



Submission cover sheet

Inquiry into the Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026

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Submission to the Committee of the Inquiry of the Firearms (Public Safety)

Amendment Bill 2026

I am writing as your constituent acknowledging the tragic events at Bondi Beach on Sunday 14 December 2025. The loss of innocent life is deeply distressing. I extend my sincere condolences to the victims, their families, and the first responders who acted with bravery in confronting such violence. I say this as a former firearms trainer for the Australian Federal Police, (AFP) as a 32-year Australian Army infantry veteran, and as a person of Jewish decent whose extended family was rounded up by the Gestapo during World War Two, from their village Bad Bachau near the Black Forest in Germany, and were never seen again.

I am also an Environmental Scientist, now a small business owner and previously Senior Program Officer for a 'Caring for our Country' biodiversity project delivered jointly by the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. In this role I provided advice to federal, state, local and NGO stakeholders concerning the management of ecosystems of international significance. As a licenced firearms owner, I contribute to vertebrate pest management strategies for land owners, and I provide ethically harvested food for my family. Wild harvesting of feral introduced pest species contributes to the conservation of endemic plants and animals. It is also economically rational; I can provide 50kg of meat for my family at the cost of 1x \$2 cartridge, a short drive to a property where I have the land manager's authority to hunt, and a few hours of my time (equivalent commercial value of in excess of \$1500). As such, firearms are a 'tool of trade' for me, much akin to carpenters who have different hammers and saws to effectively craft timber, and race car drivers who use different tyres to optimise performance and safety.

So, I am deeply concerned by the speed with which the Bondi tragedy has been used to justify calls for further firearm restrictions at national, territory and state levels. The 1996 National Firearms Agreement, established following the Port Arthur massacre, was negotiated over several months in consultation with firearms experts and industry representatives. By contrast, I was appalled at the speed and un-democratic manner in which

the NSW and Federal Government's forced through their amendments to firearms legislation with what appeared to be an uninformed yet emotionally charged responses.

It is in this context that I welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into the ACT Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026. I offer the following observations for your consideration.

Root Causes of Violence

While firearms were the means used to commit brutal criminal offences in the Bondi attack, Australia has a long history of ideologically motivated violence occurring both with and without firearms. This fact indicates that focusing legislative responses solely on the weapon used to commit violent crime risks overlooking the underlying drivers of such violence.

The last twenty years has seen considerable changes in Australia's social-political circumstances. Over this period, the Australian government concluded its long-standing military operational commitments to Iraq and Afghanistan. In parallel, there has been a marked increase in migration with reports that, by 2023, more than 30% of Australians were born overseas, the highest number since 1892. Facilitated by the ubiquitous presence of technology that amplifies propaganda and polarises narratives, Australia has also experienced a rise in ISIS-inspired or extremist attacks and plots across multiple states during this time employing a range of methods. I consider, as do many others, that the three (war, immigration and terrorist attacks) are linked. Attacks include the 2014 Endeavour Hills police stabbings and 2018 Bourke Street attack (Victoria), the 2014 Parramatta attack and subsequent extremist plots in Holsworthy (NSW), the 2020 Kangaroo Point stabbing (Queensland), and knife attacks inspired by ISIS ideology (Western Australia). In some cases firearms were used, while in many others knives, vehicles, or other readily available means were employed. In this regard, let us not forget the Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) that were found (but not used) by the Akrams at Bondi, nor the fact that the Bali Bombing was conducted using agricultural fertiliser as the main ingredient of a car bomb. The perpetrators of the 911 attacks in New York used Stanley knives to subdue crew members and passengers of airplanes that were subsequently used as aerial bombs. The death toll from this heinous crime stands at nearly 3,000 people, yet it is not surprising that box cutter knives are still available in Bunnings and planes still fill the air space. The common element among terrorist attacks is not the type of weapon that is used to dispense hatred but rather the radicalisation

of individuals to the point that they feel that killing innocent citizens is a legitimate course of action.

All of the tragic events in Australia occurred under already stringent firearm control laws and demonstrate that extremist violence adapts to the environment and the means available. The consistent factor has not been access to a particular weapon, but the presence of radicalising ideology (in the case of Bondi antisemitism), and failures in early identification and intervention at both federal and state levels. International extremist propaganda has long encouraged individuals in countries with strict gun laws to use everyday tools to carry out attacks. This fact reinforces the reality that removing one method for committing a crime does not negate the intent nor the capacity to commit the offence using other means. Therefore, policy and legislative responses that focus narrowly on the tools used in a particular criminal incident risk obfuscating Australian governments' obligation to address the root causes of violence.

The Importance of National Security Coordination

What happened on Sunday 14th December at Bondi Beach was preventable and highlights systemic failures and shortcomings in the existing agencies entrusted by the Australian population to identify and mitigate threats to their wellbeing and way of life. The genesis of the attack was the in-action of the Federal and NSW Governments in response to a known danger to public safety. As early as 2019, Naveed Akram was known to ASIO as being aligned with ISIS and yet, 4 years later, his father (Sajid) was granted a firearms licence despite the fact that the firearms were registered to the same residential address as Naveed. Just 36 hours after the shootings, we find out (via US security agencies) that both Sajid and Naveed Akram went to the Philippines in the month prior to their killing spree with media commentary suggesting that they undertook military-style training there. Why was this planned travel not known to our own security services? And why was it not resolutely acted upon.

The Firearms Act 1996 (NSW) would have enabled the Commissioner of Police, at any time in the last 3 years, to have revoked Sajid Akram's firearms licence. The legislative basis for such a decision could have included that Sajid was not a 'fit and proper person [who] can be trusted to have possession of firearms without danger to public safety or the piece' (s.11 (3), Div.2). Further, the fact of Sajid's cohabitation with a known ISIS sympathiser (his son) should have provided the Commissioner with 'reasonable cause to believe that [Sajid

Nakram] may not personally exercise continuous and responsible control over firearms because of (a) the applicant's way of living or domestic circumstances' (s.11 (4), Div 2). Parallel provisions exist in the Firearms Act 1996 (ACT).

The courses of action that will prevent further terrorist attacks in Australia (and thus threats to 'Public Safety' in Canberra) do not gravitate around the imposition of further restrictions on firearms ownership. Section 19 of the Firearms Act 1996 (ACT) already provides considerable discretion to the Registrar to assess the suitability of individuals to hold a firearms licence including 'whether the registrar believes on reasonable grounds that information held by a law enforcement agency in relation to the individual indicates that it would be contrary to the public interest for the individual to have access to a firearm' (s.28 (1)). Such agencies include the AFP, a police service or force of a State, another Territory or a foreign country, the Department of Home Affairs (Cth), the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption, the NSW Crime Commission or any other entity prescribed by regulation (s.18, (2)). These are the agencies with the responsibility to combat and prevent radicalisation of individuals within our community, and the information and intelligence they gather provides the foundation upon which firearms ownership is the privilege of law-abiding members of the ACT community.

The ACT government Counter Terrorism Framework outlines the roles and responsibilities of the ACT Government in addressing terrorism and other forms of politically motivated violence. As you are aware, its work focusses on preventing terrorism using intelligence information and by addressing the sociological instigators of extremism. In my submission, in response to the Bondi attack the ACT government has an obligation to forensically review this framework to ensure that it enables effective communication and collaboration with these federal and state entities. Where weaknesses are identified in Australia's national security framework, the ACT government needs to use forums such as the Council for the Australian Federation to have them effectively dealt with. This may include, for example, advocating for more resourcing for ASIO, ASIS, AFP, ABF and the counter terrorism units of Australia's police forces, and the creation and enforcement of stronger immigration policies that deny entry to those whose ideologies fundamentally do not align with Australian values. And why doesn't Australia work more strongly with countries like Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand (known to have ISIS elements and sympathisers) in an effort to eliminate the ISIS threat that created the Bondi tragedy? These countries are known to have been the cradle that fostered

terrorists who have attacked Australian citizens in the past, and they are likely to be so again in the future.

Given the misdirected national discussion on firearms control that is now underway, I respectfully urge you to advocate for evidence-based legislation and policy that prioritises: confronting extremist ideology (including but not limited to antisemitism) and online radicalisation; intelligence coordination; and early intervention. Addressing these underlying issues is far more likely to improve public safety than measures that affect the approximately 7,258 residents of the ACT (<https://www.afp.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-03/LEX%203539.pdf>) who lawfully own and use firearms under the terms of the existing ACT Firearms Act.

Territorians deserve a serious and honest conversation about prevention of crime and public safety that targets causes rather than symbols, while preserving the rights of law-abiding citizens. We do not need emotive knee jerk reactions, enshrined in legislation, created by the need for politicians to be seen doing something.

I will now address specifically the Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026 (the 'Bill').

Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026

What I was hoping to see in the Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026 was a tougher stance on firearms related crime. Apart from addressing blueprints to 3D print firearms and parts, in my mind the Bill fails to do this.

A report by the Australian Institute (<https://australiainstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/P1893-Firearm-theft-in-Australia-Web.pdf>) states that “Theft of legal guns is now the main source of illegal guns in Australia, yet public information on the topic is scarce. This report compiles new data from state law enforcement agencies and other sources to find that over 9,000 firearms have been stolen since the start of 2020. At least 44,600 have been stolen over the past 20 years – one every four hours.”

I respectfully submit that the Bill would address this shocking circumstance by introducing tougher penalties for stealing, trafficking and unlawfully owning/possessing a firearm.

The Bill also fails to increase penalties for other firearms related crime.

Instead, it focuses on:

- Redefining the categories of individuals who can possess and use firearms
- Restricting the number of firearms an individual can possess and use
- Criminalising the possession of blueprints that can be used to create 3D-printed firearms.
- Recategorising the types of firearms that can be possessed and used

I wish address my submission to concerns arising from the first two dot-points:

Redefining the Categories of Individuals who can Possess and Use Firearms

The meaning of 'business or employment' needs to be clarified

Section 52A(1) of the Bill provides that licensee who possesses or uses a firearm for a 'relevant genuine reason' may possess no more than 10 firearms or a (different) number approved by the registrar. Section 52A(4)(b) specifies that the term 'relevant genuine reason' includes 'business or employment'.

The meaning of the term 'business or employment' is unclear. I proffer the following example to illustrate.

As a small family veteran owned and run business, I am multi-disciplinary. In addition to my other professional roles, I am a journalist who writes articles for multiple outdoor recreation magazines. The majority of these pieces are prepared for the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia's suite of magazines. Through journalism, I use my experiences as a hunter and Environmental Scientist to help educate shooters and hunters about the environmental challenges posed by feral introduced species, to inform readers about the habits and habitat of game species, and to advocate the principles of humane vertebrate pest management. I also regularly trial firearms accessories for the purpose of writing reviews for publication. Such accessories need to be mounted to a firearm that I am lawfully authorised to possess and use.

I would strongly contend, therefore, that my 'business or employment' provides a relevant genuine reason to possess and use firearms under s52A(1)(a) and s52A(4)(b) of the Bill. Specifically, my paid occupation is as a journalist in the specialised field of firearms use and management. The fact that I also do other work that does not relate to firearms journalism is not determinative my genuine need to possess and use firearms for my business and employment. What is important is that I have the requisite journalistic skills, that I have

long-standing professional experience in the field, that I have and a portfolio of published work, that I am connected with professionals within the firearms industry, and that I adhere to the professional standards required of me by law and policy.

The issue with the Bill is that the term ‘business or employment’ is so broad as to be virtually meaningless. It provides applicants with no guidance or confidence as to the relevant considerations upon which the registrar would decide that an applicant does – or does not – have a relevant genuine reason to use and possess a firearm (or firearms). From my perspective, the rationale for my use and possession of a firearm for business or employment reasons is self-evident. But would the registrar take the same view? It is entirely unclear as to what lines of businesses (and at what rate of effort) should be sufficient to satisfy the legal requirements. Instead, the provision grants the registrar an extraordinary degree of discretion that – in the event of dispute – would inevitably be difficult to appeal.

‘Recreational hunting and vermin control’ needs to be included as a ‘relevant genuine reason’ to possess and use firearms

Section 52A(4) provides that ‘a relevant genuine reason’ means: animal welfare, business or employment, occupational requirements relating to rural purposes, primary production, sport or target shooting, vertebrate pest animal control. Conspicuously missing from this definition is the term ‘recreational hunting’. Currently, an ACT firearms licence applicant is required to provide and prove at least one genuine reason for possessing or using a firearm; one such reason is ‘recreational hunting and vermin control’. This authority is granted by virtue of section 61 (Table 61) of the ACT Firearms Act but it is not mirrored by section 52A(4) of the Bill.

I fear this Bill is being used to railroad ‘recreational hunting’ out of the legislation.

Use of the phrase ‘vertebrate pest animal control’ is not a suitable substitute for the term ‘recreational hunting and vermin control’. While ‘vertebrate pest animal control’ *could* be interpreted by a registrar as being broad enough to include recreational hunters, equally on a narrow interpretation it applies only to those who are accredited pest managers under the Australian Environmental Pest Managers Association. I contend that most recreational hunters in the ACT are not.

I therefore submit that the language in the Bill provides too much discretion to the registrar to decide that ‘recreational hunting and vermin control’ is *not* a genuine reason to possess and use a firearm. I content that such a decision would be unreasonable.

Recreational hunters make a legitimate contribution to vertebrate pest management strategies. Hunters assist land managers by providing pest control services for free. The alternative is for the land holder to contract for professional services at a fee, to task farm hands to conduct the work, or to undertake the task themselves. The capacity of land holders to engage professional help is difficult to gauge, however there are numerous reports indicating that Australian farmers are under unprecedented financial pressures. In any event, the cost of pest control services will inevitably be onforwarded to the consumer, in a cost-of-living crisis no less. A farmer’s capacity to instead use their in-house personnel resources to manage invasive pests is entirely dependent on the competing demands of farm maintenance, animal welfare and health and safety considerations (including worker fatigue). It should be remembered too that recreational hunters offer their services for free during times of hardship after natural disasters. Floods and fire can lead to farmers having to shoot their livestock because they are wounded or there simply isn’t sufficient feed. Livestock exist in their millions on properties all over the country and, in times of natural disaster, recreational hunters undertake the difficult task of euthanasia in the interests of animal welfare, at their own cost to maintain the relationship with the farmer. It is important to note that hunters operating cross state and territory boundaries undertake this significant task.

Beyond commercial farmers, reports indicate the existence of over 60,000 hobby farms in Australia, with an average size of 50 acres or less. Small-scale land holdings such as these allow individuals and families to engage in farming and leisure activities where the land is not a primary source of income and when it generates no income at all. Not all small-scale land holders are licenced firearms owners, yet their properties have as much potential to harbour vertebrate pests as do agricultural holdings. Recreational hunters contribute to pest control on such properties on a daily basis.

Whether land is commercially, privately owned or in public hands, recreational hunting is a cost-effective method to help manage feral introduced species and should be considered as an integral component of any land managers vertebrate pest management strategy. Removing ‘recreational hunting and vermin control’ from within the specified genuine reasons for

holding a firearms licence under the ACT firearms legislation – or leaving the matter entirely at the discretion of the registrar - is arbitrary and unjustified.

Provision should exist to permit minors to conduct recreational hunting for vermin control

In the ACT, juniors (between the age of 12-18) may apply for a minor's firearms licence for the purpose of training, target shooting or competition shooting. This makes the ACT and Victoria the only Australian jurisdictions that make no provision for minors to use or possess a firearm for the purpose of recreational hunting. By contrast, in NSW, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, minors from the age of 10 or 12 (depending on the jurisdiction) can hunt with a firearm under the supervision of a licensed adult. In Tasmania, minors are permitted to hunt under the supervision of a licenced adult when they are above 16 years of age. In all jurisdictions that permit hunting by minors, the minor must be licenced *and* be in the presence of a licensed experienced adult. In some cases there is a maximum of two juniors per adult licensee. If the adult is a parent or legal guardian of the minor, the minor can hunt on private land with the landowner's permission.

I would content that granting authority for minors in the ACT to possess and use a firearm to participate in supervised hunting is one of the most effective methods of fostering a community of ethical and responsible adult firearms owners within your constituency. An ethical and responsible hunter needs more than good marksmanship and a theoretical knowledge of how to use firearms safely and responsibly. On the range, a minor will not learn the unique considerations of firearms safety that apply in the field, and they will not understand the aspects of animal anatomy that are crucial in the effective targeting and ethical despatch of vertebrates using a firearm. Further the experience of hunting under supervision develops disciplines such as tracking, navigation, weather prediction, as well as the survival and bushcraft skills that are essential for the safety and wellbeing of anyone who ventures into the outdoors. Skills that apply outside of hunting.

As it stands, the ACT firearms provisions regarding minors are incongruous. For example, my 15-year-old daughter is able to join me bowhunting for feral animals, but she is not permitted to hunt with a firearm for which she holds an ACT Minors Firearms Licence. By contrast, her under 18-year-old cousins (who may be standing 3 feet from her) in Queensland are permitted to do so.

Granting a minor authority to hunt under supervision is akin to permitting an adolescent with an 'L'plate to drive on public roads. There are known risks in allowing this to occur. But measures exist to mitigate these dangers including: a zero tolerance of alcohol and drugs, restrictions on passenger numbers, restrictions on the capacity of the vehicle driven, and – critically – the requirement for supervision by a fully licenced driver. Granting authority for minors to hunt subject to analogous provisions concerning (for example) firearm calibre and age would be the hallmark of an ACT legislature that is committed to genuine efforts to advance public safety as it relates to firearms ownership. In my mind this would directly, and indirectly advance Public Safety more than any other point raised in the Bill.

Restricting the Number of Firearms an Individual can Possess and Use

Hunters and shooters may require multiple (including duplicate) firearms

Regardless of the reason for which a licenced firearms owner uses and possesses firearms, different tasks require different firearms with various calibres and configurations.

For instance, for shooters and hunters who target live animals, different firearms are needed depending on the target species. The situation is no different whether a licensee is a commercial shooter who targets species for their living or is a recreational hunter who does so part time. Consider, for example, the following rifle calibres:

- **Small Bore** for small game like rabbits and hares
- **Medium Bore** for foxes, cats and the like.
- **Large Bore** for larger game like pigs, goats and deer
- **Monster Bore** for extra-large game like camels or buffalo.

Now consider:

- **Shotguns of various sizes** for birds on the wing – such as duck hunting in Victoria (in which ACT residents participate) and shooting pest birds like starlings at wineries.
- **Air rifles** for training minors in safe handling of firearms including their first shots at the range, and – more broadly - for shooting rats, mice and small birds.

If a licensee fails to use the correct calibre of firearm, he or she risks causing unnecessary suffering to the animal and breaching animal welfare regulations. Specifically, using a small calibre/ammunition firearm on a large animal will more likely wound it than achieve a humane dispatch. Furthermore, using a large calibre/ammunition firearm on a small animal

may obliterate it, thus removing any opportunity for wild harvest because the meat is unfit for human consumption.

In addition to needing different calibre firearms to deal with different sized vertebrates, a firearms licensee may genuinely require duplicate firearms in the same calibre. This is because different aiming devices will need to be fitted depending on whether the user intends to shoot during the day or after dark. Scopes that are ideal for daytime conditions include traditional glass optics. For night shooting, thermal scopes are more suitable. Becoming increasingly common and affordable, these types of scopes detect infrared heat signatures not visible light. While some thermal scopes can be used in both day and night conditions, their performance can be affected by factors like ambient temperature and heat reflection.

A further consideration is that firearm sighting systems are not readily interchangeable between different individuals or between different firearms owned by the same individual. In terms of swapping between authorised users, firearms and their sighting systems are zeroed into the eye of the owner, that is – they are sighted to the owner's unique biometrics. This is because everyone 'sees' differently. Thus, most firearms can only be used effectively and humanely by one person. In terms of removing and replacing equipment from one firearm to another, this is not something that is done lightly. The process is awkward, time consuming and risks damaging costly equipment. Because of this, scopes are commonly fitted to a firearm and then 'shot in' by the owner at a range to ensure they are properly calibrated for accuracy. The firearm and its scope are then maintained in this configuration. It is for these reasons that a hunter may require the same number and variety of firearms as a professional shooter - while the full-time shooter earns a living from their firearms, the part-time hunter requires the same tools to operate effectively and humanely.

While my predominant specialisation is in vertebrate pest management, I have also participated in clay target shooting. It is a family tradition; my grandfather was renowned in the discipline, and my father was so skilled that only a back injury prevented his selection for the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics clay target team. To this day, I periodically attend a Clay Target Club and use a trap (the device that throws the clay target) in my private time.

On the basis of this experience, I can attest that there are at least 20 different forms of regulated competition in clay target shooting. These can be grouped under the main headings of trap, skeet, and sporting clays. Each discipline offers a unique shooting experience and challenges different shooting skills; some require different gauges (calibres) and different

barrel lengths. So a firearms owner with one shotgun cannot compete effectively in a different discipline. The skills gained in clay shooting are intended to mirror different hunting techniques/methods so it stands to reason that a licensee may elect to possess and use a different set of firearms in competition to those used in the field.

The relevance of heritage firearms

There are many licensees who possess firearms for reasons that relate primarily to their provenance rather than their performance. For my own part I own five such firearms: two are over 60 years old, one is more than 70 years old, one is more than 100 years old, and two are from Australian companies that no longer exist. All five have heritage significance to myself and my family albeit none would likely qualify as collectors' pieces under the relevant provisions of the ACT Firearms Act. Some of the characteristics of these firearms (including age, weight, firing mechanism, or loading configuration) mean that they are not optimally suited for the purpose of hunting or shooting in all manners of weather or conditions. Nevertheless, these firearms are a treasured part of my family history and I strongly submit that I have a justifiable reason for owning them.

Three of the firearms were originally my grandfather's. He was a former Light Horseman, veteran of World War Two, and a member of the NSW Rural Protection Board entrusted with rabbit and pig eradication in the 1960s & 70s. While all of these firearms are in perfect working order, they are not my preferred hunting tools. One is a simple single shot rifle with no magazine that needs to be reloaded each and every shot. However, my grandfather taught my father the 'skill of arms' and the 'principles of marksmanship' with these firearms. In turn, my father taught my brother, sister and I with the same firearms. In more recent years, I have taught my wife and daughter the principles of responsible firearms use and marksmanship using them. So, that is three generations of one family who have been instructed in safe firearms handling with the same three firearms, with the prospect of continuing the family tradition in the future when my daughter is an adult with other own children. Each time I use these firearms, I feel the presence of both my father and grandfather with me, guiding me. Indeed, I am crying now simply typing this for fear of losing them.

Beyond these family heirlooms, I possess a World War One era .303 that is 106 years old. And there are literally 10's of 1,000's of these historic firearms in private hands. Like myself, the owners of such firearms are not necessarily 'collectors' as the term is understood in the ACT Firearms Act. Rather, they are people from across the country who gather at 'Skill of

Arms' meets at rifle ranges on weekends and who hunt large game with them. Our rationale in owning such a firearm is to hold, use and cherish a piece of Australia's military history – the spirit of ANZAC if you will.

Lastly, I own a lever action shotgun that was legally transferred to me when my wife's father emigrated back to England in his twilight years. My intent is to hold this firearm against my license until my daughter (who holds an ACT Minors Firearms Licence) reaches the age of 18 and holds her own adult firearms licence. At this point, I will transfer its ownership to her. This firearm represents one of the only family heirlooms that my daughter stands to own from my wife's side – most of the family's other possessions having been disposed of during multiple relocations during their lifetime.

As a former member of the AFP and 32-year Army veteran, I am proud to have been entrusted by the ACT authorities with a firearms licence that permits me to possess, use and maintain these heritage firearms. However, the arbitrary limits on firearms numbers that are imposed by the Bill threaten to see these firearms reduced to scrap under the proposed national buyback scheme. Would you willingly take away any other sector of the community's legacy, culture and sense of connection so readily?

The limits imposed by the Bill on firearms numbers are not evidence based

The considerations raised above illustrate the broad range of firearms that a licensee may need depending upon their circumstances. The limit of 10 firearms that is imposed by s.52A(1)(a) on those with 'a relevant genuine reason' is not evidence based and neither is the limit of 5 firearms imposed by s.52A(1)(f) in 'any other case' not otherwise specified.

The average number of firearms owned by licenced persons in the ACT is 3.16.

(<https://www.afp.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-03/LEX%203539.pdf>) This figure is blown out by collectors, some of whom may own scores of them. As such, the majority of Canberrans are unlikely to be affected by either the 10 or 5 firearm limits. There is, however, a legitimate sector of your community with the genuine need to own more than 5 and, in some cases, more than 10 firearms. This includes a group of recreational hunters who face the disproportionate burden of having their firearms limited to 5 or to having their authority to conduct recreational hunting removed altogether. It appears we are being penalised by virtue of our decision *not* to gain an income from our vertebrate pest management efforts and that, quite frankly, is un-Australian.

I speculate that the decision to specify a 5-firearm limit ‘in any other case’ responds directly to the fact that Sajid Akram was licenced to possess 6 firearms. So, a limit of 5 is (presumably) more politically palatable than a higher number. But such reasoning is entirely arbitrary and fundamentally misconstrues the circumstances of the Bondi shootings. Video footage of the incident showed the criminal pair using three firearms between them, reloading from belts around their waists. In reality, far more carnage could have ensued had the pair used only one firearm each supported by multiple magazines (regardless of size/capacity) held in their pockets or backpacks. This situation would be akin to the carriage of ammunition by police and soldiers who carry one firearm and multiple magazines. To have a real effect on public safety, instead of limiting firearms numbers the Bill should instead impose an upper limit on the number of magazines per firearm in the licensee’s possession. In truth most people only have one or two. By contrast, specifying an arbitrary limit of 5 firearms per licensee, based on the tragic incident at Bondi, achieves nothing.

Equally, the upper limit of 10 firearms imposed on those with a ‘relevant genuine reason’ is not supported by evidence either. As I have already stated, firearms licensees - both paid and unpaid – undertake a broad range of tasks. And many have firearms for reasons that relate more to heritage than to their performance. While for some individuals, 10 firearms may be sufficient, for others it will not.

Concerns regarding the proposed national buyback scheme

The Federal Government’s proposed national buyback scheme is unlikely to yield the type of firearms that criminals actually use. Based on the experience of previous buybacks, it is antiquated firearms (those which cost very little money, some less than \$100) that will be handed-in by law abiding firearms owners. As will occur elsewhere in the country, here in the ACT you will be presented with piles of old, wooden, bolt action or single shot heirlooms and not the type of firearm that was used at Bondi that is worth \$1000’s.

Further, such a buyback scheme is unlikely to provide adequate compensation to licenced firearms owners. In 1996, the Howard Government’s buybacks cost \$500,000. Today, the figure of \$1 billion is being touted by the Federal Government to support assertions that it intends the buyback to be fair. Such political assurances are illusory. Given considerations of inflation, industry has suggested that – to equal the provisions of the Howard era buyback - a figure of \$15 billion is more accurate. This is because the Howard government accounted for the handback of both the firearm and the ammunition and accessories associated with it. Our

current leaders must do the same. If firearms' accessories are not bought back at a fair market rate, they are likely to be sold instead on the open market or on the black market – a situation that would entirely defeat the purpose of the government's intervention.

It has also been unfortunate that some politicians, media and other commentators on the subject have been purposely using inflammatory and emotional language when talking about a possible buy back and the issue of firearms in general. Words such as 'dangerous' and 'high risk' shows no understanding of either firearms, sporting shooters or hunters and the rigorous measures we have to undertake to secure, transport and operate our tools of trade under current regulations. Having been a firearms trainer for the AFP I can tell you that what is 'high risk' and 'dangerous' is some members of our own police force who remain insufficiently familiar and competent with their issued firearms – even when they are entrusted to wear them in public every single day.

I ask that the ACT legislature engage fully with the Federal government in any and all deliberations concerning the imposition of a national buyback scheme and oppose it. The law-abiding firearms owners among your constituents should not be penalised for the acts of a criminal few.

Closing Observations

I am a proud and honest man who serves my country and my community, but the debate over the number of firearms one can possess has brought me to tears on multiple occasions. My fear is that the ACT Government will force me to choose between firearms with cultural, historical and family significance and the newer firearms I use when conducting recreational hunting for vermin control. Indeed, I am concerned that my authority to hunt may be removed entirely.

My dad tells stories of going to and from school on the bus (between 13-17 years old) with his school cadet issued SMLE .303 in the 1960's - and carrying ammunition too! The Commonwealth Cadet scheme ended in the late 70's, but I still remember going to the range on school-organised events in the early 1980's. These school-based events taught skills like patience, focus, discipline and self-control.

Instead, from the 1950's through to the 1970's firearms were seen as just another tool. Families used them routinely for hunting game, controlling pests, and for recreation. Children would ride their pushbikes to the outskirts of town, rifle in hand, and shoot rabbits on

weekends and after school. Some even rode the train with their firearms and rabbits and would sell them to passers-by on the way home.

To gain a sense of this era I commend to you a social-media post that I published on Heiman Habitat's public Facebook page (23 December 2025). With a contemporary photo of kids safely handling firearms in public, this post received 2,200+ reactions, 519 comments and 485 shares. This is the highest number of reactions I have had to any social media post in the 12 years since Heiman Habitat first established a Facebook presence. Among the people who responded to the post are your constituents, people who deplore the way that law abiding citizens are held to account for the crimes of the few bad eggs who exist among us.

The point here is that the firearms are not the problem. Fuelled by immigration in the 1970s and mass migration in the 2000s, Australian society has now fundamentally changed. In my youth, there were no terrorist shootings. Indeed, Australians did not feel the scourge of terrorism on our shores until 2001, the same year that 19 terrorists, driven by extremist ideologies and supported by radicalised networks, hijacked four planes and killed nearly 3,000 innocent people whose only fault was to be governed by a Western democratic system of government. Extremism is fed by ubiquitous technology that cultivates radicalisation that festers when it is not nipped in the bud. This is the problem that leads to tragedies like the Bondi shooting and any number of other terrorism related crimes – whether committed by firearms or not. This Bill does nothing to address this underlying reality.

Public safety will not be advanced through this Bill as it stands, but it will cause stress to many of your constituents and trauma among others. When governments do this kind of thing, forcing themselves into the living rooms and lives of their constituents, it creates distrust. Indeed, it can lead to anti-government sentiments, which can in-turn instigate the development of so-called 'sovereign citizens' within our community. Yet extremism, of all sorts, is the very cancer that your Bill aims to confront is it not?

The Firearms Act 1996 (ACT) already provides provisions that – if properly applied – would have prevented a circumstance such as we witnessed at Bondi Beach in December 2025. The issues involved are too important to justify legislative change without adequate consultation.

So, I commend the Members of the Legislative Assembly for directing the establishment of a Committee of the Inquiry of the Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026. And I implore members of the Committee to consult widely with subject matter experts from

industry, government and from among representative agencies such as the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia and the National Farmer's Federation.

Thank you for your time and for your service to our community. If required, I am willing to address the committee at a hearing.

Yours sincerely,

Husband, Dad, Son, Army Veteran, Former member of the AFP, Environmental Scientist, Business owner, Author, Journalist, 8th Generation Australian, Descendent of German Jews.

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