



Submission cover sheet

Inquiry into Legislation on proposed firearms reform

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**Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026
and
Firearms (Firearm Prohibition Orders)
Amendment Bill 2026 and
Petition E-PET-002-26 Firearms Reform –
Evidence Based Police (sic) and Proper
Consultation**

SIFA COMMENT

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Introduction

The Shooting Industry Foundation of Australia (SIFA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the ACTs Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026 and the Firearms (Firearm Prohibition Orders) Amendment Bill 2026.

SIFA is the peak body representing the major importers, wholesalers and retailers of firearms and related accessories across Australia.

Our industry services the approximately 7000 licensed firearm owners within the ACT plus those in the surrounding Capital Region.

We are also an essential supplier of firearms, ammunition and firearm related accessories to the ACT Government and to Commonwealth Departments such as Defence and the AFP.

In 2019, our industry was conservatively estimated to contribute \$2.4 billion to Australia's GDP and supported some 19,500 jobs.

The Australian regulatory context.

The Australian firearms industry has been regulated within the framework established by the National Firearms Agreement (NFA) since it was introduced in 1996. This non-binding agreement sets out the minimum standards that states and territories have agreed to enact with the express intention of delivering national consistency.

Reinforcing the importance and benefits of national consistency, the Commonwealth Firearms Information Booklets states that *"One consequence of the lack of a uniform approach to firearms management in Australia was that it provided an opportunity for firearms to be diverted to the illicit market.*

This diversion was facilitated by jurisdictional loopholes in legislation and regulation, lack of oversight, and low penalties that were applied to firearms offences. The lack of a uniform approach to firearms management also created ambiguity around what constituted firearms misuse"

Regrettably, many of the poorly informed and misdirected responses to the Bondi massacre now work against that simple principle of uniformity.

Whilst there may be an assumption that the ACT is well served by falling into line with NSW due to geographic proximity, it is now clear that not all jurisdictions are aligned on some aspects of this bill, particularly on the subject of numerical limits.

By aligning with NSW, the ACT will in fact be acting in isolation from the majority of jurisdictions, negating any perceived benefits, and introducing unintended consequences (e.g., the marked increase in firearm license applications and Permits to Acquire (PTA) currently underway in NSW).

SIFA strongly urges the ACT Government to restrict its reforms to those which have been embraced by the majority of jurisdictions.

Limit the number of firearms someone can possess and use, **Not supported by the majority.**

Recategorise the types of firearms someone can be possess and use. **Supported by the majority.**

Prohibit belt-fed firearms. **Supported by the majority.**

Make it an offence to possess a digital blueprint to make a firearm using technology such as 3D printing. **Supported by the majority.**

1. Limitations on Firearm Possession

The Bill introduces Section 52A, which proposes a cap on the number of firearms an individual may possess or use under their license:

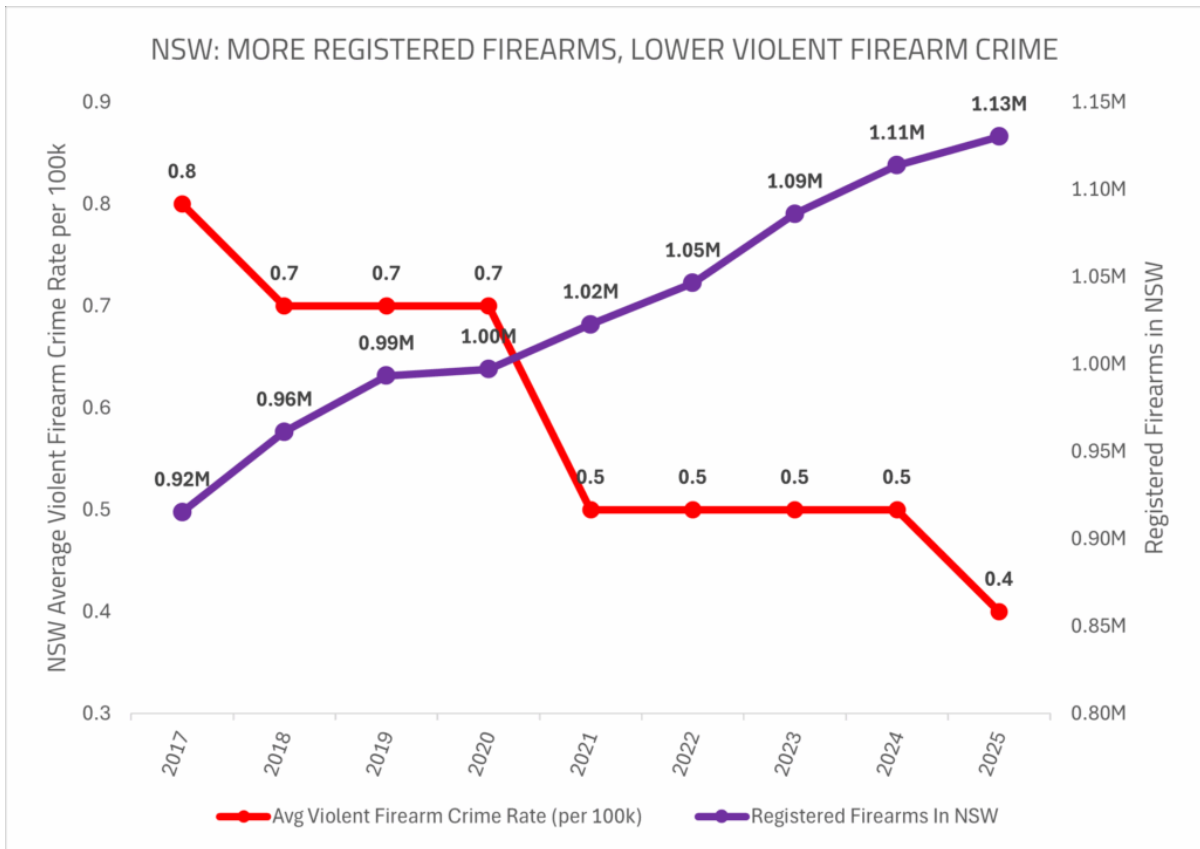
There is no evidence that the number of firearms a license holder possesses presents any more or less risk to the community provided the firearm is held by a properly assessed, fit and proper person to hold that license and that the firearm is stored correctly.

There is however strong evidence which paints an inverse relationship between the number of firearms held and the rates of violent crimes. These trends have been consistent and began well before Port Arthur.

This subject of numerical limits has been examined by the ACT Administrative Appeals Tribunal as in [Q v REGISTRAR OF FIREARMS \(Administrative Review\) \[2015\] ACAT 84 \(8 December 2015\)](#) where a licensed firearm owner with 79 firearms was denied an additional permit to acquire (PTA), with the ACAT hearing finding in favor of the license holder provided they managed the storage risk appropriately.

Dr Samara McPhedran, Principal Research Fellow at Griffith University, recently published an analysis showing that while legal firearm numbers and licences in Australia have steadily increased, firearm crime has long been declining.

Data from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) support these observations.



Business viability.

It must be remembered that licensed firearms dealers play a vital role in Australia’s firearm management processes. By legislation, every firearm transaction must be facilitated by one or more licensed firearms dealer.

SIFA industry data tells us that the average firearm dealer employs 5 staff, in addition to the dealer principal. The data also tells us that for every dollar of revenue a firearm dealer earns, they earn an additional two dollars in the sales of accessories and ammunition.

Anecdotal feedback since the gun buyback was first announced is that dealer turnover is down approximately 70% to 80%, and that staff layoffs are occurring. The absence of a clear pathway forward and assurances of fair market value compensation are proving to be very damaging.

It is critical that these enterprises remain commercially viable if the ACT is to continue benefiting from a well-regulated firearm sector. Numerical limits will severely impact that viability.

Fiscal responsibility

It is widely known that the ACT Government is under financial stress. The recent Eslake report into the fiscal sustainability of the Australian Capital Territory clearly shows the parlous state of the ACT Government budget.

World events since that report was published have greatly exacerbated those stresses.

The total cost of digitising the ACT firearms registry to support the National Firearms Register (NFR), the cost of administering and compensating for any form of buyback, together with the increased fees payable to the Commonwealth for all subsequent background checks are not commensurate with the extremely low levels of risk associated with firearms in the hands of approximately 7000 responsible, licensed and law abiding ACT residents.

It is obvious that the higher any numerical limit (if any), the less expensive any resulting buyback will be for ACT taxpayers.

The ACT would be well advised to follow the example set by the NT, Qld and Tasmania, which limited its buyback commitment to the types of firearms recently reclassified, and avoiding the far more substantial costs which arise from imposing numerical limits upon their citizens.

It would be fiscally irresponsible for the ACT Government to commit to an uncosted but substantial series of reforms which detract even more from the Territories fiscal wellbeing, for little or no benefit to public safety.

2. Recategorise the types of firearms someone can be possess and use

Straight pull firearms are technically bolt-action firearms. Similarly, button release firearms are technically lever action firearms. The method of unlocking and cycling the bolt has little effect on the speed of fire, all else being equal. Both require a specific action from the operator to chamber and fire another round and, by definition, are not semi-automatics.

The danger of recategorising straight pull and lever release firearms to higher categories is that it once again takes us away from an objective assessment of a firearm based upon observable and measurable mechanical characteristics and takes us into a subjective "case by case" classification rabbit hole. Regulatory uncertainty such as this is not good for the industry and complicates an already complex regulatory regime.

The issue of primary concern here for SIFA is that the legal owners of these items have still not received an assurance that fair market value for the newly reclassified item, its accessories and any ammunition for that item will be paid.

3. Prohibit belt-fed firearms

The proposed prohibition on belt fed firearms highlights the rushed and ill-informed nature of these reforms and has been the source of much derision amongst the firearm owning community.

Belt fed firearms are only available to the military and are not available to civilians in Australia.

This reform will have zero effect.

4. Make it an offence to possess a digital blueprint to make a firearm using technology such as 3D printing.

SIFA has no in principle objection to measures that target the illegal manufacture of firearms and firearm parts.

Our concern relates to the definition and interpretation of “digital blueprints” within the proposed framework, particularly given the significant penalties attached to the offence provisions.

Many firearms are supplied with user manuals that include exploded technical diagrams to assist with cleaning, maintenance and safe handling. These materials are commonly available in digital format. While such diagrams illustrate component relationships, they do not contain the dimensional specifications, tolerances or machine instructions required to manufacture a functional firearm.

Without clear legislative and regulatory boundaries, there is a substantial risk that these materials could be misinterpreted as “digital blueprints” and inadvertently captured by the offence provisions.

To ensure the provisions are appropriately targeted, the Act and supporting regulations should define digital blueprints as files that contain sufficient technical detail to enable the manufacture of a functional firearm or firearm part, including machine-readable files used to program 3D printers or CNC equipment.

This should be accompanied by a clear exclusion for illustrative, instructional or non-dimensional materials, such as user manuals and maintenance diagrams.

This level of clarity is necessary to ensure the provisions are proportionate, enforceable and do not unintentionally capture lawful and widely available materials.

1. Firearm Prohibition Orders.

SIFA asserts that the primary benefit of an FPO is that it gives law enforcement the ability to intrude into the lives of an FPO recipient without the constraints and legal protections enjoyed by other citizens.

In reality, FPO's have little to do with firearms. That said, SIFA is supportive of measures which are genuinely designed to keep firearms out of the hands of those who are unsuitable to hold a firearms license.

That assumes that appropriate safeguards exist to ensure that others are not unfairly impacted by the issuance of an FPO.

Petition E-PET-002-26 Firearms Reform – Evidence Based Police (sic) and Proper Consultation.

The most disappointing aspect of this petition is that it should not have been required in the first place. That there was any doubt that best practice parliamentary process would be applied to this topic speaks to the reactionary and politically motivated nature of firearms reform in this country.

The importance of evidence-based decision making.

The Minister personal web site publicly states, *"I strongly value evidence-based decision-making to tackle the complex problems that our community currently faces, to ensure Canberra is the best place to live."*

SIFA is a strong advocate evidence-based decision making and as long campaigned for the collection, collation and publication of data which validates Australia's claim to having "world leading gun laws".

Equally, we believe that in the interests of regulatory best practice, Ministers must compel their regulators to include appropriate and adequate supporting data in all firearm related policy and regulatory advice, and that Shooting industry stakeholders be given access to all supporting data which the regulator has relied upon as part of a best practice consultation process.

The public health paradigm.

Anti firearm advocates often seek to apply a public health paradigm to firearms regulation.

If we look for comparables from the Ministers own area of expertise (gambling) a few first principles for harm minimisation emerge which can equally be applied to firearms.

Public health models commonly describe three levels of prevention:

- *universal prevention which is targeted towards the whole population;*
- *selective prevention targeted towards those at increased risk of problems; and*
- *indicated prevention targeted at those already showing signs of problems.*

Firearms are currently managed using selective prevention. The issuance of a firearms license to suitably vetted individuals is the primary tool in ensuring public safety and confirms that the holder is a “fit and proper person”.

Failures at this primary barrier (as happened at Bondi) make all other measures redundant. Additional measures above the issuance of a license offer incremental benefits to public safety, if any.

The measures enacted to fast track the National Firearms Register (NFR) and to remove barriers which prevented agencies from sharing information when assessing an applicant’s suitability to hold a firearms license are the most effective actions in response to the Bondi incident.

Once delivered, these selective prevention improvements will make the reforms currently being proposed by the ACT Government redundant.

The Minister must be suitably guarded to unsubstantiated and emotionally charged claims put forward by anti-firearm campaigners who masquerade as “gun safety advocates” but who are ideologically driven to seek incremental steps towards their ultimate goal of universal prevention (i.e., the end of all private firearm ownership in Australia).

Specific preventive interventions are less effective when conducted in isolation and are more likely to have impact when they are incorporated into a more comprehensive and coordinated approach.

This statement again emphasises the importance of the ACT only enacting reforms which have been supported by the majority of states, thus maintaining the consistency which is sought via the NFA.

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