



# Submission cover sheet

## Inquiry into Legislation on proposed firearms reform

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Submission to the Inquiry into Legislation on proposed firearms reform.

To whom it may concern,

The proposed new laws are widely viewed by the public as a diversion and an attack on working class Australians. The government's cries of "public safety" are seen as rhetoric. The Prime Minister's approval rating took a nosedive on announcement of the proposals and continues to fall. Ordinary Australians feel betrayed by the Labor party which was formed to represent the working class but now seems to only be a tool for small, angry, special interest groups, and increasingly irrelevant newspaper journalists. The vast majority of Australians have never been surveyed on these or any other issues. The government surveys only those who are likely to give the desired opinions. More and more classically centrist Australians are seeking alternative representation and are finding it in so called "right wing" parties. The political landscape of Australia is changing due to the mishandling of this one incident and subsequent laws. The Prime Minister, it now seems, cannot put a foot right.

The laws enacted after 1996 by then Prime Minister John Howard stopped all mass shootings in Australia until the wrong person was given a firearms license. We don't need an overhaul of gun laws, just a couple of small tweaks to stop the wrong people obtaining a license.

Australia has big pest animal problem which is barely being held in check as it is. Further restrictions in an already over regulated field will only make the problem worse.

As I grew up in a farming family, I have always been involved in pest control and firearms have always been a tool I employ. I have undergone training in this field and am certified to use firearms to humanely destroy animals. I perform control on my family farm and other farms in the district and interstate on a voluntary basis. I own and use an array of firearms for this purpose, as well as electronic detection devices, all paid for by myself. The proposed laws intend to limit my ability to destroy animals in a humane manner by restricting what I can use. As I shoot a range of animals from rabbits and foxes, to pigs and even buffalo and camels, five firearms will not do. It is wrong to shoot a rabbit with a buffalo gun and it is wrong to try to shoot a camel with a rabbit gun. I need to right tool for the job. Anti-gun individuals do not understand this and base their knowledge of the subject on Hollywood movies, not reality.

Voluntary vermin controllers like myself serve as assistants to farmers and land holders. If we are rendered ineffective as these proposed laws will, already cash strapped farmers will need to pay professionals for these services, thus driving up the cost of production, or otherwise let feral animals destroy crops and grazing land which in turn limits production. Either way, this will drive up prices for primary products resulting in higher prices at the market and at the check out, driving up already the high cost of living for all Australians.

Many Canberrans are in the same situation as me and some will go down the path of becoming professional shooters. Many will qualify for category C and D firearms thus increasing the number of these "rapid fire" and high ammunition capacity guns in the community.

Also, those who only currently own one or two guns will purchase more to fill their limit, especially since there will be many cheap guns going on the market if these laws pass and may result in a net increase on the total number of guns held in private ownership. This is why numerical limits have not previously been imposed.

I doubt any compensation offered will be enough to cover the true value of any firearm under a "buy back" confiscation scheme. For example, just one of my guns is custom built and cost me almost ten thousand dollars. Will the government cover this cost? That is only one gun, the new laws will take at least eight guns from me. All this will come at a great cost to the taxpayers who are already being taxed at much too high a rate. The ACT is in no financial position to waste money on such a frivolous endeavor. In just ten years my rates have more than tripled under the Labor government. The Territory's debt has exceeded 200% of what revenue can cover as it is.

Even the limit of ten firearms for target shooters will be too restrictive as these people mostly also hunt and guns built for target shooting are often impractical to use for hunting, and vice versa. There will need to be exceptions to these limits as genuine needs will be encountered.

The firearms registry in the ACT is unique in that it is part of and manned by the Australian Federal Police. They have greater access to intelligence agencies than other jurisdictions. Every license holder in the ACT must book an appointment with the registry and meet face to face with an AFP officer every time they renew their license and apply to acquire a firearm. The terrorists who committed the massacre in Bondi probably could not have obtained a license in the ACT.

Only the ACT and NSW are considering the proposed new laws with the other states rejecting them.

The ACT already has some of the most restrictive gun laws in Australia, second only to Western Australia.

Labor seems hell bent on "tightening" laws, but I hope common sense will prevail. If further limits are imposed on the already restrictive laws, may I propose:

- Exceptions be made for genuine voluntary pest controllers regarding what type of firearms they can own and how many
- Make the limits higher than what is proposed
- If some firearms are recategorized, allow greater access to these categories

- Block non-citizens from obtaining a license
- Provide adequate compensation for surrendered firearms
- Remove the current "appearance laws" which ban certain guns based on what some people might think look scary. Only the ACT and NSW have this law. It is badly defined and is open to interpretation and serves no useful purpose.
- Make training mandatory for those who engage in recreational hunting. Under current laws a person does not need to know what animals can legally be killed or what animals are protected species.

Thank you for your time.

Richard Baxter