



Submission cover sheet

Inquiry into Legislation on proposed firearms reform

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SUBMISSION TO THE ACT GOVERNMENT

Reforms to Support the Operation of the National Firearms Register (NFR) and Related Matters

Date: 27 March, 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Canberra Multicultural Community Forum (CMCF) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the ACT Government's discussion paper on reforms to support the National Firearms Register (NFR) and related amendments to ACT firearms legislation.

CMCF had provided a submission on December 19, 2025, and this is a revision that addresses the emerging concerns of members.

About CMCF

Canberra Multicultural Community Forum Inc is the recognised Peak body representing more than 110 ethnic and associated community organisations in the ACT and its surrounding areas. CMCF was established in December 2005 to have a unified voice and a single peak body to promote the common interests and articulate the purpose and direction of the multicultural community in the ACT.

CMCF is established to act as the peak multicultural voice of the ACT.

Our feedback is grounded in **practical community experience**, not technical expertise. We approach this consultation from the perspective of:

- protecting community safety,
- supporting strict and responsible gun control,
- ensuring transparency and accountability,
- promoting community education,
- ensuring human rights protections, and
- supporting full alignment with the NFR.

Across all sections, CMCF strongly supports reforms that modernise the ACT Firearms Registry, strengthen national consistency, address emerging risks such as 3D-printed firearms, improve licensing and PTA processes, and ensure suitability assessments that prioritise safety and fairness.

Purpose

This submission provides CMCF's feedback on the ACT Government's proposed reforms to support the operation of the National Firearms Register (NFR) and related amendments to ACT firearms legislation.

CMCF's purpose is grounded in representing multicultural communities who often have lived experience of unsafe environments overseas. This gives our communities a heightened appreciation for strong gun-control systems. Our feedback is based on lived experience, trust in institutions, and the need for transparent, consistent regulation.

Background

The National Firearms Register (NFR), led by the Commonwealth Department of Home Affairs and ACIC, will integrate data from all jurisdictions to enable:

- near real-time nationwide tracing of registered firearms,
- secure sharing of firearms and licence information,
- national licence verification for law enforcement and dealers,
- alerts and notifications for high-risk events,
- national reporting and analytics.

The ACT Government is upgrading its paper-based registry to a digital system to support NFR participation and improve local administration, automation, and information sharing.

For multicultural communities, national consistency is especially important because inconsistent rules across states create confusion, many community members travel or move interstate, and trust increases when systems are uniform and predictable. Digital transformation also improves transparency and reduces errors.

Human rights considerations

CMCF supports reforms that are proportionate, necessary, non-discriminatory, transparent, and consistent with the Human Rights Act 2004.

Multicultural communities often face language barriers, unfamiliarity with regulatory systems, and heightened concerns about safety. Reforms must therefore ensure equitable access to information, provide multilingual and culturally safe communication, avoid unintended discrimination, and maintain strong privacy protections.

Privacy, access controls, and auditability

CMCF support the NFR's verification service but request explicit statutory safeguards to protect personal information.

The ACT should require role-based access controls, mandatory, tamper-evident audit logs for every query, and automated notifications to licence holders when their record is accessed.

There must also be a clear, time-bound correction and appeal process so individuals can promptly challenge and rectify inaccurate registry entries.

Section 1

Proposed changes to enable participation in the National Firearms Register Licence and permit verification service

CMCF supports controlled expansion of access to the verification portal for sporting clubs, collectors' associations, licensed security employers, and relevant government agencies.

Real-time verification reduces fraud and administrative errors, while limiting access prevents misuse of sensitive data. Mandatory checks for high-risk processes, such as firearm transfers and armed security roles, ensure consistency and prevent loopholes.

Multicultural communities value transparency and strong safeguards around personal information, making privacy protections and multilingual guidance essential.

To build trust with multicultural communities, people must be informed when their records are checked.

The Registry should automatically notify a licence holder within a defined timeframe (for example, 7 days) when their licence or permit is queried by a dealer, club, employer or agency, and provide a simple multilingual pathway to request a review.

Notification should include the reason for the query, the querying party's identity, and instructions for lodging a correction or complaint.

Firearms dealers: recording and reporting of firearms transactions

CMCF supports near-real-time reporting by dealers, provided safeguards address administrative burden, system reliability, privacy, and consistency.

Real-time reporting strengthens the NFR's accuracy and prevents unlawful transfers. Small dealers may lack digital capacity, so compliance should not be punitive.

Multicultural community members often rely on dealers for explanations; consistent guidance and multilingual education are essential to prevent unintentional non-compliance.

Near-real-time reporting must be implemented with measures to avoid disadvantaging small dealers and non-English speakers.

CMCF recommends a phased rollout with funded training, multilingual user interfaces and guidance, a paper-fallback or assisted-reporting option during the transition, and a non-punitive compliance window (for example, 6–12 months) after go-live.

The ACT Government should also provide small grants together with technical support to help small dealers meet digital requirements.

Section 2

Review of ACT Firearms Legislation

Creation of an offence relating to possession of digital blueprints for the computer-aided production of firearms and related items

CMCF supports creating a new offence covering possession, sharing, or dissemination of digital or physical firearm blueprints.

3D-printed firearms bypass traditional controls and pose emerging risks. Digital files can spread rapidly; preventing access is a preventative safety measure.

Exemptions for legitimate research, industry, and education ensure the law remains targeted and proportionate.

CMCF also supports expanding unlawful manufacture offences to include firearm parts, unfinished receivers, conversion kits, suppressors, and 3D-printed components.

Any offence relating to digital or physical blueprints must be narrowly drafted and proportionate.

CMCF recommends the law define a covered “blueprint” as material that is reasonably capable of enabling the manufacture of a functional firearm or

component, require a mens rea element (intent to manufacture, supply, or facilitate unlawful use), and include explicit exemptions for accredited research, accredited education, licensed manufacturers, and law enforcement.

These drafting principles will reduce the risk of criminalising legitimate academic, hobbyist, or industrial activity.

Treatment of temporary visa holders

CMCF supports proportionate, risk-based eligibility requirements, not blanket restrictions.

Risk should be assessed based on behaviour, not immigration category.

Clear, multilingual guidance is essential to prevent unintentional non-compliance, especially for those unfamiliar with Australian regulatory systems.

A risk-based approach to temporary visa holders should be supported by concrete safeguards.

CMCF recommends a statutory provision for short-term licence templates for temporary visa holders (for example, licences that expire before visa end), mandatory reporting of visa status changes, and multilingual guidance on obligations when a visa ends. These measures would balance safety with fairness and reduce the risk of inadvertent non-compliance.

Reforms to permit to acquire (PTA) arrangements

CMCF supports retaining the serial number requirement unless strong safeguards replace it, because serial numbers ensure traceability and prevent loopholes.

CMCF supports retaining the 28-day waiting period, as cooling-off periods reduce impulsive acquisitions and support community confidence.

Extending PTA validity to 60 days (with possible extension to 90 days) is appropriate because delays often occur outside the applicant's control, and multicultural communities may need more time due to language or logistical barriers.

Improving accessibility and consistency across dealers is essential to ensure fairness.

Waiting period: licence renewals and interstate transfers

CMCF does not support shortening nor waiving, the 28-day waiting period for ACT licence renewals and interstate transfers.

Digital reminders and early renewal options improve compliance for multicultural communities who may miss deadlines due to language or system barriers.

Exclusion periods for disqualifying events

CMCF supports automatic exclusion for violent offences, domestic violence, firearms offences, serious crime, and high-risk mental health events. These offences strongly correlate with future risk and must be treated seriously.

Minor or historical offences, stabilised mental health episodes, and cultural misunderstandings should be assessed case-by-case to ensure fairness and proportionality.

A tiered exclusion system, 10 years for serious offences, 5 years for moderate-risk offences, and permanent exclusion for the most serious offences, ensures proportionality and strengthens community confidence. National consistency is desirable to support enforcement and clarity.

Stay on licence without prejudice: family hardship and mental health

CMCF supports allowing temporary surrender of firearms and licences during mental health concerns, family hardship, relationship breakdown, or other risk-related circumstances.

This encourages responsible behaviour, reduces stigma, and supports early intervention.

Surrender should be permitted to police, the Registry, or licensed dealers (with mandatory notification).

Return should require health or risk assessment where relevant, review of new incidents, and clear timeframes and appeal rights.

Temporary surrender should be easily accessible, dignified, and procedurally clear.

The ACT should permit surrender to police, the Registry, or licensed dealers with a mandatory receipt and a maximum automatic hold period (for example, 90 days unless extended after review).

Return of firearms should require a documented risk assessment, a clear timeframe for review, and an independent appeal mechanism to protect procedural fairness.

Cross-jurisdiction notifications and outage resilience

With the NFR linking interstate events, licence holders must be promptly informed, and the system must be resilient to outages.

The ACT should require automatic licence-holder notifications when an interstate event affects their status, a graduated penalty framework that accounts for system outages, and a public incident reporting regime that documents outages and remedial steps.

During outages, a clear temporary exemption or paper-based process should be available, so lawful transactions are not unfairly penalised.

Duration of a firearms licence

CMCF supports allowing shorter licence terms in defined circumstances, such as new licence holders, temporary visa holders, emerging risk factors, or conditional licences.

Shorter terms allow closer monitoring where needed, while higher-risk firearms justify more frequent review.

Fairness requires proportionality across categories.

Closing Statement

In closing, CMCF acknowledges the ACT Government's commitment to strengthening firearms regulation in line with national expectations and the requirements of the National Firearms Register.

Events over the past few years have reinforced the urgent need for a modern, consistent, and digitally enabled firearms regulatory system that leaves no gaps in information-sharing or oversight.

As the ACT works with the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions to uplift its digital registry and ensure national consistency, CMCF emphasises legislative reform must be accompanied by **strong community education and awareness initiatives**.

Clear, multilingual communication about legal obligations, safe storage, risk-management measures, and the purpose of the NFR is essential to ensuring all residents, particularly those from the multicultural background,

understand their responsibilities and the safeguards in place to protect the community.

CMCF stands ready to continue working constructively with the ACT Government as these reforms progress, and we strongly support efforts to ensure that ACT legislation, policies, and digital systems are fit for purpose in this new national environment.

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