



# Submission cover sheet

## Inquiry into Legislation on proposed firearms reform

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ACT Legislative Assembly  
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8 April 2026

Dear Ms Barry

*Chiaka*

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Standing Committee of Legal Affairs' Inquiry into Legislation on Proposed Firearms Reform.

The ACT Government Submission provides insight into the development of the Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026 and Firearms (Firearm Prohibition Orders) Amendment Bill 2026 by outlining the context, policy intention, issues and safeguards of the amendments included in the Bills.

The Submission also provides a Government Response to e-Petition *E-PET-002-26 – Firearms Reform – Evidence Based Policy and Proper Consultation* which was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 26 March 2026.

I thank the Standing Committee for this opportunity and look forward to the delivery of the Inquiry report in due course.

Yours sincerely



Tara Cheyne MLA,  
Acting Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services

Encl

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# ACT GOVERNMENT SUBMISSION

ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on  
Legal Affairs

Inquiry into Legislation on Proposed Firearms Reform

March 2026



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Justice and Community Safety Directorate acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region.

We respect the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, and their continuing culture and contribution they make to the Canberra region and the life of our city.

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## INTRODUCTION

The ACT Government welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Standing Committee on Legal Affairs' (the Committee) *Inquiry into Legislation on Proposed Firearms Reform* (the Inquiry).

The proposed firearms reforms that are the subject of the Inquiry represent a critical component of the Government's multifaceted strategy to ensure public safety and limit the risk of gun violence following the tragic terror attacks at Bondi Beach on 14 December 2025.

This Submission seeks to assist the Committee by providing information on the operation and policy intention of the amendments in the Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026 (the Public Safety Bill) and the Firearms (Firearm Prohibition Orders) Amendment Bill 2026 (the FPO Bill), and the safeguards incorporated into the amendments to mitigate any potential issues that may arise.

This Submission is intended to supplement the information presented in the Explanatory Statements and presentation speeches of the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Dr Marisa Paterson MLA for the Bills.

This Submission also examines the issues raised in e-Petition *E-PET-002-26 – Firearms Reform – Evidence Based Policy and Proper Consultation* (the Petition), petitioned by Ms Nicole Small and sponsored by Mr James Milligan MLA.

This Submission addresses the matters raised in the Petition to assist the Committee in its Inquiry. In accordance with Standing Order 100, the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services will lodge a response to the Petition with the Clerk for presentation to the Legislative Assembly within three months of tabling of the Petition. However, the Government considers that the information presented in this Submission constitutes the Government's substantive response to the Petition.

## FIREARMS (PUBLIC SAFETY) AMENDMENT BILL 2026

### CONTEXT FOR REFORMS

#### THE NATIONAL FIREARMS AGREEMENT

Australia's reputation for effective firearms laws is built upon a foundation of decisive inter-jurisdictional action. Following the events of 1996, the rapid negotiation and subsequent adoption of the National Firearms Agreement (NFA) across all Australian jurisdictions demonstrated a uniform commitment to public safety. The NFA was a watershed moment for Australian gun control, resulting in the surrender and destruction of 600,000 legal and illegal firearms; an estimated reduction of 20-30% of all privately owned firearms.<sup>1</sup>

However, the landscape of firearm ownership in 2026 has changed significantly in the last 30 years, with over 4.1 million registered firearms in Australia in 2026, more than at any time in 1996.<sup>2</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> University of New South Wales, *Case Study: The National Firearms Agreement*, <<https://www.howardlibrary.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/2021-01/Case%20Study%20National%20Firearms%20Agreement.pdf>>.

<sup>2</sup> The Hon Tony Burke MP, 'Record number of firearms in Australia show need for gun reform laws,' *Australian Government* (Webpage, 18 January 2026) <<https://minister.homeaffairs.gov.au/TonyBurke/Pages/record-number-of-firearms-in-australia-show-need-for-gun-reform-laws.aspx>>.

types of firearms available have also evolved alongside advancements in technology, with developments in 3D-printing posing novel threats to public safety. This concentration of firearms across Australia exhibits the need for regulating both the types and volume of firearms in the community.

## THE BONDI ATTACK

On 14 December 2025, an antisemitic terror attack on Jewish Australians took place at Bondi Beach, New South Wales (NSW), resulting in the tragic loss of 15 lives and the wounding of a further 40 individuals (the Bondi attack). The Bondi attack was the worst mass shooting and deadliest terror incident in modern Australian history since the Port Arthur massacre in 1996, exposing critical vulnerabilities in the control and regulation of firearms across Australia.

At the meeting of National Cabinet in the wake of the Bondi attack, leaders agreed that strong, decisive and focused action was needed on gun law reform. This included renegotiating the NFA to ensure that it remains as robust as possible in a dynamic security environment. To progress these changes, all First Ministers committed to develop options for ambitious gun reforms in each jurisdiction, including:

1. limiting the number of firearms to be held by any one individual;
2. limiting open-ended firearms licensing and the types of guns that are legal, including modifications;
3. Australian citizenship being a condition of holding a firearms licence;
4. allowing for additional use of criminal intelligence to underpin firearms licensing that can be used in administrative licensing regimes; and
5. accelerating work on standing up the National Firearms Register.<sup>3</sup>

To support the delivery of these reforms, the Commonwealth Government also announced the introduction of a National Gun Buyback Scheme (Buyback Scheme), which was established under the *Combatting Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism (Firearms and Customs Laws) Act 2026* (Cth). The Commonwealth Government pledged to meet the costs of purchasing surplus, newly banned and illegal firearms with States and Territories on a 50:50 basis, with participation in the Buyback Scheme conditional on States and Territories agreeing to the ambitious reforms by March 2026 and legislating the reforms no later than 1 July 2026.

## FIREARMS IN THE ACT

There are an estimated 23,000 registered firearms in the ACT and 7000 firearms licences.<sup>4</sup> Table 1 illustrates the estimated number of firearms and firearms licences by State and Territory as of December 2025.

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<sup>3</sup> The Hon Anthony Albanese MP, 'Media Statement - Meeting of National Cabinet', *Australian Government* (Webpage, 15 December 2025) <<https://www.pm.gov.au/media/meeting-national-cabinet-8>>

<sup>4</sup> The Hon Tony Burke MP, 'Record number of firearms in Australia show need for gun reform laws,' *Australian Government* (Webpage, 18 January 2026) <<https://minister.homeaffairs.gov.au/TonyBurke/Pages/record-number-of-firearms-in-australia-show-need-for-gun-reform-laws.aspx>>.

**Table 1: Number of firearms and firearms licences by State and Territory<sup>5</sup>**

State or Territory	Number of firearms	Number of firearms licences
ACT	22,857	7,315
NSW	1,158,654	260,946
NT	55,678	14,268
Qld	1,143,895	231,732
SA	329,580	61,498
Tas	156,339	36,965
Vic	974,279	243,851
WA	272,453	73,166
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,113,735</b>	<b>929,741</b>

These figures represent only the number of registered firearms in each jurisdiction, and do not account for the numbers of unregistered firearms circulating within illegal markets that are acquired and trafficked by organised criminal groups. In a report published by the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC) in 2016, the ACIC conservatively estimated that there are 260,000 firearms in the domestic illicit market, but noted that the exact extent cannot be determined due to the unavailability of historical data prior to the implementation of the NFA.<sup>6</sup>

## AMENDMENTS IN THE BILL

Following the Bondi attack and the historic consensus of National Cabinet to strengthen responses to gun violence, the Government has moved promptly to strengthen the ACT's firearms framework to promote the safety of all Canberrans. The Public Safety Bill amends the *Firearms Act 1996* (Firearms Act) to:

1. Limit the number of firearms that can be possessed or used;
2. Recategorise the types of firearms that can be possessed or used;
3. Prohibit belt-fed firearms; and
4. Introduce an offence to possess digital blueprints for the computer-aided manufacture of firearms and firearm parts.

The policy intention of the Public Safety Bill is to improve public safety by introducing quantitative limits on the possession and use of firearms, restricting access to high-capacity and rapid-fire weapons, and prohibiting the possession of blueprints for the illegal manufacture of firearms.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, *Illicit Firearms in Australia* (Report, October 2016) 7.

These measures are intended to reduce the capacity for harm caused by the misuse or diversion of firearms to illicit markets and will prevent the proliferation of untraceable and illegal weapons that threaten the security of the ACT community.

These reforms are introduced alongside legislation in other jurisdictions to further improve gun safety across Australia, and are progressed in tandem with ongoing work to renegotiate the NFA, implement the Buyback Scheme, review the Firearms Act and operationalise the National Firearms Register (NFR).

## CONSULTATION

JACS conducted targeted consultation with key internal stakeholders in the development of the amendments giving effect to the National Cabinet options for reform to ensure that these reforms will operate effectively in practice and are compliant with human rights. All amendments in the Bill were drafted in close consultation with ACT Policing and the ACT Firearms Registry. The amendments have also been introduced by the Government in the Assembly on the understanding that their passage would allow for public scrutiny and examination of the proposed reforms.

Additionally, in late 2025, the Justice and Community Safety Directorate (JACS) undertook broad consultation with community stakeholders on potential reforms to enable ACT's participation in the National Firearms Register and other related reforms to firearms legislation, including the introduction of an offence for the possession of digital blueprints for the computer-aided manufacture of firearms.

## LIMIT THE NUMBER OF FIREARMS POSSESSED OR USED

### THE AMENDMENT

The Public Safety Bill introduces numerical limits on the number of firearms a licensee can possess or use.<sup>7</sup> Under this amendment, a licensee will be limited to possessing five firearms, unless certain exceptions apply.

These exceptions include where a licensee requires a firearm for a relevant genuine reason, which includes animal welfare, business or employment, occupational requirements relating to rural purposes, primary production, sport or target shooting or vertebrate pest animal control. A licensee who requires a firearm for one or more of these genuine reasons will be entitled to possess up to 10 firearms or a number approved by the registrar subject to any requirements prescribed by regulation.

Similarly, holders of a composite entity licence, firearms dealer licence or collector licence will not be subject to any numerical limits, in recognition of the commercial, conservation or occupational purposes for these types of licences that may require the possession or use of larger volumes of firearms. These exceptions also recognise the strict regulatory requirements that apply to these types of licences, that subject such licensees to a significantly higher level of oversight.

These limits apply as a condition of a firearms licence. It is an offence to contravene a condition of a firearms licence pursuant to section 45 of the Firearms Act.

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<sup>7</sup> Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026 clause 4 (new section 52A).

## POLICY INTENTION OF THE AMENDMENT

The policy intention underlying this amendment is to proactively enhance public safety by addressing the systemic risks inherent in unrestricted firearms ownership. This amendment recognises that higher numbers of firearms in the community increases the risk of harm, both in cases of mass casualty and individual firearms-related deaths. The amendment also seeks to limit the proliferation of private arsenals, to reduce the risk of large-scale thefts and the subsequent diversion of firearms into the illegal market. By introducing these limits, this amendment seeks to ensure that the volume of firearms in the community remains commensurate with genuine need.

### *Limiting the risks of firearm-related harm*

Research suggests that there is a correlation between limiting the availability of firearms following the Port Arthur massacre and the decline in firearm-related harm in the immediate years that followed. After the Port Arthur massacre, over 600,000 newly prohibited firearms were purchased under the 1996-1997 Australian Firearms Buyback. Following the Buyback and the subsequent introduction of 26 uncompensated amnesties, over 1 million firearms were surrendered between 1996 and 2015, resulting in a dramatic decrease in firearms in Australia.<sup>8</sup>

Studies suggest that the post-1996 firearms reforms have been effective in reducing mass shootings and total firearms deaths. In comparing the rates of mass shootings prior to and after 1996, there were 13 mass shootings in the 18 years before the Port Arthur massacre. Modelling indicates that, had mass shootings continued at this rate, 16 mass shooting incidents would have been expected by 2018, although none had occurred during this time.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, studies have noted a downward trend in firearm-related harm after 1996, with the rates per 100,000 of total firearm deaths, firearm homicides and firearm suicides declining at more than twice their preexisting rates after the introduction of the NFA.<sup>10</sup>

On a broader scale, both domestic and international studies have found a direct correlation between reduced firearm prevalence and a decrease in firearm-related deaths. This evidence was demonstrated in Victoria, which had moved early to introduce significant firearms reforms before the Port Arthur massacre, and experienced more rapid reductions in firearm related harm and deaths than other jurisdictions.<sup>11</sup> Similar findings were observed on studies examining the impact of law reform in Queensland, South Australia, Ontario and Washington DC.<sup>12</sup>

Building on this evidence base and on the success of the NFA post-1996, this amendment recognises that lower firearm availability is fundamentally correlated with lower rates of firearm-related harm in the community. This amendment addresses the contemporary challenge of ownership density in the

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<sup>8</sup> Robin S. McLeod, MD et al, *A Public Health Approach to Prevent Firearm Related Injuries and Deaths*, Annals of Surgery, Vol 274, No 4, October 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Robin S. McLeod, MD et al, *A Public Health Approach to Prevent Firearm Related Injuries and Deaths*, Annals of Surgery, Vol 274, No 4, October 2021.

<sup>10</sup> Simon Chapman, PhD et al, *Fatal Firearms Incidents Before and After Australia's 1996 National Firearms Agreement Banning Semiautomatic Rifles*, Annals of Internal Medicine, Vol 169, No 1, March 2018; Robin S. McLeod, MD et al, *A Public Health Approach to Prevent Firearm Related Injuries and Deaths*, Annals of Surgery, Vol 274, No 4, October 2021.

<sup>11</sup> J Ozanne-Smith et al, Victorian Department of Human Services, *Firearm related deaths: the impact of regulatory reform*, 2004.

<sup>12</sup> J Ozanne-Smith et al, Victorian Department of Human Services, *Firearm related deaths: the impact of regulatory reform*, 2004.

Territory, by proactively limiting opportunities for firearms to be misused, whether through accident, self-harm, or extremist violence.

### *Reduce the risk of stockpiling and theft*

The accumulation of firearms by an individual presents a dual challenge to public safety, by increasing both the probability and the consequences of theft. Concentrating a large number of firearms within a single residence significantly elevates its profile as a high-value target for organised crime. This increases the severity of theft, if a single burglary is able to result in a large influx of firearms into the illicit market or arm criminal networks with multiple weapons.<sup>13</sup>

The Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission has found that theft is the primary contemporary diversion method of legal weapons to illicit markets, with many jurisdictions reporting an increase in the percentage of firearms stolen from premises in regional or isolated locations.<sup>14</sup> Data from the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) shows that firearm thefts most commonly involve more than one weapon.<sup>15</sup> In the Senate Inquiry on the ability of Australian law enforcement authorities to eliminate gun-related violence in the community, the AIC submitted that the main locations for firearm theft between 2005 to 2006 and 2008 to 2009 were private residences, where firearms were stolen from secure receptacles in 58% of reported incidents between 2005 to 2009.<sup>16</sup> Between 2008 and 2018, the number of firearm theft incidents increased by 15% and the number of stolen firearms increased by 35%.<sup>17</sup> This suggests the number of firearms stolen per theft incident is increasing, and that the current regulations on firearms ownership are not sufficient to prevent weapons from entering the black market.

These risks specifically informed the five-firearm limits introduced by Western Australia in 2024, to mitigate the prevalence of firearms-related theft and reduce the number of firearms entering illegal circulation. In 2018, the theft of multiple firearms made up 57.7% of all thefts in Western Australia, and thefts involving six or more firearms made up 11.9% of all theft incidents.<sup>18</sup>

## ISSUES AND SAFEGUARDS

### *Limit of five firearms*

The five-firearm limit was determined by reference to the precedent set by Western Australia (WA) in its 2024 reforms to its firearms framework. WA was the first jurisdiction in Australia to introduce

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<sup>13</sup> Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, *Illicit Firearms in Australia*, August 2020, p 10; <[aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-08/illicit\\_firearms\\_in\\_australia.pdf](https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-08/illicit_firearms_in_australia.pdf)>.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Samantha Bricknell, Australian Institute of Criminology, *Statistical Report 24 – Firearm Theft in Australia 2018*, May 2020; [https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/sr24\\_firearm\\_theft\\_in\\_australia\\_2018.pdf](https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/sr24_firearm_theft_in_australia_2018.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, *Ability of Australian Law Enforcement Authorities to Eliminate Gun-Related Violence in the Community*, 9 April 2015, Chapter 2; <[https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Legal\\_and\\_Constitutional\\_Affairs/Illicit\\_firearms/Report/c02](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Legal_and_Constitutional_Affairs/Illicit_firearms/Report/c02)>.

<sup>17</sup> Samantha Bricknell, Australian Institute of Criminology, *Statistical Report 24 – Firearm Theft in Australia 2018*, May 2020; [https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/sr24\\_firearm\\_theft\\_in\\_australia\\_2018.pdf](https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/sr24_firearm_theft_in_australia_2018.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> *Firearms Act 2024* (WA) section 30.

numerical caps to the number of firearms an individual may own. In WA, there is a cap of five firearms for recreational hunters, with higher limits for primary producers and competition shooters.<sup>19</sup>

The WA reforms followed a review by the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia and were also reviewed by the Standing Committee on Legislation.<sup>20</sup> In determining the five-firearm limit, WA consulted broadly, and determined that five was an appropriate number that balanced the need to possess different firearms for different purposes with the need to restrict the number of guns in the community.

While the Standing Committee on Legislation received a number of submissions that were critical of the new limits, the Standing Committee on Legislation noted that those submitters represented a small minority of the State population, citing findings of the Australian Institute that over three in four (78%) of Western Australians supported the firearms limits.<sup>21</sup> The Standing Committee on Legislation also heard that only 7% of total licence holders held over five guns, meaning that 93% of firearms owners would not be affected by the numerical limits.<sup>22</sup> Ultimately, considering this evidence, the Committee found the Western Australian limits to be justified and appropriate. ACT data indicates that only around 8% of licence holders currently hold in excess of five firearms, demonstrating a similar limited impact on ACT licence holders.

#### *Impact on licensees who require firearms for genuine reasons*

The Government recognises the necessity of firearms in legitimate occupational and sporting activities, including primary production, pest control, security and sports shooting. Accordingly, there are specific exceptions for individuals who require a firearm for a prescribed genuine reason, to allow possession of up to 10 firearms or a number determined by the registrar in accordance with requirements prescribed by regulation.

The Government also acknowledges that many individuals hold multiple licences for various genuine reasons. Under the amendment, the total number of firearms a licensee may possess or use under more than one licence is not the combined numerical total of both licences, but is limited to the number under whichever relevant licence authorises the highest number of firearms. For example, if an individual has a licence that carries a limit of five firearms, and another licence that carries a limit of 10 firearms, the individual may only possess up to 10 firearms in total, not 15 firearms.

The effect of the limits may have an adverse impact on certain licensees who require firearms for multiple genuine reasons, for whom a maximum of 10 firearms may not be sufficient. By embedding regulation-making powers into the provisions, the Public Safety Bill provides an opportunity for the registrar to respond flexibly to legitimate needs while also ensuring an overall reduction in firearms in the community.

No limit will be imposed for composite entities or firearms dealers on the number of firearms that may be possessed or used. This is because the primary purposes of firearms possession for composite entities and firearms dealers are business operations or commercial necessity as opposed to

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<sup>19</sup> *Firearms Act 2024 (WA)* section 30.

<sup>20</sup> Standing Committee on Legislation, Legislative Council of Western Australia, *Report 51 - Firearms Act 2024*, October 2025.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid* 11.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid* 52.

recreational use, and these organisations are also subject to stringent additional regulatory requirements for safe storage, ammunition and record-keeping.

The Government acknowledges that licensees who have individual firearm licences may also become a registered user of a firearm required during the course of their employment. The Government also recognises the importance of safe sporting culture and respects the participation of licenced adults and minors in approved club activities. As such, licensees may continue to use firearms owned by composite entities, firearms dealers or approved clubs without restriction, and all existing requirements for supervised, temporary or instructional use remain unchanged. This ensures individual limits are maintained while allowing people who rely on firearms for their work, sport or club involvement to continue doing so without disruption.

#### *Impact on minors*

While a minor can hold a minors firearms licence, a minor is prohibited from owning a firearm.<sup>23</sup> Any firearm possessed or used by a minor must be owned by an adult or composite entity that is authorised to possess or use that type of firearm. Under the Firearms Act, it is a requirement that a minor be a member of an approved shooting club before a licence is issued,<sup>24</sup> and the genuine reasons for a minors firearm licence are confined to firearms training, target pistol training or instructions on the safe use of the firearm for primary production.<sup>25</sup> This means that a firearm that is used by a minor but owned by their licenced parent may be counted towards the firearms limit that applies to the parent's licence. However, the firearms limits do not prevent a minor from participating in training or club activities as a registered user of a firearm owned by an approved club or composite entity.

#### *Impact on antique firearms and collectors*

The Firearms Act and *Firearms Regulation 2008* (Firearms Regulation) provide that an antique firearm or firearm manufactured before 1900 for which ammunition is not readily commercially available is not a 'firearm' to which the Firearm Act applies.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, the firearms limits introduced under this amendment do not apply to antique firearms.

No limits will apply to collectors licences. The amendment acknowledges the importance of conservation of firearms with historic value, and also recognises that firearms owned under collectors licences are subject to special conditions, which include restrictions on the possession of ammunition for firearms owned under this licence and requirements that all firearms be rendered incapable of being fired or permanently inoperable.<sup>27</sup>

The numerical limits also do not affect the existing restrictions on the issue of heirlooms licences under section 68 of the Firearms Act, which continue to apply.

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<sup>23</sup> *Firearms Act 1996* section 84.

<sup>24</sup> *Firearms Act 1996* section 85.

<sup>25</sup> *Firearms Act 1996* section 91.

<sup>26</sup> *Firearms Act 1996* section 6(2)(a); *Firearms Regulation 2008* regulation 6(1)(a) and (b).

<sup>27</sup> *Firearms Act 1996* section 76.

## RECATEGORISE TYPES OF FIREARMS POSSESSED OR USED

### THE AMENDMENT

The Public Safety Bill also recategorises the types of firearms that can be possessed and used under category A, B, C and D licences, and introduces new definitions for terms used in the recategorisation of firearms.<sup>28</sup>

Under this amendment, only Category C and D licensees will be able to possess and use straight pull repeating action, self-opening action and self-closing action firearms, which will no longer be available to Category A and B licensees. Category A and B licensees will also be subject to magazine limits of between 5 to 10 rounds for rim-fire rifles, centre-fire rifles and shotguns, and Category A licensees will no longer be able to use semiautomatic airguns.

While all applicants for firearms licences must demonstrate a genuine reason for the possession or use of firearms, the issue of a Category C or D licence is limited to circumstances where the applicant requires a firearm for the genuine reason of primary production or vertebrate pest control, and satisfies a special need test.<sup>29</sup> Category C and D licensees are also subject to more stringent storage requirements for firearms held under those licences than for holders of Category A or B licences. By recategorising certain types of firearms to Category C or D licences, this amendment restricts their widespread accessibility among recreational firearms users.

The Bill also introduces new definitions for 'straight pull repeating action', 'self-opening action', 'self-closing action', 'pump action', 'repeating action' and 'semiautomatic airgun'. These definitions articulate and explain the types of firearms actions that are authorised under each licence category. The definitions were developed in close consultation with forensic firearms experts in ACT Policing, to clarify the operation of the new licence categories and reduce the risk of non-compliance.

### POLICY INTENTION OF THE AMENDMENT

This amendment gives effect to the National Cabinet commitment to develop options to limit the types of guns that are legal, including modifications.

The purpose of the recategorisation is two-fold: to restrict the availability of rapid-fire devices and high-capacity magazines, which have an increased potential for mass casualty if misused; and to account for new developments in firearms technologies in the 30 years since the NFA was first drafted.

Rapid-fire weapons, such as automatic and semiautomatic firearms, are designed to increase the number of rounds a person can fire in a short period. These weapons present an elevated risk in mass shootings as they may enable a shooter to reload rapidly or fire continuously, increasing the probability of injury or death. Similarly, high-capacity magazines enable a shooter to fire more rounds without needing to reload, which may also increase the likelihood of multiple impacts.

Following the Port Arthur massacre, Australian jurisdictions moved to restrict or prohibit entirely the use of automatic and semiautomatic firearms for their destructive capacity. However, the evolution of the firearms market since 1996 has led to the introduction of new firearms technologies or the

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<sup>28</sup> Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026 clauses 15 to 21 (Schedule 3 and Dictionary).

<sup>29</sup> *Firearms Act 1996* sections 64 and 65.

popularisation of less-commonly used firearms that can enable a shooter to reload a repeating action firearm quickly and effectively.

While straight pull repeating action, self-opening action and self-closing action firearms are all types of manually operated firearms, the design of these actions is such that they may be rapidly operated to enable a user to fire multiple rounds in quick succession. It is alleged that one of the shooters in the Bondi attack used a straight pull repeating action rifle, which was able to be fired rapidly at intended victims, despite being manually operated.<sup>30</sup> The recategorisation of straight pull repeating action, self-opening action and self-closing action firearms to Category C licences limits the availability of those types of firearms within the community and ensures that such firearms are only used where there is a genuine need.

## ISSUES AND SAFEGUARDS

### *Impact on sports and target shooters*

There is a risk that the recategorisation of straight pull repeating action, self-opening action and self-closing action firearms to Category C licences may impact the participation of individuals in shooting competitions, given that the issue of Category C licences are typically limited for the genuine reason of primary production.

However, section 64(a) of the Firearms Act allows the prescription by regulation of other genuine reasons for the issue of a Category C licence, which are listed at regulation 16A of the Firearms Regulation and include sport or target shooting with certain conditions.<sup>31</sup> While the regulations do not, at this time, include provision for sports shooters who require recategorised firearms for shooting competitions, the Government is committed to ongoing engagement with the firearms community to work through the regulatory impacts of the Public Safety Bill and ensure that this amendment does not disproportionately affect specific groups of gun owners.

## PROHIBIT BELT-FED FIREARMS

### THE AMENDMENT

The Public Safety Bill introduces a new definition for ‘belt-fed firearms’ and provides that belt-fed firearms are a prohibited firearm, which are not authorised for possession or use by any holder of a Category A, B, C, D or H licence.<sup>32</sup>

‘Belt-fed firearm’ is defined as a firearm with a feeding mechanism, whether integral or detachable that is designed to supply cartridges to a firearm by means of belt or linked carrier and in which cartridges are held in sequence and mechanically advanced into the chamber through cycling the firearm’s action.

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<sup>30</sup> Julian Fell, ‘The Bondi shooter only had a basic gun licence. How could he buy multiple high-powered rifles?’ *Australian Broadcasting Corporation* (16 December 2025) <[The Bondi shooter only had a basic gun licence. How could he buy multiple high-powered rifles? - ABC News](#)>.

<sup>31</sup> *Firearms Regulation 2008* regulation 16A.

<sup>32</sup> Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026 clauses 14, 17, 18 and 21 (Schedule 3 and Dictionary).

## POLICY INTENTION OF THE AMENDMENT

The policy intention of the amendment is to prohibit the use of belt-fed firearms, which allow a shooter to fire hundreds of rounds without stopping and have a high risk of lethality if used in an attack. These mechanisms are typically used in military and automatic weapons, which are already prohibited under the Firearms Act. However, new and emerging technologies since the drafting of the NFA in 1996 has meant that there is a risk that self-loading or semiautomatic firearms may be modified to incorporate belt-fed mechanisms to increase the rate of fire. By classifying belt-fed firearms as a prohibited firearm, any person that possesses or uses a firearm that has a belt-fed mechanism without authorisation may be subject to an indictable offence, and the possession or use of such firearms may be subject to stricter regulation.

## ISSUES AND SAFEGUARDS

### *Impact on wearable ammunition belts and holders*

Early consultation on this amendment advised that the definition of ‘belt-fed firearm’ would need to be considered carefully to avoid the inadvertent prohibition of ammunition storage systems, such as ammo belts, bandoliers, cartridge holders and ammunition pouches. To mitigate this risk, the definition of ‘belt-fed firearm’ was carefully developed in close consultation with forensic firearms experts in ACT Policing, to ensure that the provision specifically targets mechanical delivery systems that use a continuous belt to feed cartridges into the chamber, rather than storage systems that require manual loading.

## INTRODUCE AN OFFENCE TO POSSESS DIGITAL BLUEPRINTS FOR COMPUTER-AIDED MANUFACTURE OF FIREARMS

### THE AMENDMENT

The Public Safety Bill introduces an offence in relation to the possession of digital blueprints for the computer-aided manufacture of firearms or firearm parts.<sup>33</sup> Strict liability applies to whether an item that may be manufactured using the digital blueprint is a firearm or firearm part, and whether the firearm or part may be manufactured using the digital blueprint in combination with a computer-aided manufacturing device.

The maximum penalty that may be imposed for the offence is 500 penalty units, 5 years’ imprisonment or both.

The amendment includes exceptions to the offence for possession of blueprints by firearms dealers, law enforcement or for the purposes of undertaking of research. It also prescribes defences to the offence, including where the defendant did not know that they possessed the digital blueprint, or where the digital blueprint came into the defendant’s possession unsolicited, and once discovered, the defendant took reasonable steps to remove the blueprint from their possession.

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<sup>33</sup> Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026 clause 12 (new section 228A).

## POLICY INTENTION OF THE AMENDMENT

The purpose of the new offence is to support and strengthen the existing prohibition on the manufacture of unauthorised firearms in a changing technological landscape.

Advances in computer-aided manufacture technologies such as 3D-printing now mean that illicit firearms can be manufactured easily with no technical knowledge. In creating a new offence for the possession of a digital blueprint that would allow for the illicit manufacture of firearms or firearm parts, the ACT Government is joining the Commonwealth and other States and Territories to further disrupt the illicit firearms manufacture process, by giving police the power to intervene prior to the creation of the unauthorised firearms.

The new offence does not prohibit the possession of all technical diagrams or schematics of firearms; rather, it is confined only to complete instructions that can be combined with a computer-aided manufacturing device to produce an item without further intervention.

The introduction of this offence aligns with reforms taken in other Australian jurisdictions to criminalise the possession and dealing of blueprints that enable the computer-aided manufacture of firearms, and will support the operation of Commonwealth offences relating to the use of carriage services for firearms and explosives manufacture material introduced under the *Combating Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism (Firearms and Customs Laws) Act 2026* (Cth).

## ISSUES AND SAFEGUARDS

### *Impact on representations of firearms for artistic, scientific or general interest*

The prohibition on possession of digital blueprints may impact the right to freedom of expression, as it may limit the possession of artistic impressions of firearm-related items and the creation of artwork that relies on computer-aided processes. However, to satisfy the elements of the offence, the artwork must be capable of being used as a blueprint for the digital manufacture of firearms or firearm-related parts, and it is not envisaged that the offence would apply to electronic representations of firearms or other things possessed for artistic, scientific or general reasons.

The offence also includes an exception, among others, for the possession of blueprints for research that has been approved by the registrar in writing. This allows a defendant to raise evidence demonstrating that any blueprints in their possession were for the purposes of research activities and that those activities were approved by the registrar. This ensures that lawful activities in the public interest are not inadvertently captured by the offence.

## **FIREARMS (FIREARM PROHIBITION ORDERS) AMENDMENT BILL 2026**

### THE AMENDMENT

The Firearm Prohibition Orders Bill amends the Firearms Act to create a new court order—a Firearm Prohibition Order (an FPO)—that positively prohibits a specified person from owning, possessing, or acquiring a firearm. The order provides search powers to police officers to confirm that the person has not contravened the FPO.

### *Positive confirmation that a person is not in possession of a firearm*

It is currently an offence for a person to possess or use a firearm if they are not authorised by a licence or permit to possess or use the firearm.<sup>34</sup> The Registrar must refuse to issue a licence to a person unless the Registrar is satisfied that the person is a suitable person.<sup>35</sup> A person must not be issued a permit to acquire a firearm unless they have a licence to possess and use that kind of firearm.<sup>36</sup>

The current scheme operates by withholding licences and permits, then relying on existing search powers to enforce compliance. Ordinarily, a search without a warrant requires the police officer to form some kind of belief (or suspicion) that an offence has been committed.

Under the proposed scheme, the Chief Police Officer will apply to the Magistrates Court for an FPO which will place a positive prohibition on a specified person not to use, possess, or acquire a firearm. This FPO will authorise police officers to undertake searches of the person and their property without requiring the police officer to form a belief or suspicion that an offence has been committed.

### *Obligations imposed by an FPO*

If a person is subject to an FPO, they are subject to a separate criminal offence if they acquire, possess, or use a firearm or firearm-related item. If the person currently has a licence or permit, the licence or permit is suspended if the FPO is an interim order and cancelled if the FPO is a final order. The person must surrender each permit or licence that they hold, and must surrender any firearms or firearm-related items that they have in their possession.

The FPO creates an offence for a person subject to an FPO to be in a prohibited premises. A prohibited premise means any of the following:

- (i) premises where a firearm or firearm-related item is stored, sold, repaired or manufactured;
- (ii) a collectors, hunting or shooting club;
- (iii) a paintball range;
- (iv) a shooting gallery;
- (v) a shooting range;
- (vi) premises where a shooting or paintball competition is being held;
- (vii) any other premises prescribed by regulation.

A Magistrate may impose a condition on an FPO that the person subject to an FPO may enter or remain at prohibited premises if satisfied the person has a genuine reason for entering or remaining at the premises. The particular prohibited premises must be stated in the FPO.

The FPO also requires the person subject to an FPO to notify the Chief Police Officer if the person changes their residential address or if there is a change in circumstances regarding properties that they own, lease, or occupy.

## **POLICY INTENTION OF THE AMENDMENT**

The policy intent of the FPO scheme is to address a specific high-risk group of individuals – including those involved in organised crime, domestic violence or violent extremism – for whom simply

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<sup>34</sup> *Firearms Act 1996* section 42.

<sup>35</sup> *Firearms Act 1996* section 58(1)(b).

<sup>36</sup> *Firearms Act 1996* section 145(1)(a).

refusing a licence is an insufficient safeguard. Given that these individuals pose a severe threat to public safety, the Government has a legitimate interest in actively ensuring that they do not have access to firearms.

Current laws generally require that police have 'reasonable grounds' to suspect that a crime has been committed before their search powers are enlivened. However, this threshold is often inadequate when dealing with individuals who use clandestine and sophisticated methods to hide weapons.

The FPO scheme provides police with the necessary tools to confirm compliance without requiring prior evidence of a breach. To prevent arbitrary use, the powers under an FPO are strictly limited and must be used solely to ensure FPO compliance, and not for general criminal investigation. Further, both the issuing Magistrate and the attending police officers will be required by law to balance these actions against the *Human Rights Act 2004*, to ensure that any entry or search power that is exercised is proportionate to the risk posed by the individual.

## ISSUES AND SAFEGUARDS

### *Searches authorised by an FPO*

A police officer may not subject a person to an arbitrary search. Although the FPO scheme does not require a police officer to form suspicion or belief on reasonable grounds prior to undertaking a warrantless search, the proposed scheme requires the police officer to be satisfied that exercising the search power 'is reasonably required to determine that the person has acquired, possesses or is using a firearm or firearm-related item in contravention of the firearm prohibition order'.<sup>37</sup>

This provision ensures that there is a rational connection between the purpose of the FPO scheme and the use of the search powers, and prevents police officers from using the FPO search powers to undertake searches for crimes unrelated to firearms.

The police officer must document their reasons for using these powers to search a person or a property without a warrant.<sup>38</sup>

The Bill does have provisions which cover circumstances where a person's property is lawfully searched using FPO powers and then evidence of criminal activity unrelated to the FPO is discovered. For example, a person subject to an FPO sends menacing and threatening messages to an ex-partner. Although this may be an offence in its own right, a police officer may be satisfied that searching the person's property for a firearm is reasonably required to determine if the person has acquired, possesses, or is using a firearm or firearm-related item in contravention of the FPO. In undertaking the search under the FPO scheme, the police officer discovers an item connected with a serious offence (an offence punishable by imprisonment for 5 years or longer in the ACT or elsewhere). The police officer may secure the item and then apply to a Magistrate for an order to seize the secured item. In order to use the item as evidence in a proceeding for an offence, a Court must give leave and, when deciding to give leave, the Court must consider whether the exercise of the power was lawful.

Using these powers, a person subject to an FPO may be frisk searched or be subject to an ordinary search. A person's residence mentioned in the FPO may be searched by entry. If the person is subject

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<sup>37</sup> Firearms (Firearm Prohibition Orders) Amendment Bill 2026 clause 14 (new section 183ZW(2)).

<sup>38</sup> Firearms (Firearm Prohibition Orders) Amendment Bill 2026 clause 14 (new section 183ZZK).

to a final FPO, any other premises mentioned in the order that are owned, leased, or occupied by the person may be searched by entry. Any vehicle, vessel, or aircraft of which the person is in charge or is a passenger may be searched by entry. These search powers may be exercised without a warrant.

If police officers seek to search a property that is not mentioned in the FPO, the police officer must form the belief on reasonable grounds that exercise of the power is necessary to prevent the person concealing, losing or destroying a thing connected with an offence against the Act, or committing, continuing or repeating the commission of an offence against the Act. This is a higher threshold to the use of the powers.

### *Issuing an FPO*

The proposed FPO scheme differs from FPO schemes operating in other Australian jurisdictions through well-designed and targeted protections and safeguards on the exercise of powers. The ACT scheme requires FPOs to be made by a Magistrate (some other jurisdictions allow the Chief Police Officer to issue an FPO). There are mandatory factors that the Magistrate must consider when making an FPO, including the human rights of the person subject to the FPO and the human rights of third parties who may be affected by the FPO. Rights of review are available to the person subject to the FPO and to third parties who may be affected by the FPO.

The scheme requires the recording of reasons when exercising powers under the FPO framework. The recording of reasons allows for review by Courts, and by the ACT Ombudsman (who is given powers to monitor compliance of the Chief Police Officer and other officers exercising powers under the scheme).

The scheme requires annual reporting by the Chief Police Officer to the Minister (who must present the report to the Legislative Assembly) and to the ACT Ombudsman.

The scheme also requires the Minister to review the operation of the scheme and whether or not the scheme is operating in a way that is consistent with human rights three years after the commencement of the scheme and provide a report of the review to the Legislative Assembly.

## **THE PETITION**

Petition E-PET-002-26 Firearms Reform – Evidence Based Policy and Proper Consultation (the Petition), petitioned by Ms Nicole Small and supported by Mr James Milligan MLA, was posted to the Legislative Assembly website on 22 January 2026. Signatures to the Petition closed on 25 March 2026. As at the time of writing, the Petition has received 1102 signatures and is yet to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly.

In accordance with Standing Order 100, the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services will lodge a response to the Petition with the Clerk for presentation to the Legislative Assembly within three months of tabling of the Petition. However, to assist the Committee in its Inquiry, the reasons for the Petition are considered briefly below.

## THE PETITION

The Petition seeks that the Legislative Assembly call on the ACT Government to:

1. Defer the introduction of any major firearms legislative reforms until the findings of the current Australian and Victorian Government investigations have been completed, released and properly assessed;
2. Commit to an evidence-based policy process, ensuring that any proposed changes are: a. justified by data; b. supported by expert analysis; and c. demonstrably linked to improved public safety outcomes;
3. Undertake genuine, fair and reasonable consultation with affected stakeholders, including: a. licensed firearm owners; b. firearms dealers and retailers; c. primary producers and land managers; d. pest control operators; e. sporting organisations; f. conservation bodies; g. government agencies and security organisations that hold licences; and h. rural landholders;
4. Ensure that any reform measures are proportionate, fair and targeted, with a clear focus on criminal misuse and illegal firearms rather than lawful, compliant ownership; and
5. Publish a Regulatory Impact Statement outlining the economic, social, operational and compliance impacts of any proposed reforms.

## GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

The Government is committed to delivering comprehensive firearms reforms that address the options agreed by National Cabinet and support the initiatives led by the Commonwealth Government to introduce a Buyback Scheme for firearms.

The Government draws on research and studies demonstrating the correlation between the proliferation of firearms in the community and firearm-related harm in determining to restrict the number of firearms held by any one individual, and engaged in intensive consultation with firearms experts in ACT Policing to recategorise the types of firearms authorised under Category A, B, C and D licences.

The Government is also committed to undertaking genuine, fair and reasonable consultation with affected stakeholders. The Government engaged in extensive consultation with key members of the firearms community in developing the offence for the possession of digital blueprints and in establishing the FPO scheme under the FPO Bill. Flexible regulation-making powers are embedded into the provisions of the Public Safety Bill to allow for continued collaboration with affected stakeholders to address the specific needs of the firearms community post-passage. The Government is also engaging with key representatives of the firearms community through the Firearms Advisory Committee on further changes to firearms laws intended to implement elements of the areas for reform identified by National Cabinet following the Bondi attack. Subject to the outcomes of this Inquiry, the Government will consult with affected stakeholders in the development of regulations where they are required.

While the Public Safety Bill aims to address the risks of criminal misuse and diversion of legal firearms into illicit markets through the introduction of numerical limits and recategorisation of firearms, this Bill represents only the first step in the ACT's response to national safety threats identified following the Bondi attack. The FPO Bill introduces a new scheme to prohibit high-risk individuals from accessing firearms, and further tranches of firearms legislation will be progressed throughout the year to ensure the ACT's firearm framework is responsive to new and emerging risks.

Ordinarily, regulatory impact statements are required to be prepared under section 34 of the *Legislation Act 2001*, for a subordinate law or disallowable instrument that is likely to impose appreciable costs on the community. As noted earlier in this submission, measures proposed in the Public Safety Bill, particularly the proposed ownership caps, will affect only a small percentage of existing licenced firearms owners. In addition, a regulatory impact statement is intended to provide for examination of regulatory measures in legislative instruments that may not be subject to the same levels of scrutiny as those introduced in bills before the Assembly. While the Government considers that the proposals in the Public Safety Bill are appropriate and adapted to meet the stated community safety goals, the Government recognises that consideration by the Assembly, including through the current Inquiry, provides the appropriate opportunity for oversight and scrutiny before they become law.

## CONCLUSION

The ACT Government welcomes the *Inquiry into Legislation on Proposed Firearms Reform*. The Government values the perspectives of stakeholders, community members and industry representatives, noting that their experiences are essential to ensuring that firearms laws remain practical, evidence-based and aligned with community expectations.

The Government is committed to a transition that is safe, transparent and respectful of the practical realities of firearms ownership in the ACT.

The ACT Government acknowledges the urgency of progressing these reforms and is committed to ensuring they are implemented in a safe and orderly manner. For this reason, the amendments will commence on a date fixed by written notice. This approach provides agencies and the community with the necessary lead time to prepare. It will also allow the Government to develop the policies and procedures required to support the proposed National Buyback Scheme, should the ACT choose to participate, continue engagement with key stakeholders, and finalise clear protocols for the surrender and disposal of firearms.

The Public Safety Bill provides an important foundation for further firearms reform. The broader public safety environment continues to evolve, and as national measures progress, the ACT Government will continue to respond to emerging risks.

The ACT Government appreciates the Committee's consideration of this important reform and remains committed to working constructively throughout the inquiry process. We look forward to supporting the Committee's deliberations as it examines the Bill and its role in strengthening public safety in the Territory.