



# Submission cover sheet

## Inquiry into Legislation on proposed firearms reform

Submission number: 034.1

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## **SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY ELEVENTH ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AFFAIRS INQUIRY INTO THE FIREARMS (PUBLIC SAFETY) AMENDMENT BILL 2026**

### **Purpose**

1. This supplementary submission is prepared to further assist the Committee in its considerations of the proposed *Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026* reforms. It is provided subsequent to a request to the ACT Chief Minister for further information (Attachment 1). The response from the office of the Chief Minister on 13 Apr 2026 details the theory hypothesised by the governing party to support the reforms (Attachment 2).
2. Reasonable minds may differ, and the same information can lead to different, yet equally logical, conclusions. Given the significance of the proposed reforms, it is imperative that the information relied on is founded on facts and evidence.

### **Aim**

3. The aim of the supplementary submission is to rely on evidence and tangible facts, rather than academic theory, and provide recommendations that support proportionate, enduring, sustainable, and fiscally responsible solutions to facilitate the purpose of the bill - to improve public safety - befitting the ACT.

### **Background**

4. I am grateful to the office of the Chief Minister for providing a comprehensive and detailed response and appreciate the Commission granting leave to provide this supplementary submission. I apologise for the lateness of this supplementary submission. However, given the lack of detail provided by the Explanatory Statement and generic templated previous responses (Attachment 3) it has been challenging, without evidence, facts or clarity to directly address the rationale for the reforms.
5. Although the time available to provide this supplementary submission is very limited, this submission endeavours to further assist the Committee to be fully informed prior to making a determination on the reforms and their efficacy to meet the stated purpose. Consequently, this submission does not profess to comply with academic writing standards but will be mercifully brief.

### **Theoretical Framework**

6. The response provided by the office of the Chief Minister is indicative of a potential forgone conclusion founded on assumptions, strategically supported by tenuously relevant theoretical academic research, rather than facts and evidence supporting a logical conclusion.
7. Given the significance of the effects of the proposed legislation on ACT firearm owners' property rights and the considerable fiscal burden on ACT taxpayers resulting from the compulsory acquisition of the property of ACT residents, it is imperative that the reasons for the reforms are sound and founded on logic, fact, and

evidence, rather than speculation based on academic theory and political expedience.

8. The theory hypothesised to support the reforms asserts that public safety will be improved by acting swiftly after the Bondi massacre, by implementing several reforms, including reducing firearms ownership through capping the number of firearms an individual can possess. Unfortunately, the research supporting the reasons for the reforms appear to rely on speculative academic theory, which in many instances, vastly overstates highly selective, circular, self-serving research and confirmation bias, which does not provide facts, evidence or clarification of the issues as requested.

9. It would not be expected a response from the office of the Chief Minister would accord with academic standards. However, given the reliance by the governing party on the theory hypothesised to support significant actual reforms, it is necessary to ensure the hypothesis is founded on relevant, reliable and credible research.

10. Creating a hypothesis and then searching for research to support it, is generally considered unacceptable and unsound. In particular, if it involves selectively searching for information that supports a theory and ignoring contradictory information, it is viewed as questionable research practice rather than true scientific inquiry.<sup>1</sup> This biased approach to decision making is mainly unintentional, and it results in a person ignoring information that is inconsistent with their beliefs.

11. While researchers often start with a tentative hypothesis, the rigorous, accepted methodology requires that the hypothesis be tested with the *intention* of potentially falsifying it, rather than proving it right.<sup>2</sup>

### **Improvements to public safety**

12. The foundational justification for the reforms relies on a review (as characterised by the authors)<sup>3</sup> of firearms studies that relies on selected countries with different societies, cultures, demographics and experiences. The review supports the construction of a theory by selecting a specific limited number of studies

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<sup>1</sup> Research Hypothesis: A Brief History, Central Role in Scientific Inquiry, and Characteristics Asghar Ghasemi, Farhad Hosseinpanah, Khosrow Kashfi, Zahra Bahadoran. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12534748/#:~:text=Characteristics%20of%20a%20good%20research,and%20will%20be%20discussed%20below>

<sup>2</sup> Ellerton, P. What exactly is the scientific method and why do so many people get it wrong? 15 Sep 2016, *The University of Queensland* <https://hpi.uq.edu.au/article/2016/09/what-exactly-scientific-method-and-why-do-so-many-people-get-it-wrong#:~:text=Science%20also%20works%20deductively%20through,philosopher%20of%20science%20Karl%20Popper.>

<sup>3</sup> Julian Santaella-Tenorio et al, *What Do We Know About the Association Between Firearm Legislation and Firearm-Related Injuries?*, *Epidemiologic Reviews*, Vol 38, February 2016, Pages 140–157, <https://academic.oup.com/epirev/article/38/1/140/2754868>

that support their hypothesis.<sup>4</sup> The office of the Chief Minister characterises the review “observations” as follows:

*International evidence suggests that swift regulatory action following mass shooting events, such as the Bondi attack on 14 December 2025, **may** generate improvements in public safety and prevent further mass shooting events. (emphasis provided)*

13. Rather than “evidence” it would be more accurate to state that “A review of international studies suggests...” given that the studies selected to construct the theory do not identify any causation or correlation to support this proposition. The “review” simply provides “observations”.<sup>5</sup> In particular, it did not observe that “swift regulatory ... may generate improvements” nor “generate improvements in public safety”.

Accordingly, it is misleading to categorically state:

“[t]hese improvements in public safety come from reducing the prevalence of, and access to, firearms, which the limit on the number of firearms an individual can own is intended to achieve”.

14. As the research findings are only theoretical and selectively chosen to construct a predetermined hypothesis, it would be more accurate, less misleading and preferable to state:

“... improvements in public safety **may** come from ... [limiting] ... the number of firearms an individual can own which **may** reduce the prevalence of, and access to, firearms”

15. It is misleading to represent a speculative theory as fact and passing it off as evidence that limiting the number of firearms and individual can own will reduce “... the prevalence of, and access to, firearms”. Consistent with this brief analysis, the authors emphasise caution in using the research for the purpose for which it has been used by the office of the Chief Minister:

“...cross-sectional studies are of least design suitability and although useful for hypothesis generation, they offer little information on which laws are more likely to work in certain settings”.<sup>6</sup>

16. Given the above, there is no further requirement to analyse or address the assertions concerning reforms introduced after the Port Arthur shooting here. They will be addressed under the heading of “Bias”, further in this submission.

### **Assessment**

17. Despite a self-serving attempt to pass off an artificially constructed intuitively appealing theory as fact, and regardless of syntax manipulation, there is no credible

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<sup>4</sup> Id.

<sup>5</sup> Id.

<sup>6</sup> Id.

evidence or facts to logically conclude that limiting the number of firearms an individual can own will reduce the prevalence of, and access to, firearms. The assertion is based simply on academic speculative, hypothetical theory.

18. It is questionable whether the theory cited and the interpretation stated is sufficient to support the imposition of numerical limits on firearm ownership in the ACT, over and above the discretion already afforded to the Registrar of Firearms appointed by the ACT Chief Police Officer.

### **Recommendation 1**

19. It is recommended that the current discretion to approve or reject a Permit to Acquire a Firearm remains at the discretion of the Registrar of Firearms based on character, genuine reason and compliance with sufficient and appropriate, safe storage requirements.

### **Risks associated with uncapped firearm ownership**

20. To address the “Risks associated with uncapped firearm ownership” it is necessary to identify the research context underpinning the research on which the office of the Chief Minister has relied. Noting part of the “research” cited includes nothing more than a 2-and-a-bit page glossy pamphlet,<sup>7</sup> the research and tendencies towards confirmation, unintentional and intentional bias require careful consideration.

### **Confirmation bias**

21. Confirmation bias in researchers is where individuals unconsciously favour information that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs, expectations, or hypotheses. This bias leads people to selectively search for and interpret data that supports their views while simultaneously ignoring or discounting contradictory evidence. This tendency is especially strong when an issue is highly personal or significant, often resulting in speculative interpretations being treated as established facts.<sup>8</sup>

22. The authors of the review, relied on by the office of the Chief Minister to provide the foundational justification for the reforms,<sup>9</sup> provide several notes of caution and warnings about the practical application of their theoretical observations:

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<sup>7</sup> University of New South Wales, *Case Study: The National Firearms Agreement* and found at *The Howard Library Case Study: The National Firearms Agreement*, <https://www.howardlibrary.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/2021-01/Case%20Study%20National%20Firearms%20Agreement.pdf#:~:text=This%20case%20study%20will%20explore%20how%20the,role%20of%20the%20Prime%20Minister%20and%20Cabinet>

<sup>8</sup> Confirmation Bias, Bettina J. Casad et. al. Britannica, 30 Mar 2026  
<https://www.britannica.com/science/confirmation-bias>; Humans actively sample evidence to support prior beliefs Kaanders P, Sepulveda P, Folke T, Ortoleva P, De Martino B. National Library of Medicine  
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35404234/>

<sup>9</sup> Julian Santaella-Tenorio et al, *What Do We Know About the Association Between Firearm Legislation and Firearm-Related Injuries?*, *Epidemiologic Reviews*, Vol 38, February 2016.  
<https://academic.oup.com/epirev/article/38/1/140/2754868>

“One potential problem of studies on firearms laws is the way in which the author’s affiliations and personal interests bias study results and influence what is to be published”.<sup>10</sup>

23. The authors go on to provide relevant advice concerning potential bias:

“In this review, we have avoided making statements on sources of funding or on affiliations of authors, although we acknowledge that this is an important problem that may distort the general information that could be obtained from this review, and that may contribute to publication bias”.<sup>11</sup>

24. It is pertinent to note that one of the selected few studies employed by the review to support the construction of their theory includes a paper co-authored by the Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP, Labor Member for Fenner.<sup>12</sup> However, the review does not identify Dr Leigh’s affiliations and personal interest consistent with their declared non-disclosure approach.

25. Dr Leigh MP is a long-term anti-firearms advocate, to the extent of being co-founder of the Parliamentary Friends of Gun Control,<sup>13</sup> and its commitment to strict gun control due to the personal loss of his mentor, Zoe Hall, during the 1996 Port Arthur massacre.<sup>14</sup>

26. Dr Leigh’s contribution to the review<sup>15</sup> is a highly technical, purely academic mathematical argument concerning the use of algorithmic<sup>16</sup> or logarithmic methods to determine whether firearms deaths and misuse were, and continue, to steadily reduce at the same rate before, and after, Port Arthur. To disprove this theory and provide support for the complimentary academic theory of a long-term anti-firearm advocate,<sup>17</sup> Dr Leigh employs highly technical pure academic mathematical theory, by applying an actuarial method, (usually used in studies of age-related death), in preference to the use of statistical algorithms traditionally used for analyzing and forecasting patterns over time.

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<sup>10</sup> Id.

<sup>11</sup> Id.

<sup>12</sup> Neill C, Leigh A. Weak tests and strong conclusions: a re-analysis of gun deaths and the Australian firearms buyback Published September 5, 2007. Accessed December 12, 2014  
[https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1011519](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1011519)

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.andrewleigh.com/launch\\_of\\_the\\_parliamentary\\_friends\\_of\\_gun\\_control\\_transcript\\_abc](https://www.andrewleigh.com/launch_of_the_parliamentary_friends_of_gun_control_transcript_abc)

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/the-haunting-of-port-arthur-mps-launch-new-push-on-gun-laws-20180918-p504hw.html>

<sup>15</sup> Julian Santaella-Tenorio et al, *What Do We Know About the Association Between Firearm Legislation and Firearm-Related Injuries?*, *Epidemiologic Reviews*, Vol 38, February 2016.  
<https://academic.oup.com/epirev/article/38/1/140/2754868>

<sup>16</sup> Autoregressive Integrated Moving Average (ARIMA) models are a popular class of statistical algorithms used for analyzing and forecasting time series data by looking at autocorrelation patterns.

<sup>17</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 who found that establishing a definitive causal connection between the NFA and the absence of mass firearm homicides is not possible but, using a different model, the rate of mass shootings did not remain unchanged after introduction of the National Firearms Agreement. (Yeah, me too!)

27. To support his anti-firearms advocacy, Dr Leigh contests the efficacy of the use of algorithms and suggests "... to the extent that this evidence [firearms deaths and misuse reduced at the same rate before and after the 1996 'buyback'] points anywhere, it is towards the firearms buyback reducing gun deaths."

28. Accordingly, contrary to Dr Leigh's intuitively appealing implied effect of law changes subsequent to the Port Arthur massacre,<sup>18</sup> the academic research by Dr Leigh and Professor Chapman does not, subject to academic rigour, conclude that the 1996 'buyback' reduced firearms deaths and misuse.

29. Given the above, it is unnecessary to address the research commissioned by the Victorian Department of Human Services,<sup>19</sup> which, while repeating the research by Dr Leigh and Professor Chapman, is similarly irrelevant to the imposition of numerical limits on individual firearms ownership.

30. Consequently, credible academic research that does not support the compulsory acquisition of firearm owners' private property through a 'buy back' scheme, and, by implication the imposition of arbitrary numerical limits on firearm ownership, should be preferred over information provided by anti-firearm-motivated advocates and lobbyist groups,<sup>20</sup> who opportunistically intensify their efforts following violent incidents - not subject to academic requirements – and which cannot be considered as credible evidence.

### **Assessment**

31. Credible academic research does not support the compulsory acquisition of ACT firearm owners' private property through the imposition of arbitrary numerical limits and a 'buy back' scheme.

### **Recommendation 2**

32. It is recommended that a 'buy back' scheme be implemented to provide a proportionate and fiscally responsible reduction in the number of firearms without the imposition of arbitrary numerical limits.

### **Intentional bias**

33. Although it is asserted that there was significant stakeholder consultation, which remains highly disputed, it is clear from the Standing Committee on

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<sup>18</sup> Andrew Leigh, Statement from the Co-founders of the Parliamentary Friends of Gun Control, 6 August 2019 [https://www.andrewleigh.com/statement\\_from\\_the\\_co\\_founders\\_of\\_the\\_parliamentary\\_friends\\_of\\_gun\\_control#:~:text=Statement%20from%20the%20Co%2Dfounders%20of%20the%20Parliamentary%20Friends%20of%20Gun%20Control,-Posted%20by%20Andrew&text=STATEMENT-,The%20co%2Dfounders%20of%20the%20Parliamentary%20Friends%20of%20Gun%20Control,to%20prevent%20further%20senseless%20deaths.](https://www.andrewleigh.com/statement_from_the_co_founders_of_the_parliamentary_friends_of_gun_control#:~:text=Statement%20from%20the%20Co%2Dfounders%20of%20the%20Parliamentary%20Friends%20of%20Gun%20Control,-Posted%20by%20Andrew&text=STATEMENT-,The%20co%2Dfounders%20of%20the%20Parliamentary%20Friends%20of%20Gun%20Control,to%20prevent%20further%20senseless%20deaths.)

<sup>19</sup> J Ozanne-Smith et al, Victorian Department of Human Services, *Firearm related deaths: the impact of regulatory reform*, 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Alannah & Madeline Foundation Alannah & Madeline Foundation Gun Control Australia (GCA) National Coalition for Gun Control (NCGC) The Australia Institute

Legislation, Legislative Council of Western Australia report<sup>21</sup> that when considering numerical limits on individual firearm ownership the government determined that it preferred to rely on information provided by anti-firearm-motivated advocates and lobbyist groups<sup>22</sup> rather than credible academic research and the recommendation by the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia (LRC) that "There should be no upper limit on the number of firearms a single Firearm Licence holder may possess."<sup>23</sup>

34. Notwithstanding evidence and facts to the contrary, somewhat tellingly, the Committee determined that "[t]he Committee ... had full regard to LRC report ... [but] ... what goes into a Bill is for the Government to decide, and what parts of the Bill become law is for Parliament".<sup>24</sup> Consequently the Labour party dominated parliament passed the bill, including numerical limits, despite evidence and facts supporting no upper limits.

### **Unintentional and confirmation bias**

35. The Western Australian (WA) example is often cited by anti-firearm-motivated advocates, lobbyist groups, and politicians in some jurisdictions. Anything other than a cursory consideration of the process, procedure and approach to firearms legislation employed by WA, shows that there was here significant descent, confusion, and resistance against the implementation of arbitrary limits on firearm ownership,<sup>25</sup> and limited public support.<sup>26</sup> However, the government's view was that, as firearm owners were a minority of the population,<sup>27</sup> the government dismissed all credible evidence and facts and used its majority to pass the bill, including imposing numerical limits on firearms ownership.

36. No doubt, the efficacy of the WA approach contrasted with the QLD approach to firearms will be the subject of many longitudinal studies. Of particular interest will be the WA Committee finding that a submission "that a .22 Hornet was "from a ballistics point of view, ... acceptable to euthanise anything pretty much up to a bull" was sufficiently compelling evidence to find the WA limits to be justified and appropriate. To find this submission persuasive and compelling and extrapolate this view to all other circumstance and situation across the whole of WA is untenable.

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<sup>21</sup> Standing Committee on Legislation, Legislative Council of Western Australia, *Report 51 - Firearms Act 2024*, October 2025.

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*, at 4.45.

<sup>23</sup> *Id.* at 4.40

<sup>24</sup> *Id.* 2.13 to 216.

<sup>25</sup> WA firearm owners concerned about new gun laws amid 'poor' communication, ABC 23 Mar 2026, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-03-23/gun-owners-concerned-ahead-of-new-gun-laws-wa/105071396>;

<sup>26</sup> Second Reading Speech, *Firearms Bill 2024*, 11 June 2024, [https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/Hansard/hansard.nsf/0/73cc240c3c3853a248258b3f000dd105/\\$FILE/C41+S1+20240611+p2671b-2687a.pdf](https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/Hansard/hansard.nsf/0/73cc240c3c3853a248258b3f000dd105/$FILE/C41+S1+20240611+p2671b-2687a.pdf); Standing Committee on Legislation, Legislative Council of Western Australia, *Report 51 - Firearms Act 2024*, October 2025.

<sup>27</sup> Standing Committee on Legislation, Legislative Council of Western Australia, *Report 51 - Firearms Act 2024*, October 2025, 4.40 – 4.45.

37. “From a ballistics point of view” a .22 Hornet may be sufficient for vets to dispatch injured or restrained animals at point blank range. Closer consideration of his contribution to the proceedings, show that he discussed the practical requirements for humane euthanasia of livestock on farms.

38. In his testimony, he indicated that a .22 Hornet is ballistically capable of euthanizing large animals, including bulls, when used appropriately for that specific purpose. The statement was made to illustrate the distinction between different calibres and their roles in agricultural management, specifically contrasting the .22 Hornet's capabilities with less powerful rounds like the .22 Long Rifle.

39. The .22 Hornet is most certainly not sufficient in the real world for hunting invasive imported species other than small animals at close range. Although I do not profess to be a ballistics expert, I am certainly most willing to facilitate a demonstration for anyone who believes a .22 Hornet is sufficient to dispatch a charging bull in northern WA.

40. The use of this example as approval of the WA approach can only be an example of unintentional and confirmation bias. It should not be used to justify following the WA example.

41. I note the rationale concerning the “Effect of a limit on firearm ownership in reducing the number of firearms” and “Increased benefit to public safety from a numerical limit, above current genuine reason requirement” simply mirror the WA Labor government approach and rationale. As such, the concerns about the WA approach provided above, will have to suffice - given in the limited time available.

### ***Assessment***

42. Evidence and facts demonstrate that reliance on information provided by anti-firearm-motivated advocates and lobbyist groups, and engaging in unintentional and confirmation bias, is inherently unreliable. Following the WA approach will lead the ACT government to promulgate legislation that is demonstrably flawed and practically, in the real world, unworkable, unpalatable, and unsustainable.

### ***Recommendation 3***

43. It is recommended the ACT government retain its reputation for being considered, dignified, and balanced and avoid embarrassment by not following the WA approach to firearms legislation which was passed, effectively, because it will only affect a minority of the WA population. The ACT government is renowned for protecting minorities and should exercise considerable caution and not take an approach to legislation because it will only affect a minority in the ACT.

### ***Inherent bias***

44. The journalistic adage suggesting that violent, sensational, and negative news stories involving injury or death are given priority in media coverage. This combined with media bias, detailed in my previous submission, provides fertile ground for a

minority of groups and individuals to construct a biased narrative about firearms and firearm owners with a view to fabricating a moral crisis.

45. The resultant inherent bias leads to all firearm owners being blamed for the transgressions of a few unbalanced or issues-motivated individuals. And, as the punishment of the transgressor or transgressors is never enough to satisfy public outrage, ultimately governments engage in, what is effectively, the collective punishment of all firearm owners.

46. Given the unwarranted biased view of firearms and firearm owners, any transgression involving firearms has serious reputational consequences for all firearm owners. Accordingly, it is an anathema to suggest public safety is not a paramount consideration for both sporting and hunting firearm owners – no different to all other Canberrans.

47. Despite views that denigrate and question the integrity of firearm owners and their governing bodies,<sup>28</sup> ACT Firearm owners are ordinary members of the community, many of whom are current or former government employees, or are government service providers – including professional pest controllers employed by the ACT government.

48. Firearm owners simply participate in internationally recognized shooting sports and/or hunting to control introduced invasive species and are governed by elected volunteers. They are not full-time employed or paid professional journalists or academics who must “publish or perish”.<sup>29</sup>

49. As a consequence, most of the available firearms ‘research’ is produced by academics or anti firearm-motivated activists<sup>30</sup> who take advantage of a biased media narrative and their privileged position to take aim at firearms and firearm owners with impunity.

### **Assessment**

50. The ACT government has a renowned reputation for being dignified, considered and balanced. Accordingly, it would be expected that the government would take a balanced approach to significant legislation that drastically impacts the

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<sup>28</sup> “*I am a law-abiding person, leave me alone and trust me to do the right thing*”, ACT Inquiry into Legislation on proposed firearms reform Submission number: 045 Submitter: and Alannah and Madeline Foundation Date authorised for publication: 1 April 2026 and [https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/3044885/Submission-045-Alannah-and-Madeline-Foundation.pdf#:~:text=The%20Alannah%20&%20Madeline%20Foundation&text=advanced%20by%20firearm%20lobbyists%20%E2%80%9CI%20am%20a,trust%20me%20to%20do%20the%20right%20thing](https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/3044885/Submission-045-Alannah-and-Madeline-Foundation.pdf#:~:text=The%20Alannah%20&%20Madeline%20Foundation&text=advanced%20by%20firearm%20lobbyists%20%E2%80%9CI%20am%20a,trust%20me%20to%20do%20the%20right%20thing) pages 5 and 6; and noting Prime Minister, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, is the patron of the Foundation <https://www.alannahandmadeline.org.au/news/prime-minister-anthony-albanese-appointed-national-patron-for-the-alannah-madeline-foundation>

<sup>29</sup> Fanelli, D. (2010). Scalas, Enrico (ed.). *Publish or perish* “...an aphorism describing pressure to publish academic work in order to succeed in an academic career”.

<sup>30</sup> Identified in previous submission.

property rights of a minority group, regardless of confected demonstrated bias against them.

#### **Recommendation 4**

51. It is recommended the ACT government not allow inherent bias to affect its reputation for being considered, dignified and balanced, and carefully consider this and all other submissions, the majority of which plead with the Committee to reject the imposition of arbitrary numerical limits.

#### **Victim-blaming**

52. Unfortunately, inherent bias provides anti-firearm-motivated activists licence to engage in victim-blaming in which firearm owners are blamed for firearms theft. It is noted that in no other circumstance would any right-thinking person blame victims of crime for having a crime committed against them.

53. As such, it is disappointing that the office of the ACT Chief Minister continues to cite research that supports victim-blaming.<sup>31</sup> This is particularly egregious given that, although accepting the numbers of firearm theft in the ACT were small, it is erroneous to then state that "...the incidence of multiple firearm theft was higher".

54. The research cited does not support this assertion<sup>32</sup> and is inconsistent with the data provided even by anti-firearm-motivated activists.<sup>33</sup> As this issue has been comprehensively addressed in my previous submission, it is unnecessary to say more. Unfortunately, as a lawyer, it is difficult to say no more, other than to note the unintended bias replete in the office of the Chief Minister stating "...the incidence of multiple firearm theft was higher; a trend replicated Australia-wide". To suggest the theft of firearms in the ACT, which has demonstrably reduced over successive years (reported to be one in 2025) is part of "...a trend replicated Australia-wide" of "...the incidence of multiple firearm theft [being] high". Now I shall say no more on this issue.

#### **Assessment**

55. The use of victim-blaming by the office of the Chief Minister to provide justification for the imposition of reforms affecting individual property is a surprising development in a jurisdiction renowned for being sympathetic to, and supportive of victims of crime. This untenable and contradictory stance is due to reliance on emotive, academically unsubstantiated information provided by unaccountable highly vocal anti-firearm-motivated advocates and groups.

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<sup>31</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>32</sup> *Id.*

<sup>33</sup> Predavec, S., Campbell, R., *Firearm theft in Australia: Two decades of stolen guns*, p.17 <https://australiainstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/P1893-Firearm-theft-in-Australia-Web.pdf>

## **Recommendation 5**

56. It is recommended that in instances where significant reforms affect individual property rights, the ACT government commission the Australia Institute of Criminology to provide the Legislative Assembly with relevant, reliable and credible research based on evidence and fact.

### **The National Firearms Agreement**

57. There is no dispute about the importance of the National Firearms Agreement (NFA) to provide consistency in firearms legislation across Australia.<sup>34</sup> Although there have been different approaches over the years since its inception there has been a general agreement on the approach to firearms laws.

58. The deadline for states and territories to agree on national gun law reforms following the Bondi terror attack was 31 March 2026. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese sought the agreement for a national gun buyback scheme to be legislated across all jurisdictions by 1 July 2026. The 31 March 2026, deadline passed with several jurisdictions failing to agree on the proposal, leaving the scheme facing delays.

59. Only 2 states have passed legislation, and it appears other states and the Northern Territory will not, or are unlikely, to pass legislation that includes numerical limits and the compulsory acquisition of property, given the outcome of recent elections and potential outcome of the upcoming Farrer by-election and Victorian election. In these circumstances it is not unreasonable to suggest that if the ACT reforms include an arbitrary numerical limit, consistent with WA or NSW, there is considerable potential for the ACT to be in a minority inconsistent with the rest of Australia.

60. Inconsistencies between Australian firearms legislative schemes is likely to cause an insurmountable rip in the fabric that underpins the NFA and its overarching objective - the overriding need to ensure public safety. However, it is noted that there are also political pressures caused by the Prime Minister's initial response to the Bondi terrorist attack on 14 December 2025 where his initial reaction on 19 December 2025 was:

“We know that one of these terrorists held a firearm licence and had six guns in spite of [sic] living in the middle of Sydney's suburbs there at Bonnyrigg. There's no reason why someone in that situation needed that many guns”.<sup>35</sup>

61. I note other confounding factors outside of the control of the ACT government influencing the ACT reforms such as Federal political Labor solidarity; the formal

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<sup>34</sup> As cited and approved of by Julian Santaella-Tenorio et al, *What Do We Know About the Association Between Firearm Legislation and Firearm-Related Injuries?*, *Epidemiologic Reviews*, Vol 38, February 2016 and recognised for having the some of the most comprehensive and strictest firearm legislation according to their criteria. <https://academic.oup.com/epirev/article/38/1/140/2754868>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/press-conference-canberra-30#:~:text=Today%2C%20I'm%20also%20announcing,situation%20needed%20that%20many%20guns.>

parliamentary agreement with the Greens;<sup>36</sup> and the vow by the Federal Attorney-General's on 7 Apr 2026, to "... continue to prosecute this case [the national gun buyback scheme legislated across all jurisdictions] through our National Cabinet processes".<sup>37</sup> I further note several jurisdictions are still conducting inquiries into proposed legislation concerning the probity of the compulsory acquisition of firearm owners' property.

### **Assessment**

62. Given extant confounding factors; current geopolitical and domestic uncertainty; cost of living concerns; and, a looming global financial crisis, there are many factors impacting the ACT government's considerations of the proposed reforms. This provides the government with an unenviable dilemma, but also the opportunity to make laws befitting the ACT.

63. To address this dilemma, the ACT government could wait until the completion of the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion,<sup>38</sup> to fully understand the circumstances of the Bondi massacre (noting none of the victims' families have called for firearms reform) and implement reforms accordingly.

64. There is also the option of waiting to see what form of legislation is promulgated by other jurisdictions. This may prevent costly legal challenges, such as the current WA matters,<sup>39</sup> and avoid the embarrassment experienced in NSW of hastily implemented post-Bondi legislation being struck down.<sup>40</sup> Alternatively, the ACT could pass legislation similar to WA and NSW, without limits on firearm ownership, consistent with the apparent intent of all other jurisdictions, but authorizing a 'buy back', consistent with jurisdictions that choose to implement a 'buy back'.

65. To satisfy NFA consistency with WA and NSW, ACT legislation could provide the ACT Registrar of the Firearms Registry with discretion to approve or reject a Permit to Acquire a Firearm to individuals with more than 10 firearms, or requesting to have more than 10 firearms, on "specific genuine reason" grounds that would require written justification and evidence of meeting defined appropriate and acceptable safe storage conditions.

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<sup>36</sup> [https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/1654077/Parliamentary-Agreement-for-the-10th-Legislative-Assembly.pdf#:~:text=The%20ACT%20Labor%20and%20ACT%20Greens%20Parliamentary,mist%20progressive%20and%20reformist%20administration%20in%20Australia](https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1654077/Parliamentary-Agreement-for-the-10th-Legislative-Assembly.pdf#:~:text=The%20ACT%20Labor%20and%20ACT%20Greens%20Parliamentary,mist%20progressive%20and%20reformist%20administration%20in%20Australia)

<sup>37</sup> Interview on ABC News Radio 1120 AM, 7 Apr 2026

<sup>38</sup> <https://asc.royalcommission.gov.au/>

<sup>39</sup> WA's gun laws in national spotlight with national reforms flagged after Bondi terror attack, ABC Keane Bourke 16 Dec 2025. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-12-16/wa-gun-laws-in-spotlight-as-national-reform-flagged/106147144>

<sup>40</sup> NSW protest laws brought in after Bondi Beach attack deemed 'unconstitutional' by top court, ABC Alexander Lewis and Pablo Vinales, 16 Apr 2026, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-04-16/chief-justice-findings-on-nsw-protest-law-reform/106570860>.

## **Recommendation 6**

66. It is recommended the ACT government consider passing legislation without limits on firearm ownership but authorizing a 'buy back' scheme and which provides the ACT Registrar of the Firearms Registry with discretion approve or reject a Permit to Acquire a Firearm to individuals with more than 10 firearms or requesting to have more than 10 firearms on "specific genuine reason" grounds.

## **Recommendations**

- A. The current discretion to approve or reject a Permit to Acquire a Firearm remains at the discretion of the Registrar of Firearms based on character, genuine reason and compliance with sufficient and appropriate, safe storage requirements.
- B. A 'buy back' scheme be implemented to provide a proportionate and fiscally responsible reduction in the number of firearms without the imposition of arbitrary numerical limits.
- C. The ACT government retain its reputation for being considered, dignified, and balanced and avoid embarrassment by not following the WA approach to firearms legislation, which was passed, effectively, because it will only affect a minority of the WA population. The ACT government is renowned for protecting minorities and should exercise considerable caution and not take an approach to legislation because it will only affect a minority in the ACT.
- D. The ACT government not allow inherent bias to affect its reputation for being considered, dignified and balanced, and carefully consider this and all other submissions, the majority of which plead with the Committee to reject the imposition of arbitrary numerical limits.
- E. In instances where significant reforms affect individual property rights, the ACT government commission the Australia Institute of Criminology to provide the Legislative Assembly with relevant, reliable and credible research based on evidence and fact.
- F. The ACT government consider passing legislation without limits on firearm ownership but authorizing a 'buy back' scheme and which provides the ACT Registrar of the Firearms Registry with discretion approve or reject a Permit to Acquire a Firearm to individuals with more than 10 firearms, or requesting to have more than 10 firearms, on "specific genuine reason" grounds.

## **Summary**

67. On 3 February 2026, I asked my local member, Chief Minister Andrew Barr MLA, to provide clarification on several issues concerning the proposed arbitrary numeric limits on firearms possession and concomitant compulsory acquisition of the property of ACT residents. After the deadline for submissions to the Standing Committee on Legal Affairs Inquiry into the Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026, I received a detailed reply on 13 Apr 2026.

68. The response provided by the office of the Chief Minister is indicative of a potential forgone conclusion founded on assumptions strategically supported by potentially defective theoretical academic research and information from anti-firearm-motivated advocates and lobbyist groups, rather than facts and evidence sufficient to come to a logical conclusion.

69. Given the significant changes and the effects of the proposed legislation on ACT firearm owners' property rights and the considerable fiscal burden on ACT taxpayers resulting from the compulsory acquisition of the property of ACT residents, it is imperative that the reasons for the reforms are sound and founded on evidence and facts, rather than speculation based on unreliable, biased, academic theoretical hypothesis, anti-firearm-motivated advocates and lobbyist groups, and political expedience.

70. This supplementary submission provides evidence-based analysis to present alternative, proportionate policy options that uphold public safety while ensuring regulatory effectiveness, fiscal responsibility, and provides a legally defensible solution to the proposed quantitative limits on the ownership and use of firearms.

### **Conclusion**

71. When a government proposes to change laws upon which individual citizens have relied to make life and financial decisions, those changes must be proportionate and based on sufficient evidence and fact to come to a logical conclusion, not speculative hypothetical theory.

72. This supplementary submission provides recommendations that are proportionate, enduring, sustainable, and fiscally responsible to facilitate the purpose of the bill - to improve public safety - befitting the ACT. I have every confidence that the Committee process will prefer to make its determination based on facts and evidence rather than theoretical hypotheses, anti-firearm-motivated advocates and lobbyist groups, and political expedience.