policing, Annual Report 2025–26, Our Challenges; crime prevention. Official source
13 AFP, ACT Policing Hot Issues: Knife Crime, FOI-released Question Time Brief REC25/65716, cleared 28 November 2025. Official source
14 AFP, ACT Policing Hot Issues: Knife Crime, FOI-released Question Time Brief REC25/65716, cleared 28 November 2025. Official source
15 ABS, Recorded Crime – Offenders, 2024–25, released 18 March 2026. Official source
16 ABS, Recorded Crime – Victims, 2025, released 3 September 2026. Official source; ACT Policing, Annual Report 2025–26, Our Challenges; crime prevention. Official source
17 ABS, Recorded Crime – Offenders, 2024–25, released 18 March 2026. Official source
18 AIHW, Injury in Australia: Assault and homicide, updated 18 June 2026. Official source

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Interpreting the evidence and limitations

The available sources do not identify the original supply route for most recovered knives, the proportion obtained from ACT retailers or online sellers, the prevalence of unsecured knife displays, or the causal effect of interstate legislation.

The AFP brief noted no noticeable change in ACT knife-crime trends as at its clearance date.

Accordingly, the AFPA proposes targeted, proportionate preventive measures supported by baseline data, measurable retailer compliance outcomes and independent evaluation. Evidence should be reviewed against offence classifications, age cohorts and reporting periods rather than used to claim a general surge in crime.19

CURRENT ACT LAW AND GAP ANALYSIS

Section 383 of the *Crimes Act 1900 (ACT)* makes it an offence to sell a knife to a person under 16. The current authorised Act provides a maximum penalty of 10 penalty units, six months' imprisonment or both.

Section 384 requires specified signage at retail sale locations and sets a maximum penalty of five penalty units.

Section 382 separately regulates knife possession in a public place or school, with lawful-excuse provisions.[20]

The existing sale and sign provisions do not impose a general secure-storage or tethering requirement on ordinary retail sharp knives, a specific "challenge age" practice, or a comprehensive stand-alone retail compliance scheme.

Regulations provide exemptions and must be reviewed as part of drafting. A detailed legislative mapping should identify any existing powers or schemes with overlapping application before introducing new obligations.[21]

In an answer to an ACT Legislative Assembly Question on Notice 647 dated 26 September 2025, the Attorney-General advised that ACT Policing had laid no charges under sections 383 or 384 from the 2019–20 reporting period to the date of the answer, and that the Government had not issued guidance to retailers on machetes or similar bladed items.

The AFPA notes that this is not evidence of widespread retailer offending; however, this shows the regulatory approach should be examined, with proactive education, data collection, and measured compliance activity.[22]

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19 AFP, ACT Policing Hot Issues: Knife Crime, FOI-released Question Time Brief REC25/65716, cleared 28 November 2025. Official source;
ABS, Recorded Crime – Offenders, 2024–25, released 18 March 2026. Official source;
ABS, Recorded Crime – Victims, 2025, released 3 September 2026. Official source;
AIHW, Injury in Australia: Assault and homicide, updated 18 June 2026. Official source
20 ACT Crimes Act 1900, current authorised republication, ss 382–384. Official source
21 ACT Crimes Act 1900, current authorised republication, ss 382–384. Official source
22 ACT Attorney-General, Answer to Legislative Assembly Question on Notice 647, 26 September 2025. Official source

Issue	Present setting / identified gap	Proposed response
Age	Under-16 sale prohibition	Under-18 general threshold with narrow 16–17 exception
Sale verification	Sign advises proof of age may be required	Reasonable proof-of-age process and retailer due diligence
Stock access	No general secure display duty in sections 383–384	Locked display, staff-held stock or tethering for prescribed knives
Online supply	No tailored remote-sale regime in sections 383–384	Age and delivery safeguards for regulated sellers
Regulatory model	Criminal offences handled through police	Funded ACT Government inspection and enforcement pathway for compliance

INTERSTATE MEASURES AND TRANSFERABLE LESSONS

Jurisdiction	Established measure	Relevant ACT lesson
Queensland	September 2024 restrictions on sales to minors, signs, specified controlled-item storage and violent marketing.	Use a tiered controlled-item definition, retailer education and advertising provisions.[23]
Victoria	Machetes are prohibited weapons from September 2025, subject to approval or exemption; police issue knife-store security guidance.	Review the high-risk product class separately from routine kitchen and trade knives.[24]
New South Wales	Sales to under-18s prohibited with a reasonable-excuse route for legitimate 16–17 employment, education or training.	Model a narrow exception without undermining a clear age rule.[25]
South Australia	Since July 2026, signage and locking/tethering duties for prescribed sharp knives in areas accessible to customers.	Use explicit product exemptions and a practical storage standard.[26]

Implementation in other states should be treated as a source of tested legal design, not as proof of reductions in offending.

The ACT Government should seek published evaluations, compliance results and unintended-impact assessments. The models differ: Queensland's mandatory secure storage targets specified controlled items, while South Australia's prescribed-knife regime captures a broader range of sharp knives displayed in customer-accessible retail areas.[27]

DETAILED PROPOSED REGULATORY MEASURES

Age of sale and lawful-use exception

Amend *section 383* to prohibit commercial sale or supply of regulated knives to people under 18. A limited exception should permit sales to 16–17-year-olds where the seller is reasonably satisfied the knife is required for lawful employment, an apprenticeship, education or recognised vocational training. A person younger than 16 should not be covered by this exception.

23 Queensland Police Service, End knife violence: retailer obligations, effective 1 September 2024. Official source
24 Victoria Police, Machete ban, effective 1 September 2025. Official source; Victoria Police, Knife storage and sales guidance. Official source
25 NSW, Summary Offences Act 1988, s 11F (sale of knives to children, including the 16–17 work, education or training exception). Official source
26 South Australian Attorney-General's Department, Knife Crime Laws: retail storage and signage, 1 July 2026. Official source
27 Queensland Police Service, End knife violence: retailer obligations, effective 1 September 2024. Official source; South Australian Attorney-General's Department, Knife Crime Laws: retail storage and signage, 1 July 2026. Official source

The Government should consult on whether the exception should require a parent, employer or education provider to purchase on the young person's behalf instead. The definition of sale must continue to capture market stalls, commercial transfers and relevant online trading.[28]

Verification and retailer responsibilities

Create an express duty on commercial sellers to take reasonable steps to establish age. Guidance should recommend checking approved identity documents where a customer appears under 25, with an employee trained to decline a sale if acceptable proof is not produced.

This is a practical operational threshold, not a proposed new legal purchasing age. Staff should record that an age check or exemption assessment occurred where appropriate, but should not routinely scan or retain identity documents.

A due-diligence defence for employers must depend on genuine training, systems and supervision, not merely a written policy.

Secure storage and displays

Require prescribed knives displayed in customer-accessible areas to be held in a locked cabinet, secure storeroom, tamper-resistant enclosure or approved tethering arrangement that prevents removal without staff assistance.

Regulations should define prescribed knives by sharp point, sharp cutting edge, blade design and level of risk, with exclusions for butter knives, rounded table cutlery, disposable eating implements and permanently enclosed razor cartridges

Specialist retailers should be consulted on workable storage methods, particularly where demonstrations are needed. South Australia provides a precedent for this design.[29]

Online, delivery and marketplace sales

Extend duties to ACT-based commercial online sellers and commercial sellers supplying into the ACT to the extent supported by territorial and Commonwealth law. Require reasonable age assurance at checkout and, for specified high-risk products, an adult signature or verified adult handover.

Unattended or unattended-locker delivery of specified high-risk products should also be restricted.

Packaging, marketing and staff instruction

Update mandatory point-of-sale wording to reflect the under-18 prohibition and define compliant online notices. Require retailers to give staff concise instructions about age checks, refusals, storage and suspected unlawful purchasers.

Prohibit commercial advertising that expressly promotes a knife as suitable for assault, intimidation or violent combat and strongly consider applying Queensland's experience as a drafting reference while protecting legitimate product descriptions.[30]

High-risk bladed products

28 NSW, Summary Offences Act 1988, s 11F (sale of knives to children, including the 16–17 work, education or training exception). Official source
29 South Australian Attorney-General's Department, Knife Crime Laws: retail storage and signage, 1 July 2026. Official source
30 Queensland Police Service, End knife violence: retailer obligations, effective 1 September 2024. Official source

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Commission a specific review of machetes and comparable bladed implements, examining whether they are best controlled under the *Prohibited Weapons Act 1996* or a new restricted supply classification.

Maintain clear occupational, primary production, land management, traditional or cultural, collection and sporting pathways where justified.

A general ban on ordinary knives is not proposed, and Victoria's machete restrictions provide one reference point, but practical ACT conditions and exemption costs require assessment.[31]

Supply to a child where unlawful use is anticipated

Examine a narrowly drawn offence for a person who knowingly supplies a knife to a child in circumstances where the person knows, or is reckless as to whether, the child intends an unlawful violent use.

This would require a clear mental element and exceptions for ordinary caregiving, family, trade, and educational uses. It must not criminalise an otherwise lawful adult solely because they are a parent or guardian.

ACT GOVERNMENT REGULATION, INSPECTION AND ENFORCEMENT

The preferred model places ordinary retailer education, inspections, administrative notices and infringement administration within Access Canberra.

The regulator already has fair trading inspection and enforcement experience, but legislation, funding, training, specialist capability and interagency arrangements would be needed before it assumes knife retail functions.

ACT Policing should retain responsibility for criminal weapon offences, serious unlawful supply, intelligence-led investigations and urgent threats.[32]

Function	Lead	Operational approach
Business education, signage templates and guidance	Access Canberra	Industry information packs, targeted visits and sector consultations
Routine retailer checks	Access Canberra	Risk-based inspections, audit of storage and training practices
Minor breaches	Access Canberra	Advice, improvement notices and proportionate infringement pathways
Serious supply or violence-related offences	ACT Policing	Criminal investigation and evidentiary referrals
Legal design and human rights scrutiny	Justice and Community Safety Directorate	Legislation, regulatory review and cross-agency coordination
School prevention and threat-response coordination	Education Directorate and partners	Protocols, school-facing resources and support-service referrals

New inspector powers should be specific, proportionate and subject to procedural safeguards. Powers to enter premises without consent should be confined to retail business premises during operating hours, subject to required authorisation.

Non-routine evidence seizure, compelled information requests and enforcement decisions should

31 Victoria Police, Machete ban, effective 1 September 2025. Official source
32 Access Canberra, Fair trading and consumer rights: inspection and enforcement functions. Official source

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have review and accountability mechanisms, and a referral protocol should allow Access Canberra to alert ACT Policing to serious unlawful supply without expecting officers to perform routine inspections.

YOUTH SAFETY AND PREVENTION MEASURES ALONGSIDE RETAIL LAW

Safer schools and faster risk escalation

Agree a whole-of-government protocol covering threats involving weapons at or near schools, escalation to ACT Policing where necessary, preservation of relevant evidence, communication with families, emergency response, trauma support and after-action learning.

This must not presume police presence is required at every school or that search powers should be routine on school grounds.

Youth services and repeat offending

Map the capacity and referral responsiveness of existing arrangements including the ACT Therapeutic Support Panel and Safer Youth Response Service.

Align any new initiative with the *ACT Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2026–2031*, rather than duplicating programmes, and assess how victims' safety, meaningful accountability, family support and early intervention can operate together.[33]

Targeted powers and supervision as a separate workstream

The AFPA supports a separate evidence-led review of police options for weapons detection in defined high-risk public settings and the management of serious repeat youth offending, including bail supervision.

Queensland made youth bail electronic monitoring a permanent statewide option on 30 April 2026; the Government should examine evaluation findings, human rights impacts, operational demands and costs before considering any ACT adaptation. These are related but distinct from this retail reform package.[34]

HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUITY AND LEGISLATIVE SAFEGUARDS

A human rights compatibility statement should address children's rights, privacy, equality, freedom from arbitrary interference, fairness and lawful access to education or training.

The ACT Human Rights Act 2004 requires attention to whether any limitation on a right is reasonable and demonstrably justified. Retail measures must be proportionate, non-discriminatory and designed to protect legitimate use.35

- Avoid collecting or holding copies of purchasers' identity documents where an age-check record is sufficient and define clear retention limits for any compliance records.
- Provide narrow statutory exemptions and reviewable decisions for legitimate work, training, cultural or recreational purposes, and ensure retail employees are not exposed to unnecessary personal risk during refusals.
- Require procedural fairness for enforcement, publish guidance, provide transparent infringement schedules, and ensure an accessible way to contest administrative decisions.
- Assess impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people with disability, regional trading arrangements and small businesses through direct consultation.

33 ACT Policing, Annual Report 2025–26, Our Challenges; crime prevention. Official source; ACT Government, Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2026–2031. Official source; ACT Government, Therapeutic Support Panel. Official source

34 Queensland Youth Justice, Electronic monitoring amendment effective 30 April 2026. Official source; Queensland Government, Youth electronic monitoring trial evaluation. Official source

35 ACT Human Rights Commission, Rights protected under Human Rights Act 2004. Official source

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COSTING AND IMPLEMENTATION

The AFPA does not propose an unverified cost figure.

Before an ACT Government Cabinet consideration, the Government, via the Justice and Community Safety Directorate (JACS), should obtain a regulatory impact assessment and cost options for Access Canberra inspectors, enforcement systems, retailer education, statutory drafting and legal support.

Assess transition grants or low-cost compliance resources for small retailers, as well as the operational burden on police if the scheme is not properly resourced.

Phase	Indicative timing	Required deliverables
Baseline and guidance	0–3 months	Lead-agency coordination, retailer consultation, existing-law mapping, interim voluntary safety guidance
Drafting and design	3–6 months	Consultation bill, risk-based product schedule, inspection design, human rights and cost assessments
Transition and education	6–9 months	Access Canberra training, signage templates, systems, business transition and consultation on online supply
Commencement	9–12 months	Staged commencement, education-led inspections, high-risk offender referral protocol

RISKS AND MITIGATIONS

Risk	Proposed mitigation
Compliance burden for low-risk retailers	Risk-based prescribed-product classes, clear exemptions, transition period and simple guidance
Sales shift to online/interstate channels	Coordinated delivery provisions and Commonwealth/interstate regulator engagement
Misuse of personal information	No routine ID copies, minimal records, secure retention and privacy impact assessment
Insufficient regulation capacity	Fund Access Canberra inspections and avoid relying on operational police for routine checks
False sense that regulation solves youth violence	Clear public communication that retail regulation is only one part of violence prevention, alongside school and youth-service responses
Overbroad prohibitions	Specific risk criteria, statutory exemptions, lawful-use consultation and merits review

PROPOSED LEGISLATIVE DESIGN FOR DRAFTING INSTRUCTIONS

The following are policy-level drafting instructions for Parliamentary Counsel, not enacted law or a settled legal opinion. JACS should consider amending *Part 17* of the *Crimes Act 1900* for age-of-sale rules, alongside a distinct regulatory division or companion Act for commercial retail duties, inspectors, and administrative enforcement.

The final legislative structure should follow a full review of overlap with the *Crimes Regulation 2001*, the *Prohibited Weapons Act 1996*, fair trading laws and Commonwealth law.

- Amend *section 383*: replace under 16 with under 18; preserve broad commercial “sell” coverage; provide a narrowly defined 16–17 occupational/education exception requiring reasonable verification; establish suitable seller and employer due-diligence provisions.

- Amend *section 384*: replace the mandatory wording to reflect the under-18 rule; require corresponding online notice content where relevant; empower regulations to prescribe approved signs and exemptions.

- New provision, prescribed knife retail storage: a commercial seller must not display a prescribed sharp knife in a customer-accessible area unless it is secured by a prescribed method or otherwise inaccessible without staff assistance.

- New provision, reasonable age checks: prescribe seller identification and due-diligence obligations, with proportional requirements for direct and remote sales; prohibit routine retention of identity-document images unless separately and lawfully required.

- New provision, high-risk delivery: prescribe adult handover requirements and limits on unattended delivery for a small, defined class of high-risk bladed products.

- New provision, prohibited violent marketing: prohibit commercial representations that expressly market regulated knives as suitable for assault, intimidation or violent combat, with a legitimate description exception.

- New compliance part: confer appropriately limited appointment, entry, inspection and evidence powers on designated Access Canberra inspectors; establish improvement notices, infringements, referral powers and review arrangements.

- Regulation-making powers: classify prescribed items and exemptions by risk; set technical storage standards, approved notices, recordkeeping limits and transition arrangements; subject powers to disallowance and published review.

CONSULTATION AND DECISION SOUGHT

The AFPA recommends consulting ACT Policing, Access Canberra, the Education Directorate, the Justice and Community Safety Directorate, and the ACT Human Rights Commission.

The AFPA can assist with frontline operational evidence but cannot undertake an internal AFP review without appropriate AFP agreement.

DRAFT CRIMES (KNIFE RETAIL SAFETY) AMENDMENT BILL 2026

Attachment A contains the AFPA's draft *Crimes (Knife Retail Safety) Amendment Bill 2026*, a model consequential regulation, explanatory statement and implementation notes.

The proposed provisions are consultation text and require ACT Parliamentary Counsel, legal, regulatory and human rights review.

CONCLUSION

The ACT is not immune from the consequences of knife-related violence seen in other Australian jurisdictions. The recent incidents involving Canberra school communities, earlier weapon-related confrontations in public places and ACT Policing's documented knife seizures show why access to bladed weapons warrants sustained attention.

Those incidents are serious in their own right; however, they do not prove that every category of violence is rising, nor do they show where every weapon was obtained. A credible response must acknowledge those limits and concentrate on controls that the Government can implement and enforce.

The present regulatory settings leave identifiable gaps. *Sections 383* and *384* of the *Crimes Act 1900* address sales to children under 16 and signage, but they do not establish a general framework for secure retail displays, online delivery safeguards or a dedicated civilian compliance programme.

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The first seven recommendations propose practical reforms to close those gaps. Raising the purchasing age, setting reasonable age-check requirements, securing prescribed sharp products, strengthening retailer instructions and reviewing high-risk bladed items can reduce opportunities for unlawful access without preventing legitimate use by workers, families and businesses. The precise product definitions, exemptions and costs should be tested through consultation and legal drafting.

A clear division of responsibilities will determine whether the package is workable. Access Canberra should receive the statutory authority, training and resources needed to educate retailers, inspect business premises and take proportionate administrative action.

ACT Policing should remain responsible for serious offences, intelligence-led investigations and urgent threats. Retailers should know what they must do, and police officers should not become the default inspectors of ordinary shops. This approach recognises the existing operational demands on ACT Policing members and directs enforcement to the agency best placed to manage routine commercial compliance.

The eighth recommendation addresses the important connections between retail controls, school safety and early intervention. A joint school and community safety protocol, supported by a review of existing youth intervention capability, would help clarify responsibilities and identify gaps without transferring education or youth-service functions to ACT Policing. It is intended to complement, rather than distract from, the proposed changes to knife retail regulation.

The AFPA therefore asks the ACT Government to consider all eight recommendations as a coordinated, evidence-led package. The immediate legislative priorities are amendments to *sections 383* and *384* and supporting provisions for secure storage, age assurance, online supply and regulator-led inspections.

The complementary school and community safety measure recognises the wider context of serious knife-related incidents.

Queensland, Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia offer useful models, but the ACT should adapt them to its own legal settings and business environment. The objective is a practical, proportionate reduction in preventable knife access, backed by accountable regulation and without diverting frontline ACT Policing officers from their primary duties.

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ATTACHMENT A | DRAFT LEGISLATION

Policy recommendation	Draft treatment
Purchasing age 18	Amend section 383; limited occupational and education exception for 16–17-year-olds.
Age verification	New section 384B; under-25 assessment and approved identification, with privacy controls.
Secure retail display	New section 384D and regulation; locked display or tethering of prescribed sharp knives.
Online sale and delivery	New sections 384E and 384F; ordering checks and adult handover for prescribed high-risk items.
Signage, training and marketing	Amend section 384 and insert sections 384G and 384H.
Machetes and high-risk blades	New section 384S requires formal classification review; no premature blanket prohibition.
Access Canberra compliance	New sections 384J–384R; ACT Government inspector appointment, limited entry powers and improvement notices.
School and community protocol	Government-led non-legislative action. Included in implementation notes, not as a new offence.

PART A | PROPOSED AMENDMENT BILL

A Bill for an Act to amend the Crimes Act 1900, and for related purposes

The Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory enacts as follows:

1 Name of Act

This Act is the Crimes (Knife Retail Safety) Amendment Act 2026.

2 Commencement

(1) Sections 1 and 2 commence on the day after this Act's notification day.

(2) The remaining provisions commence 6 months after this Act's notification day.

Six months is a proposed transition period to allow businesses to install storage, update signage and train staff. The Government may select staggered commencement following consultation.

3 Legislation amended

This Act amends the Crimes Act 1900.

4 Section 383 heading

substitute

383 Sale of knife to person under 18

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5 Section 383 (1)

Substitute

(1) A person commits an offence if the person sells a knife to another person who is under 18 years old.

Maximum penalty: 50 penalty units, imprisonment for 6 months or both.

(1A) Strict liability applies to subsection (1) in relation to the age of the person to whom the knife is sold.

(1B) Subsection (1) does not apply if—

(a) the person to whom the knife is sold is 16 or 17 years old; and

(b) the knife is reasonably required for the lawful employment, apprenticeship, vocational education or accredited training of that person; and

(c) the knife is not a high-risk bladed article prescribed by regulation; and

(d) before completing the sale, the seller verifies the person's age and receives a declaration or other evidence prescribed by regulation establishing the purpose mentioned in paragraph (b).

(1C) A seller who relies on subsection (1B) must comply with the record requirements prescribed by regulation.

Maximum penalty: 10 penalty units.

(1D) To remove any doubt, subsection (1B) does not authorise an act prohibited under the *Prohibited Weapons Act 1996.*

The current inclusive meaning of "sell" in s 383 (2) is preserved. The Criminal Code 2002 governs strict liability and mistake-of-fact issues, subject to confirmation by ACT Parliamentary Counsel.

6 Section 384 (2)

Substitute

(2) The sign must display at least the following words in the following sequence:

"It is an offence to sell a knife to a person under the age of 18, unless a lawful work or training exception applies.

Proof of age is required if the purchaser appears to be under 25.

7 New section 384 (6)

Insert

(6) A person who sells knives by retail through an online platform must display a notice containing the words stated in subsection (2), or other words prescribed by regulation, prominently before a purchaser completes the order.

Maximum penalty: 10 penalty units.

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8 New sections 384A to 384S

Insert

384A Definitions for knife retail safeguards

In sections 384A to 384S:

approved proof of age means a current proof of identity prescribed by regulation as acceptable to establish that a person is 18 years old or older.

business premises means premises used in the course of a business supplying knives to consumers, including a storage area used in connection with retail supply.

high-risk bladed article means a knife or other bladed article prescribed by regulation as a high-risk bladed article for this Act.

inspector means a person appointed under section 384J.

knife retail supplier means a person who, in the course of carrying on a business, sells or offers to sell knives by retail.

online sale means a retail sale arranged by website, application, electronic marketplace, telephone or other means in which the purchaser is not physically present when the order is placed.

prescribed sharp knife means a knife of a kind prescribed by regulation for the purpose of the secure-display requirement.

regulated business record means a document or record reasonably necessary to determine compliance with sections 383, 384 or 384B to 384H.

retail display area means an area of business premises to which customers ordinarily have access, whether or not accompanied by a staff member.

Note The definitions in the dictionary, including knife, continue to apply except to the extent provided in this section.

384B Reasonable steps to verify purchaser's age

(1) A knife retail supplier commits an offence if—

(a) the supplier completes a retail sale of a knife to a person who reasonably appears to be younger than 25 years; and

(b) the supplier does not, before giving possession of the knife to the person, take reasonable steps to verify the person's age using approved proof of age or an approved verification method prescribed by regulation.

Maximum penalty: 10 penalty units.

(2) An offence against subsection (1) is a strict liability offence.

(3) A knife retail supplier must undertake age verification if the supplier knows or reasonably suspects that a purchaser is under 18 years, whether or not the purchaser appears younger than 25.

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Maximum penalty: 10 penalty units.

(4) Subsections (1) and (3) apply to the extent reasonably practicable having regard to the method of sale, and do not require an employee to confront a customer where doing so would create an immediate risk to personal safety.

(5) For an occupational or training exception under section 383 (1B), the supplier must also undertake the verification required by that section.

384C Limits on collecting identification information

(1) A knife retail supplier must not copy, photograph, scan for retention or otherwise retain an image of a purchaser's proof of age solely for the purpose of complying with section 384B.

Maximum penalty: 10 penalty units.

(2) Subsection (1) does not prevent the use of an approved electronic age-verification service that confirms age without providing the supplier with an image or full identity-document number.

(3) A supplier may record only the result and date of an age check and any minimum evidence lawfully required for an exception under section 383 (1B).

(4) This section does not authorise the collection, use or disclosure of information otherwise prohibited by law.

384D Prescribed sharp knives to be securely displayed

(1) A knife retail supplier commits an offence if the supplier displays a prescribed sharp knife for sale in a retail display area and the knife is not—

(a) held in a locked cabinet or container accessible only by staff; or

(b) attached by a device that prevents its removal without staff assistance; or

(c) secured in another manner prescribed by regulation that provides substantially equivalent protection against unauthorised removal.

Maximum penalty: 20 penalty units.

(2) An offence against subsection (1) is a strict liability offence.

(3) Subsection (1) does not apply while a staff member provides a knife to a customer for lawful examination under direct supervision.

(4) The regulation may prescribe exclusions for low-risk products, safe presentation methods and circumstances in which equivalent protections are appropriate.

(5) Nothing in this section requires a retail employee to intervene physically to prevent theft or to take steps that would put the employee or another person at risk.

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384E Online and remote sales

(1) A knife retail supplier commits an offence if the supplier accepts an online sale of a knife for delivery to an address in the ACT without—

(a) displaying the notice required under section 384 (6) before the order is completed; and

(b) taking reasonable steps, using a method prescribed by regulation, to establish that the proposed recipient is at least 18 years old or falls within section 383 (1B).

Maximum penalty: 15 penalty units.

(2) An offence against subsection (1) is a strict liability offence.

(3) An unverified declaration by a purchaser that the purchaser is over 18 years is not, of itself, sufficient to satisfy subsection (1) (b).

(4) This section applies only to a supplier carrying on business in the ACT, or to a supply for which there is a sufficient territorial connection with the ACT, subject to any applicable Commonwealth law.

384F Delivery of prescribed high-risk bladed articles

(1) A knife retail supplier who arranges delivery of a high-risk bladed article to a person in the ACT must take reasonable steps to ensure that—

(a) the delivery is made directly into the hands of an adult recipient who has provided approved proof of age; and

(b) the delivery is not left unattended at an address, parcel locker or other collection point where age cannot be verified; and

(c) a delivery agent is given written instructions about paragraphs (a) and (b).

Maximum penalty: 20 penalty units.

(2) A person undertaking delivery who knowingly gives possession of a high-risk bladed article to a person under 18 years old commits an offence.

Maximum penalty: 20 penalty units.

(3) Regulation may prescribe approved adult-collection arrangements and permitted exceptions for business-to-business delivery.

(4) This section does not authorise the delivery of a prohibited weapon contrary to another territory law.

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384G Retailer staff instruction

(1) A knife retail supplier must ensure that a person whose duties include completing knife sales receives instruction, before undertaking unsupervised sales, on—

(a) the minimum sale age and the section 383 (1B) exception; and

(b) approved age-verification methods and safe refusal of a sale; and

(c) the supplier's secure-display and online supply obligations; and

(d) procedures for reporting a threat, suspected unlawful sale or theft without placing staff at risk.

Maximum penalty: 10 penalty units.

(2) A supplier must keep a record that staff instruction occurred for the period prescribed by regulation.

Maximum penalty: 5 penalty units.

(3) An offence against subsection (1) or (2) is a strict liability offence.

(4) The regulation may provide proportionate requirements for small businesses and sole traders.

384H Marketing knives for violence

(1) A person commits an offence if, in the course of a business supplying knives, the person advertises, labels or promotes a knife in a way that—

(a) expressly represents the knife as suitable for unlawful assault, intimidation or violent attack against a person; or

(b) is intended to encourage unlawful violence involving use of the knife as a weapon.

Maximum penalty: 30 penalty units.

(2) Subsection (1) does not prohibit a truthful and proportionate description of legitimate occupational, agricultural, educational, sporting, culinary or collection uses.

(3) In deciding whether subsection (1) applies, regard may be had to the context, overall presentation, imagery and intended audience of the material.

384I Relationship with other laws

To remove doubt, nothing in sections 383, 384 or 384A to 384S authorises the possession, supply, dealing, use or advertisement of an article prohibited or restricted by the *Prohibited Weapons Act 1996* or any other territory law.

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384J Appointment of knife retail inspectors

(1) The director-general of the administrative unit responsible for fair trading and consumer regulation may appoint a public servant as a knife retail inspector.

(2) The director-general must be satisfied that the person has the qualifications, training and experience necessary to exercise the powers of an inspector.

(3) An inspector must be issued with an identity card stating the inspector's name, appointment and photograph.

(4) An inspector must show the identity card before exercising a power in relation to a person, unless doing so is not reasonably practicable.

384K Functions of inspectors

An inspector has the following functions:

(a) to provide information and guidance to knife retail suppliers about compliance with sections 383, 384 and 384B to 384H;

(b) to monitor and inspect commercial premises for compliance;

(c) to investigate suspected regulatory contraventions and issue improvement notices;

(d) to refer suspected serious criminal offences or urgent public safety risks to ACT Policing.

384L Entry to premises

(1) An inspector may enter and inspect a part of business premises ordinarily open to the public while that part is open for business.

(2) An inspector may enter another part of business premises—

(a) with the informed consent of the occupier; or

(b) under a warrant issued under section 384M.

(3) An inspector must not enter any part of premises used solely for residential purposes without consent or a warrant.

(4) When seeking consent, the inspector must explain the purpose of entry, the powers proposed to be exercised and that consent may be refused or withdrawn.

384M Warrant for entry

(1) A magistrate may issue a warrant authorising an inspector to enter specified business premises if satisfied, on information given on oath or affirmation, that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting a contravention of section 383, 384 or 384B to 384H and that entry is reasonably necessary to investigate that contravention.

(2) A warrant must state its purpose, the premises, the inspector authorised to enter, the powers permitted, and the period within which entry may occur.

(3) A warrant must not authorise entry for a purpose unrelated to compliance with sections 383, 384 or

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384B to 384H.

384N Inspector powers on lawful entry

(1) On entry under section 384L or 384M, an inspector may, to the extent reasonably necessary for the inspector's functions—

(a) inspect knife displays, storage arrangements and point-of-sale notices;

(b) examine, photograph or record a display or commercial process;

(c) request production of regulated business records and inspect or copy the records;

(d) ask the occupier or a person apparently in charge of the business for information about retail compliance.

(2) An inspector must exercise a power under subsection (1) in the least intrusive manner reasonably available and must not require production of a purchaser's identity-document image if its retention is prohibited under section 384C.

(3) This section does not authorise a personal search, seizure of a person, interception of communications, or use of force.

(4) A person is not required to answer a question or produce a document if doing so would tend to incriminate the person or expose the person to a penalty, to the extent permitted by law.

384O Improvement notices

(1) If an inspector reasonably believes that a knife retail supplier is contravening, or has contravened, section 384, 384B, 384C, 384D, 384E or 384G, the inspector may give the supplier a written improvement notice.

(2) An improvement notice must—

(a) identify the alleged contravention and the factual basis for it;

(b) specify reasonable steps required to remedy the matter;

(c) allow at least 14 days for compliance, unless the notice states why an immediate serious safety risk requires a shorter period; and

(d) explain the supplier's review rights.

(3) The inspector may extend the compliance period on written application by the supplier.

(4) A person commits an offence if the person fails, without reasonable excuse, to comply with an improvement notice that has taken effect.

Maximum penalty: 30 penalty units.

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384P Review of improvement notice

(1) A person given an improvement notice under section 384O may apply to the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal for review of the decision to give the notice.

(2) An application may be made within 28 days after the notice is given, or within a longer period allowed under the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2008.

(3) The making of an application does not of itself stay the notice, but the tribunal may grant a stay in accordance with law.

384Q Obstruction and impersonation

(1) A person commits an offence if the person intentionally obstructs an inspector lawfully exercising a power under sections 384L to 384N.

Maximum penalty: 20 penalty units.

(2) A person commits an offence if the person falsely represents that the person is an inspector.

Maximum penalty: 20 penalty units.

384R Information obtained by inspectors

(1) An inspector must not disclose personal or confidential business information obtained in exercising a function under this Act except—

(a) for the lawful administration or enforcement of this Act;

(b) to ACT Policing where reasonably necessary for a suspected serious offence or urgent public safety risk;

(c) as required or authorised by another law; or

(d) with the consent of the person to whom the information relates.

Maximum penalty: 20 penalty units.

(2) Nothing in this section authorises disclosure inconsistent with the Information Privacy Act 2014 or any other applicable privacy law.

384S Review of high-risk bladed products

(1) The Minister must, within 12 months after commencement of this section, cause a review to be undertaken of the adequacy of existing restrictions on the commercial sale and supply of machetes, swords and other high-risk bladed articles in the ACT.

(2) The review must consider—

(a) the Prohibited Weapons Act 1996 and associated regulations;

(b) the legitimate use of the articles in agriculture, horticulture, trades, sport, recreation and cultural activities;

(c) relevant measures and available evidence from other Australian jurisdictions;

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(d) human rights, regulatory cost and enforcement implications.

(3) The Minister must publish a report or summary of the review, excluding information whose disclosure would prejudice law enforcement or public safety.

9 Section 444

substitute

444 Regulation-making power

(1) The Executive may make regulations for this Act.

(2) Without limiting subsection (1), a regulation may make provision for the following matters in connection with sections 383, 384 and 384A to 384S:

(a) the classification, display and secure storage of prescribed sharp knives;

(b) approved proof-of-age and online-verification methods;

(c) the form and verification of occupational and training exceptions;

(d) high-risk bladed articles requiring adult handover;

(e) approved notices, staff instruction and minimum record periods;

(f) other matters necessary or convenient to carry out these provisions.

Drafting note: the current section 444 provides a general regulation-making power. The replacement above makes the proposed technical matters express. ACT Parliamentary Counsel should confirm whether the additional list is required and whether a separate disallowable-instrument power is preferable.

PART B | MODEL CONSEQUENTIAL REGULATION

1 Name of regulation

This regulation is the Crimes (Knife Retail Safety) Amendment Regulation 2027.

2 Commencement

This regulation commences on the commencement of section 8 of the Crimes (Knife Retail Safety) Amendment Act 2026.

3 Legislation amended

This regulation amends the Crimes Regulation 2001.

4 Section 3 (b)

substitute

(b) at each place where knives are displayed for retail sale, the person displays a sign in type no smaller than 12 point stating:

"It is an offence to sell a knife to a person under the age of 18, unless a lawful work or training

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exception applies. Proof of age is required if the purchaser appears to be under 25."

This updates the existing reduced-signage option for retailers for whom knife sales are not a major part of their business. It does not abolish that existing exemption.

5 New sections 5 to 9

insert

5 Prescribed sharp knives—Act, section 384D

(1) A prescribed sharp knife is a knife supplied for retail sale that has a sharp cutting edge or sharp point capable of causing a penetrating injury.

(2) The following are excluded from subsection (1):

(a) a plastic or wooden eating utensil;

(b) a blunt table or butter knife without a sharp point;

(c) a razor blade permanently enclosed in a cartridge;

(d) an article specified in a disallowable instrument made by the Minister, after consultation with the director-general responsible for fair trading, as presenting a low risk of unauthorised removal.

(3) A prescribed sharp knife is securely displayed if it is kept in a locked display cabinet, secured by a tether preventing removal without staff assistance, or displayed in another approved secure manner prescribed under the Act.

6 Proof of age—Act, sections 383 and 384B

(1) Approved proof of age is a current Australian driver licence, Australian proof-of-age card, Australian passport, or another prescribed document showing the holder's photograph and date of birth.

(2) An approved electronic age-verification method must confirm that the person meets the relevant age threshold without disclosing to the supplier the number or image of the identity document used.

(3) A vendor may rely on a document or verification result that appears authentic unless the vendor knows or reasonably suspects it to be false.

7 Exception for employment or accredited training—Act, section 383 (1B)

(1) A person aged 16 or 17 years who seeks to purchase a knife under section 383 (1B) must provide a signed confirmation from an employer, registered training organisation or educational institution stating that the knife is reasonably required for the relevant employment, apprenticeship, qualification or training.

(2) The supplier must record the date, the verifying organisation and the outcome of the check, and keep the confirmation for 12 months.

(3) The supplier must not retain an image or full number of a proof-of-age document.

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8 Staff instruction—Act, section 384G

(1) A supplier must provide instruction when a person first undertakes unsupervised knife sales and at intervals not exceeding 24 months thereafter.

(2) A brief written record of instruction must be retained for 2 years.

(3) For a sole trader, a record of the trader's review of official retailer guidance is sufficient.

9 High-risk bladed articles for adult delivery—Act, section 384F

(1) A high-risk bladed article includes a machete or other bladed article specified in a disallowable instrument after public consultation.

(2) This section does not classify an article as a prohibited weapon under the Prohibited Weapons Act 1996.

(3) The regulation does not displace any stricter authorisation or exemption required under another Act.

PART C | EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Overview

The proposed Amendment Bill modernises provisions of the Crimes Act 1900 governing commercial knife sales.

It would raise the minimum general purchasing age from 16 to 18; preserve a controlled pathway for legitimate work or training by 16 and 17-year-olds; require age checks where purchasers appear younger than 25; and introduce proportionate storage, online-sale, delivery, training and marketing requirements.

The Bill also establishes a dedicated civilian compliance model. Authorised Access Canberra officers would undertake routine retailer education and inspection, with consent and warrant safeguards for non-public areas, improvement notices and review rights.

ACT Policing would remain responsible for urgent public safety threats and serious criminal investigations. This distinction reflects Access Canberra's existing regulatory enforcement role .36

The changes are informed by interstate measures, including South Australia's secure storage, signage and age-restriction rules introduced from July 2026, and NSW's under-18 knife sale restrictions . The proposed ACT drafting is independent and must be assessed against local laws and rights.37

Background and need

Sections 383 and *384* presently prohibit selling knives to children under 16 and require retail signage.

The Crimes Regulation 2001 provides a modified sign requirement for businesses where knife sales are incidental.

The existing provisions do not themselves establish a general secure-display standard, mandatory online age assurance or an Access Canberra-specific regulatory inspection scheme. These differences do not establish that particular retail controls will prevent any identified stabbing, and the evidence does not generally identify the source of knives used in reported incidents.

36Access Canberra, Fair trading and consumer rights: inspection and compliance functions. https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/consumer-rights/fair-trading-and-consumer-rights

37South Australian Attorney-General's Department, Knife crime laws, retail reforms in force from 1 July 2026; NSW Police, Knife Crime, under-18 retail sale reforms. https://www.agd.sa.gov.au/law-and-justice/legislation/knife-crime-laws and https://www.police.nsw.gov.au/crime/knife_crime

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The AFPA proposal addresses a preventable regulatory exposure: customers can access sharp products without an explicit secure-display standard, while existing age and signage controls do not reflect those now operating in several interstate jurisdictions. Any intervention must respect legitimate trade, employment, agricultural and family uses and be proportionate for small businesses.

Financial and regulatory impact

Government should undertake a regulatory impact assessment before introduction. The main costs will relate to locked displays or tethers, staff instruction, website changes, age verification and a funded civilian inspection function. A six-month transition, tailored exemptions and low-cost compliance guidance are proposed to reduce the burden on small retailers. The Bill does not assume that any additional ACT Policing resources will be available for routine retail inspections.

Outline of the Bill

Clause or proposed section	Effect
Clauses 1–3	Name, commencement and principal Act amended.
Clauses 4–5; section 383	Raise minimum sales age to 18, retain existing inclusive definition of sell and provide controlled 16–17 work/training exception.
Clauses 6–7; section384	Update physical and online signage to reflect new age and verification rules.
Section 384A–C	Define relevant concepts, require proportionate age verification, and prohibit retention of identity document images.
Section 384D–F	Require secure display, online verification and adult handover for high-risk blades.
Section 384G–I	Require staff instruction, restrict violent marketing and preserve stricter weapons laws.
Section 384J–R	Appoint civilian inspectors, limit inspection powers, establish notices, ACAT review and privacy controls.
Section 384S	Require a review of machete and other high-risk bladed article restrictions.
Regulation	Technical categories, training, proof of age, work/training exception and updated reduced-format signage.

Offences and safeguards

The proposed age-of-sale offence increases the maximum to 50 penalty units or six months imprisonment. Routine signage, storage, age-check and staff-instruction offences would be strict liability offences at lower maximum penalties.

This distinction is intentional: readily verifiable shop duties are appropriate candidates for proportionate regulatory enforcement, while an unlawful sale to a minor carries greater seriousness. Penalty ratios, any reverse onus, reasonable mistake provisions and infringement eligibility must be independently tested against the ACT Guide for Framing Offences and Parliamentary Counsel's drafting guide .[38]

Proposed inspectors are not given arrest, personal search or coercive police powers. Entry into non-public areas requires consent or a magistrate's warrant. An occupier may contest an improvement notice in ACAT. Identification copies are not to be retained merely to prove age verification. The Bill expressly preserves separate restrictions on prohibited weapons.

38ACT Government, Guide for framing offences (April 2010, version 2) and ACT Parliamentary Counsel's Office, Drafting Practice Guide (February 2026). https://www.act.gov.au/open/guide-for-framing-offences and https://www.pco.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/2216042/Drafting-Practice-Guide.pdf

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Human rights compatibility assessment for consultation

The Bill pursues the protection of life, personal safety and children's rights, including the protection of children recognised in section 11 of the Human Rights Act 2004. It also engages privacy under section 12, freedom of expression in relation to advertising, property and business interests, and fair-hearing rights relating to enforcement. Restrictions must be assessed under the reasonable-limits framework in section 28 .[39]

The proposed age restriction is targeted at a class of goods that can cause serious injury.

The 16–17 occupational and education pathway reduces effects on legitimate training.

The marketing offence is aimed at the promotion of unlawful violence, not ordinary descriptions of lawful use.

Privacy protection is strengthened by preventing routine retention of identity documents. Inspector entry into non-public commercial areas is restricted to consent or warrant, and administrative decisions are reviewable.

These are proposed safeguards, not a substitute for formal compatibility advice from the ACT Human Rights Commission or Government lawyers.

Before introduction, Government should assess whether the phrase "appears under 25" is sufficiently certain and whether procedural alternatives would meet the same purpose with less interference, as well as the impact on young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, people with disability and small businesses.

Final instructions should also settle whether the proposed strict liability and maximum penalties are proportionate.

Recommendation 8: non-legislative implementation

The eighth AFPA policy recommendation is a joint school and community safety protocol supported by a review of youth intervention capability. It is not drafted here as a further criminal offence.

The ACT Government can direct the Education Directorate, Justice and Community Safety Directorate, ACT Policing and relevant youth services to establish a protocol addressing credible weapon threats, lawful information-sharing, referral pathways and emergency response.

Legislative development steps

ACT Parliamentary Counsel to settle the structure of inserted sections, the relationship with s 444 regulation-making power, terminology and any required consequential amendments.

JACS to undertake human rights and privacy assessments, consult with the Director of Public Prosecutions, ACT Policing and youth justice agencies, and settle offence fault elements.

Access Canberra to cost the inspector role, refine entry and notice powers, and prepare risk-based business guidance.

Retailers, training providers, delivery services and community representatives to test age checks, legitimate-use exceptions, product classes and small-business costs.

39Human Rights Act 2004 (ACT), sections 11, 12 and 28; ACT Human Rights Commission explanatory resources. https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/a/2004-5/ and https://www.hrc.act.gov.au/humanrights/rights-protected-in-the-act

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Government to settle the existing Crimes Regulation 2001 signage exception and the Magistrates Court infringement notice schedules, rather than assume that all new offences are suitable for infringement notices.

Unresolved instructions requiring legal review

Key matters include the constitutionality and practical reach of interstate online supplies; alignment with the Information Privacy Act 2014 and Commonwealth privacy laws; ACAT review mechanisms; treatment of age-verification service providers; consistency with the Prohibited Weapons Act 1996; strict liability defences and evidentiary burdens; technical storage standards; and the commencement period.

No high-risk weapon prohibition should be made solely on the basis of the draft classification in the model regulation without the separate s 384S review.

PART D | IMPLEMENTATION AND SOURCE NOTES

Government decisions requested

The AFPA requests that the ACT Government use the model Bill as the basis for instructing Parliamentary Counsel, nominate JACS as policy lead and Access Canberra as the proposed routine compliance regulator, and consult before finalising offence settings, technical product standards, and costs. Legislative drafting should proceed alongside, not replace, the separate school and community safety workstream.

What is and is not proposed

Included in draft	Not proposed
Raising commercial sales age and targeted, documented exception	Prohibiting ordinary household or workplace knife ownership.
Secure displays and adult handover for prescribed products	Mandatory police inspections of ordinary retail outlets.
Reasonable age checks with privacy controls	A customer database or routine copying of photo identification.
Review of machetes and comparable blades	An immediate unqualified ban on agricultural or trade implements.
ACT Government inspection and review rights	Police search or arrest powers for Access Canberra inspectors.
Separate government-led school safety protocol	Making the AFPA responsible for school programmes or youth services.

Primary legislation and guidance referenced

The model Bill is intended as a substantive policy starting text. An ACT Parliamentary Counsel version may make substantial technical, structural or drafting changes before it can be introduced.

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