



# Submission cover sheet

## Inquiry into Legislation on proposed firearms reform

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**From:**  
**To:** [LA Committee - Legal](#)  
**Subject:** Submission for Inquiry into Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026  
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Submission to the Legislative Assembly

Re: Proposed Amendments to the Firearms Act 1996 (ACT)

To the Honourable Members of the Assembly,

I write in relation to the tragic events at Bondi, the subsequent announcement by the Chief Minister, Andrew Barr, and the Introduction of the Firearms (Public safety) Amendment Bill 2026 regarding proposed amendments to ACT firearms legislation.

At the outset, I extend my deepest sympathies to the victims, their families, and the first responders who placed themselves in harm's way. Such incidents shock the nation and demand careful reflection. However, it is precisely because these matters are serious that legislative responses must be measured, evidence-based, and properly directed at the root causes of the failure.

#### 1. Enforcement Failures, Not Legislative Gaps

Australia already operates under some of the strictest firearms regulations in the world, including those introduced following the 1996 reforms under the Firearms Act 1996 framework. The overwhelming majority of licensed firearms owners comply fully with all statutory requirements and pose no risk to public safety.

Available reporting indicates that at least one perpetrator in the Bondi incident had previously been known to federal authorities, including Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO). If individuals of concern were known to intelligence or law enforcement agencies, serious questions arise as to:

- Whether appropriate inter-agency information sharing occurred;
- Whether existing “fit and proper person” provisions were properly applied;
- Whether available powers to suspend or revoke licences were exercised.

Under current law, firearms licences may be suspended or revoked on the basis of associations, allegations of violence, mental health concerns, or other risk indicators. The fact that individuals with extremist associations may have remained licensed suggests not a deficiency in the legislation, but a failure of oversight and enforcement.

Extremism—not lawful licensing—was the cause. Expanding restrictions on compliant licence holders will not address failures in intelligence coordination or

intervention.

## 2. Opposition to Specific Proposed Measures

### A. Caps on Firearm Ownership

The proposed caps on firearm numbers fail to account for the practical realities of legitimate use.

For pest control, different calibres and configurations are necessary depending on species and terrain. Humane pest management requires appropriate calibre selection to ensure single-shot dispatch of larger animals.

For competitive shooters, it is common to maintain:

- A primary and secondary competition firearm;
- Firearms configured for different disciplines;
- Equipment unsuited for field conditions (for example, a 6kg precision rifle valued at over \$10,000 is impractical for scrub or undulating terrain).

Imposing arbitrary caps disproportionately affects individuals who lawfully participate in both pest management and competitive shooting.

### B. Reclassification of Straight-Pull, Lever-Release and Pump-Action Firearms to Category C

Many sporting competitors rely on straight-pull and lever-release platforms to remain competitive internationally, where semi-automatic firearms are permitted.

Reclassification would severely disadvantage Australian athletes without demonstrable public safety benefit.

In agricultural pest control contexts, these actions allow efficient and humane follow-up shots, reducing suffering and improving operational effectiveness.

### C. Removal of Supervised Handling by Unlicensed Individuals

A complete prohibition on unlicensed individuals handling firearms is overly broad.

When conducted:

- On an approved range,
  - Under direct 1:1 supervision by a qualified instructor,
- the risk is minimal. Such supervised access is often part of introductory training and safety education. A more proportionate approach would preserve supervised instructional use while maintaining safeguards.

### D. Listing of Belt-Fed firearms in any capacity

Under the current legislation belt-fed firearms are already illegal given all firearms fed from a belt are automatic weapons; a single trigger activation produces a sustained rate of fire rather than a singular; these are used by military members worldwide and not used by privately licensed shooters within Australia. The inference to a "Belt-Fed Firearm" incorrectly came from a press conference held by Mr. Minns based off the shooter using a bandolier, these are also a commonly utilised device by recreational hunters and pest controllers to allow them to carry additional ammunition when

completing activities with tube-fed firearms. No belt-fed firearm is available to civilians, and even if they were they are illegal under Firearms Act 1996 as they are an automatic firearm.

#### E. Reduction of Licence Validity from Five Years to Two

Reducing licence validity to two years would significantly increase administrative burden on the ACT Firearms Registry, which remains a largely paper-based system with limited operating hours.

This would:

- Increase renewal volumes dramatically;
- Divert resources from compliance and intelligence work;
- Create inefficiencies without measurable public safety gains.

Maintaining the current five-year period achieves regulatory oversight without unnecessary strain on administrative capacity.

### 3. Areas of Support

While I oppose several elements of the proposed reforms, I support the following:

#### A. Restrictions on Temporary Visa Holders

Limiting firearms licences to citizens and appropriately established permanent residents is reasonable. Consideration could be given to allowing permanent residents to apply after a defined period of demonstrated residence (for example, five years), ensuring they meet the statutory “fit and proper person” test.

#### B. Improved Inter-Agency Communication

Enhanced information-sharing between federal agencies such as:

- Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), and
  - Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC),
- and state or territory police services is essential.

Current legislation already permits licence suspension upon allegations of assault, AVOs, or WPOs. Firearms owners are subject to substantial scrutiny, including:

- Safe storage inspections at reasonable times;
- Disclosure requirements during RBT stops;
- Ongoing compliance monitoring.

Where inter-agency communication fails, risk persists regardless of additional restrictions.

#### C. National Firearms Register

I support the expedited implementation of a National Firearms Register. A unified database would:

- Improve tracing of illegally held firearms;
- Reduce jurisdictional confusion;
- Assist lawful interstate transport for competitive purposes;
- Prevent administrative delays or temporary seizures due to inter-state database limitations.

Events such as those in Porepunkah and Wieambilla involved unlicensed individuals with illegal firearms. A properly maintained national system would improve accountability across jurisdictions.

#### 4. Broader Considerations

Australia's 1996 reforms have already contributed to significantly lower rates of firearm violence over the past decades. The evidence demonstrates that lawful firearms ownership under strict regulation is not the primary driver of such rare but tragic events.

Criminals and extremists do not comply with legislation. Additional restrictions on those who already comply do not address radicalisation, intelligence failures, or unlawful possession.

Punitive measures applied broadly to responsible citizens for the actions of a small number of radicalised individuals risk undermining confidence in evidence-based governance.

#### 5. Conclusion

The proposed reforms warrant careful scrutiny and genuine consultation with:

- Sporting organisations,
- Agricultural stakeholders,
- Volunteer pest controllers,
- Industry professionals, and
- Law enforcement experts.

The ACT Government has previously demonstrated a capacity for measured and consultative policymaking. I respectfully urge the Assembly to:

- Delay passage of the current bill;
- Conduct thorough investigation into the inter-agency failures revealed by the Bondi incident;
- Ensure reforms are targeted at systemic weaknesses rather than compliant licence holders;
- Maintain proportionate, evidence-based regulation.

Removing privileges from all licensed owners in response to isolated extremist violence would represent a disproportionate and misdirected response.

Public safety is best served not by reactive expansion of restrictions, but by proper enforcement of existing laws, improved intelligence coordination, and accountability where systems fail.

Respectfully submitted,

Zachary McClenahan-Brown