



Submission cover sheet

Inquiry into Legislation on proposed firearms reform

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The Committee,

Please accept this submission from a law-abiding citizen who is deeply concerned about proposed additional changes to firearms legislation. Not one of these proposals address the real issue that was the catalyst in these rushed and poorly planned changes. The topic of a Firearms Legislation Review is a complex issue.

Australian States and Territories have among the tightest Firearm Legislation in the world. Further to this, the ACT has the tightest Firearms Legislation in the country. The incidence of firearms related offences has been steadily decreasing for decades even though the number of registered owners and firearms has increased. So the question must be asked "Why amend the legislation at all?" Rushing through amendments to current legislation without balance and careful consideration has a real possibility of failing to attain the intended purpose. Introducing yet more laws will clog the system with red tape and distract police from undertaking more critical law enforcement activities. If the purpose of the amendments before the committee listed below is to make our community safer, it is very doubtful to succeed. My views on the proposed changes and their consequences is briefly addressed below.

1. LIMIT THE NUMBER OF FIREARMS SOMEONE CAN POSSESS AND USE

I understand that many believe less firearms mean less crime. However, the evidence and historical records show otherwise. Criminals will not be effected by these amendments at all. Illegal firearms are already in the community and continue to enter Australia unchecked. Stronger Border Controls will do more to address this than imposing limits on law abiding citizens.

I am a competition shooter and recreational hunter. I regularly compete in both shotgun and rifle matches. To participate and be competitive, specific types of firearms are needed, and in a range of calibres. Generally a rimfire, a 22cal centrefire, a midsized centrefire say 6 & 6.5mm, long range centrefire of 7mm or 30cal, Big Bore centrefire and then a minimum of 3 shotguns. One shotgun being 12g, a back up gun in the case of breakdowns etc, then a smaller gauge for specialty events and possibly a side by side. That's nine firearms and I haven't mentioned what I require for hunting and vermin or feral animal control.

The Firearms Registry already has the authority to decline 'Permits to Acquire' if the Register is of the opinion the applicant cannot provide a genuine reason or need for the additional firearm. For an active hunter or recreational shooter 5 firearms is not sufficient. This is especially true for shooters like myself who travel interstate and internationally and hunting small game to large and dangerous game.

2. RECATEGORISE THE TYPES OF FIREARMS

Changing the categories of certain firearms will have absolutely no effect on public safety. One or more of the firearms used in the Bondi incident was clearly not a legal firearm. Did knowing the shotgun was a prohibited firearm deter the operator from selecting that firearm? We all know the answer – not one bit. The damage, carnage or whatever terminology used in atrocities' like Bondi are the result of indiscriminate firing into large groups. The speed of reloading, the type of action, magazine capacity or other mechanical factors would have had

little or no effect on the outcome. If the perpetrators drove a truck into the same crowd the outcome would probably be worse. Look at the knife related crime figures. Recent tightening of legislation on carrying knives and machetes has not reduced assaults using these types of weapons. In fact bladed weapon offences continue to increase at an alarming rate.

Most if not all self-opening or self-closing firearms should be or already are restricted to a magazine capacity the same as gas operated firearms. Reclassifying is completely unnecessary and will only result in becoming surplus as the current lawful owner will not qualify for a Category C Licence. This means nearly all these firearms will be required to be handed in should the Gun Buy Back program be introduced. The number of firearms in the community will then increase as these firearms will be replaced by owners purchasing additional Category B Firearms.

Straight Pull Rifles are typically very expensive often commanding prices in excess of \$20,000 or more. These firearms should most definitely not be re-classified. Straight Pull Rifles are typically extremely well made, hand crafted and produced in limited numbers. Many makes and models are available with interchangeable barrels. I have one such firearm and presently have on order additional barrels in different calibres. My intention is to dispose of numerous Category B Firearms and purchase additional barrels for the straight pull rifle. Thus, the total number of firearms would be lowered. However, reclassifying them will mean myself and others will now buy additional Category B firearms completely reversing the government's intention of reducing the number of firearms in society. As an example, I was going to dispose of half a dozen rifles and have them all replaced by just one Straight Pull firearm. A sensible and convenient way to reduce the number of firearms. Firearms such as these are also the safest to store – being modular the Receiver is easily separated from the barrels and trigger, which is also separated from the bolt making it nearly impossible for intruders to steal, assemble and operate. Disassembly like this is just not possible with any other type of firearm.

Straight Pull Firearms are no quicker to fire than other Firearm Categories. Straight Pull firearms are not rapid fire firearms. Rapid Fire firearms were made illegal many years ago.

3. PROHIBIT BELT FED FIREARMS

It is perplexing to understand where this term or title came from – perhaps video games, who knows. I notice the terminology used by politicians and the media was originally Belt Fed Shotguns. The fact is the only “Belt Fed Firearms” were Military Machine Guns which have NEVER been approved for civilian use. You would be advised to remove all references to “Belt Fed Firearm”. Introducing legislation on a subject that is already legislated is completely superfluous and unnecessary.

4. MAKE IT AN OFFENSE TO POSSESS A DIGITAL BLUEPRINT TO MAKE A FIREARM USING TECHNOLOGY SUCH AS 3D PRINTING

A blueprint is generally accepted to be the final and approved plan or technical drawing including dimensions and engineering requirements for the construction or manufacture of an item. Will this legislation make it an offense for someone who has, when purchased a legal firearm has included in the packaging, schematic drawings of the firearm and its parts? Does it also make in

offense to see schematics on the internet of firearm related items. This legislation will be an absolute nightmare to administer and enforce.

To use the terminology “**SUCH AS 3D PRINTING**” without being specific means different people will interpret the term differently. All modern Lathes, Milling Machines, Shapers, Pantographs and other machines are electronic nowadays. From my understanding 3D Printing is limited to polymers and plastics which may produce non stressed firearm parts. An entire or complete firearm printed by a 3D Printer cannot withstand the pressure generated firing such a firearm. In nearly every case discharging a firearm made by these means would almost certainly result in serious injury to the user.

Does this mean it will be an offence if a person obtains “Parts Lists including Diagrams” of a firearm so that broken parts can be correctly ordered to repair such firearms in the event of wear and tear or breakages?

FACTS

1. Implementing Restrictions on the number of privately owned firearms will backfire. If these proposed changes are introduced the number of registered firearms owners will increase. Additionally the number of firearms will also increase. Evidence of this can already be seen in the current surge in licence applications in other states.
2. Re-categorising certain firearm types cannot make our society safer.
3. Prohibiting something that is already prohibited is senseless.
4. Introducing legislation on a vague non-specific tool cannot be successful and will not make our community safer.

These proposed amendments to legislation are unnecessary will not, and cannot make our society safer. Criminals always have, and always will, disregard the law. Burdening law abiding respectable members of our community with these changes will not achieve the intended outcome. Criminals and terrorist groups will continue to go about their activities as they have always done no matter what additional laws are imposed on law abiding citizens.

Instead, direct funds and manpower to addressing the real issue of criminal investigations and monitoring and acting on suspicious activities. If agencies had done what the people of Australia expected them to do, the Bondi incident would never have occurred.

Yours faithfully

John Sankey