



# Submission cover sheet

## Inquiry into Legislation on proposed firearms reform

Submission number: 041

Submitter: Name Withheld

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## **Submission to the Committee of the Inquiry of the Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026**

I am making this submission to the inquiry into the Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026 as a long-term ACT resident and a life-long licensed firearms owner and active shooter. I have been involved in shooting for over 48 years, a member of SSAA ACT for over 31 years including travelling to national competitions, a qualified range officer, an AFP authorised firearms instructor and a committee member of an ACT firearms club for over 20 years. I also have a primary production role with animal welfare and pest control responsibilities and have always been a hunter.

I currently hold firearms for competition, pest control, animal welfare, hunting and instructing purposes. I have complied with all licencing and storage requirements, passing safe storage inspection without any issues.

Can I please request that all my personal details are withheld. Allowing personal details to be made public defies common sense in relation to advertising the presence and location of firearms in the community.

### **Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026**

As there is no list in the terms of reference explaining exactly what the committee wants to know about, this submission will focus on the key points listed in the Explanatory Statement to the FIREARMS (PUBLIC SAFETY) AMENDMENT BILL 2026.

*The Bill will amend the Firearms Act to:*

- *Limit the number of firearms that can be possessed and used;*
- *Recategorize the types of firearms that can be possessed and used;*
- *Prohibit belt-fed firearms;*
- *Introduce an offence to possess digital blueprints for the computer-aided manufacture of firearms and firearm parts.*

### **Limit the number of firearms that can be possessed and used**

- ACT firearms licensees are already limited in the number of firearms they can possess and use via the Permit To Acquire (PTA) process. Every firearm acquisition must satisfy the PTA process with the registrar approving all ownership. A PTA will not be granted unless there is a genuine need and the registry approves it. All firearms currently held by individuals have been acquired through this rigorous process.
- The Registered User process is also approved by the registrar. This currently records a firearm being registered to a person other than the owner. This allows another person to possess and use the firearm without the need to purchase a separate firearm for themselves. Any restrictions placed on registered users and counting towards limits could see an increase in the overall number of firearms owned in the ACT. Registered User firearms should not be included in any limit if one is imposed.

- The proposed upper limit of 10 does not allow enough for many licensed firearms owners who have multiple interests and uses of firearms. To compete at a local, state or national level in the SSAA Combined Services Discipline could see the number of firearms being required in excess of the proposed limit of 10 [ref: 1]. This is just one competition discipline and does not cater for primary production or hunting categories of use.
- The proposal under the new section 52A(1)(a)ii may allow the registrar to approve more than the limit of 10. For lawfully licensed firearms owners this would introduce a new requirement for interaction with an already overworked and underfunded registry and an additional workload for registry staff to maintain any such approval. Each PTA process submitted by every firearms owner would need to be checked against any approvals to own more than the legislated limit.
- A firearm is like many other tools. Just as you would not use a bread knife for chopping vegetables, dicing meat and eating your dinner, competition firearms are not used for pest control and vice versa. Specific firearms and calibres are required for competition which are most often different to pest control and hunting. The ACT Labor party blanket response to submissions including “*A limit of five firearms will still allow a firearms owner to own a range of types of firearms of different action types and calibre to continue to undertake different activities*” is a good indicator of the very limited understanding and knowledge of the legislators, and that proper research has not been completed before creating the proposed legislative changes or releasing public statements.
- The explanatory notes document contains the statement “*These measures are intended to reduce the capacity for harm caused by the misuse or diversion of firearms to illicit markets and will prevent the proliferation of untraceable and illegal weapons that threaten the security of the ACT community*”. With no facts supplied to support why this statement has been made or how it would be achieved, it should be ignored in the context of a review of the proposed legislative changes. If there is an issue with security and/or theft this needs to be the focus of any changes, along with adequate policing and sentencing to address the identified and documented problems. If documented evidence does exist to support this statement it needs to be made public immediately and considered by the inquiry.
- There is an existing legal requirement for ACT Firearm owners with more than 10 firearms to implement higher level storage measures. If there has been a significant increase in thefts from owners with more than 10 firearms, further measures would likely have been legislated. This has not happened indicating that no such trend exists.
- The ACT Firearms Registry carry out storage inspections to ensure firearms and ammunition are stored correctly in line with the relevant legislation. Any suggestion of diversion of firearms into illicit markets or untraceable firearms would be best addressed by allocating the resources that would otherwise be wasted on applying limits to be reallocated to carrying out storage and compliance inspections.
- Licensed firearms owners are already scrutinized and vetted with all licence applications and PTA’s being a personal interaction with the ACT firearms registry. Linking licensed firearms owners to an act of terror is just an easy target and not focusing on the root cause of issues.
- A grandfather clause has been talked about in relation to limits. This could be considered as a last resort to allow those currently owning more than the new limit to maintain their

current number of firearms for the life of their licence. This would enable the disposal of an existing firearm and the purchase of a new one regardless of the 10 limit but never exceeding their baseline number. New licensees would be subject to the new limits from day one which in time would impose the same unworkable limit on new entrants to the shooting community. While this may sound like a practical solution, the registry would have another overhead to establish a baseline number for every licensee and maintain this for the life of their licence.

- Anti-gun lobbies are very quick to report on the current number of firearms registered compared to 1996 after the Port Arthur buyback. Their main focus is that there has been a 25% increase in the number of privately owned firearms in Australia and that this equates to “at least one licensed firearm for every seven Australians” [ref: 2]. What they fail to report on is the ABS figures for Australian population [ref: 3 & 4]. and the approximate 50% increase in population during the same period, resulting in less firearms per person in Australia now. Until the Bondi tragedy the number of firearms per licensed person has not been seen as an issue, and this can continue by restricting licenses not firearms.

Action required: Proper research is required with knowledgeable members of the shooting community regarding the real need and impact of imposing any limit on the number of firearms owned and used by any individual, and balance this with documented evidence of how any such limit would improve public safety. There is no current evidence linking the number of firearms owned by an individual in relation to any offences committed by that person. Therefore, any limit is an arbitrary number, which has currently been suggested as 5 or 10 with no real understanding of the current use of firearms licensed owners already possess.

### **Recategorize the types of firearms that can be possessed and used**

The firearms used at Bondi are not the problem; it has already been publicly accepted that the processes at a federal (ASIO) and state (NSW Police and Registry) have failed on this occasion and restricting lawful licensed owners to specific firearm types (or numbers) would not have made a difference in Bondi. The laws didn't fail; they were very poorly implemented. This is not a firearms problem; it's the people who shouldn't have them.

A similar problem occurred with John Edwards in NSW in 2018 who took the lives of his two children and himself after persistent failings with the NSW licencing process [ref: 5]. Again, the type of firearm is irrelevant when the authorities who should be protecting the community fail to implement the existing laws that would have stopped this occurring.

Recategorising firearms will result in most owners having to surrender recategorised firearms moving to a category of licence they do not have. This will mean compensation (buyback) will be required for the firearm and all associated equipment which can no longer be used. Speaking to members who may be affected by this change will in most cases see the compensation payment put directly to buying a new firearm which fits under their licence category, ie no reduction in total number of firearms, a buyback program that requires funds and management and licenced firearms owners who become disenfranchised with the system.

Again, without proper research and evidence, the removal of certain firearm types/actions has no proven impact on public safety.

Action required: applying the current licencing and PTA processes of genuine need in conjunction with more detailed vetting and background checks utilising all the available intelligence when issuing and renewing licenses and PTA's should eliminate the situation which led to the Bondi tragedy.

### **Prohibit belt-fed firearms**

By definition any belt fed firearm would be classed as fully automatic, and if they ever existed in Australia in civilian ownership, they were banned following the 1996 changes and buy back. Therefore they do not exist in public hands.

Unfortunately, this appears to be a very good example of no consultation being sought with the relevant groups before embarking on legislative changes as this should never have included, other than for sensationalism, media headlines or attempting to buy community support for a meaningless change. It is also at odds with the explanatory statement stating the amendments "*were refined through consultation with ACT Policing and the firearms sector*". If the firearms sector had been involved this would have been clarified very early in the process.

The ACT Firearms Act 1996 already encompasses belt fed firearms, albeit not explicitly, with the inclusion of 'all automatic firearms' in the following clause

Part 2 Important concepts

5 Principles and objects of Act

(2) (a) to prohibit the possession and use of all automatic firearms, self-loading rifles and shotguns (including pump action shotguns), except in special circumstances

and

7 Meaning of prohibited firearm

(1) In this Act:

***prohibited firearm***—

(a) means—

(i) a firearm described in schedule 1;

### **Schedule 1 Prohibited firearms**

1	a machine gun, submachine gun or other firearm capable of propelling projectiles in rapid succession during 1 pressure of the trigger
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Action required: All licensed firearms owners will willingly hand in all their belt-fed firearms as they do not exist, so in reality there is no change required here. The legislation can be updated for completeness and to appease the general public, media and politicians.

### **Introduce an offence to possess digital blueprints for the computer-aided manufacture of firearms and firearm parts**

In principle support for this change however there is a difference between the possession of digital blueprints with the intent and capability to manufacture a firearm or firearm part, rather than having them for completeness or genuine interest. An owner may wish to have a digital

copy of a firearm plan to further understand the working of that firearm and also own a milling machine for other interests. This does not imply or prove they are manufacturing firearm parts. The intent to manufacture firearms or parts would need to be proven.

Action required: ensure that this is worded to avoid people innocently being caught out and penalised for something they never intended to do.

## **Conclusion**

As the focus of the proposed ACT firearm law changes is about public safety, there needs to be an evidenced based approach, with proper consultation involving all parties concerned. It needs to be proven that the changes will make a positive impact to public safety without causing undue impact on the lawfully licenced firearms owners and the ACT budget which is already under stress.

The costs to the community must also be seriously considered with any buyback proposal having an unknown cost and as yet an undefined direction in terms of exactly what will be compensated.

The ACT currently has very strong firearms laws, which if implemented properly and supplemented with the new sharing of information between all relevant federal and state/territory bodies will ultimately create a safer community without the need to impose any limits.

Any changes in the ACT relating to firearm law reform, including this inquiry,

- needs to be evidence based, not emotive
- must be focused on proper funding of the ACT registry to enable full and proper vetting of all licensees (including dealer, collectors and business), and compliance activities relating to safe storage
- must include collection and public release of real data relating to firearms and all offences involving firearms. If it can be proven there is a pattern of theft from owners with a certain number or type of firearm then the appropriate action can be taken to mitigate the risks involved, ie limits revisited or storage requirements amended
- needs to include education of the firearms community in relation to their obligations regarding possession and use of the firearms they are licensed to own
- must be carried out by persons who have not already publicly declared their anti-gun bias. Any such cases must be declared as a conflict of interest and the person or persons involved stand down. [ref: 6]

## References:

1. <https://www.actmfc.com/about-mfc> Operations Manual download, section 17
2. The Australia Institute “Australian gun control: 29 years after Port Arthur” May 2025  
[gunpolicy.org](http://gunpolicy.org)

3. 1996 population 18,054,000  
<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/2f762f95845417aeca25706c00834efa/8468da4c5b3d526cca2570ec0073cdf9!OpenDocument>
4. 2025 population 27,614,411 <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/national-state-and-territory-population/jun-2025>
5. [https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://coroners.nsw.gov.au/documents/findings/2021/Inquest\\_into\\_the\\_deaths\\_of\\_John\\_Jack\\_and\\_Jennifer\\_Edwards\\_-\\_findings\\_of\\_State\\_Coroner\\_dated\\_7\\_April\\_2021.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwicwK7ZliTAxV0e\\_UHHZ5slzMQFnoECAwQAQ&usg=AOvVaw3ELz3otcyCb0HjzqiMoowG\]](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://coroners.nsw.gov.au/documents/findings/2021/Inquest_into_the_deaths_of_John_Jack_and_Jennifer_Edwards_-_findings_of_State_Coroner_dated_7_April_2021.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwicwK7ZliTAxV0e_UHHZ5slzMQFnoECAwQAQ&usg=AOvVaw3ELz3otcyCb0HjzqiMoowG)
6. “Mr Rattenbury also said he would like the government to further explain why the proposed bill's cap on the number of guns was different to that in NSW.”  
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-02-02/proposed-new-act-laws-to-limit-number-of-guns/106292942>