



Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Select Committee on Estimates 2026-
2027

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into Appropriation Bill 2026-2027 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2026-2027

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SSAA ACT Inc.

Open Submission

**Firearms Registry Funding, Firearms
Licensing Fees and Related Budget
Measures**



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Section 1

Executive Summary

1. Executive Summary

The Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia ACT Inc. (SSAA ACT Inc.) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Select Committee on Estimates in relation to the ACT Government's 2026–27 Budget.

This submission does not seek to revisit the Territory's firearms legislation, nor does it oppose investment in public safety or the modernisation of the ACT Firearms Registry. SSAA ACT supports effective firearms regulation, modern information systems and nationally consistent approaches that improve public safety outcomes through information sharing.

Rather, this submission focuses on the manner in which several firearms related Budget measures have been funded, presented and justified. It asks whether the Budget provides sufficient transparency to enable Parliament to properly scrutinise significant public expenditure and whether the financial burden of implementing public policy is being shared appropriately between Government and responsible firearms licence holders.

Before turning to those matters, SSAA ACT Inc. asks the Committee to keep one broader consideration in mind.

Shooting sports are an established part of the ACT's sporting and recreational landscape. SSAA ACT Inc. owns, operates and maintains one of the Territory's largest privately funded sporting facilities, providing 23 bookable shooting facilities across more than 90 hectares of leased land. Each year, the Range Complex supports more than 24,000 attendances, over 5,000 facility bookings and in excess of 40,000 hours of booked facility use through recreational shooting, organised competition, firearms safety training and nationally recognised sporting events.

SSAA ACT Inc.'s contribution extends beyond providing sporting facilities. Through accredited instructors, qualified range officers and structured club activities, SSAA ACT Inc. promotes safe firearms handling, reinforces compliance with legislative requirements and provides an established mechanism through which regulatory information can be communicated to responsible firearms licence holders. In this way, the Association complements the work of the ACT Firearms Registry by supporting the practical implementation of the Territory's firearms regulatory framework through education, supervision and organised participation.

These activities are delivered primarily through private investment, volunteer effort and user contributions, with very limited ongoing government support. This broader context is relevant to the Committee's examination because the Budget measures considered in this submission affect not only the operation of the regulatory framework, but also the community organisations and volunteers that support responsible participation in one of the Territory's most privately funded sporting communities.

SSAA ACT Inc. submits that the Committee's examination of the 2026–27 Budget should focus on six interrelated questions. Together, these questions address not only the immediate impact of the Budget on responsible firearms licence holders, but also the broader principles of transparency, financial accountability and equitable public investment that underpin good public administration.

First, the 2026–27 Budget represents a significant increase in the financial contribution expected from responsible firearms licence holders. While licence holders recognise their obligation to contribute towards the costs of regulation, the Committee should examine whether the scale of this increase has been adequately justified and whether it reflects an appropriate balance between public investment and user contributions.

Second, understanding that increase requires greater Budget transparency. The Budget includes several distinct firearms-related measures, including the National Firearms Register, the ACT Firearms Registry Uplift Project, proposed firearms buyback measures and significant increases in statutory licensing fees. While these

measures are related, they serve different policy objectives, have different funding arrangements and should be considered separately. The Budget papers do not clearly explain how these measures interact or how they have informed decisions regarding increased licence fees.

Third, the Budget raises broader questions regarding long-term planning and financial management. The National Firearms Register has been contemplated by Australian governments for decades, while the need to modernise the ACT Firearms Registry has been foreseeable as part of the normal lifecycle of government information systems. The Committee should therefore examine how long-term planning, asset management and Commonwealth funding informed the financial decisions reflected in the 2026–27 Budget.

Fourth, the submission asks the Committee to consider whether the allocation of costs remains equitable. The ACT firearms regulatory framework delivers benefits that extend well beyond individual licence holders by supporting policing, public safety, criminal investigations and national information sharing. These public benefits raise legitimate questions regarding the appropriate balance between public investment and financial contributions from regulated users.

Fifth, the submission asks the Committee to consider the broader community benefit delivered by organisations such as SSAA ACT Inc. While the ACT Firearms Registry establishes the Territory's regulatory framework, that framework is supported in practice through privately funded infrastructure, volunteer capability, firearms safety education and organised participation delivered by the community. The Committee may therefore wish to consider whether these broader public benefits have been appropriately recognised when assessing the overall balance between public investment and the increasing financial contribution expected from responsible firearms licence holders.

Finally, the submission asks the Committee to consider whether the Budget reflects a consistent application of the ACT Government's broader principles regarding public investment in community sport. Successive ACT Governments have accepted that community sporting infrastructure should receive substantial public support because participation delivers wider community benefits. While SSAA ACT Inc. is not seeking additional funding for shooting sports, it submits that the Committee should consider this broader policy context when assessing Budget measures that affect one of the Territory's largest and most privately funded sporting communities.

Ultimately, this submission is not about whether these initiatives should proceed. It is about whether the financial decisions underpinning them have been explained with sufficient transparency, supported by appropriate long-term planning, and balanced fairly between public investment and user contributions, so as to enable proper parliamentary scrutiny and maintain confidence in the Territory's financial management.

Section 2

Introduction

2. Introduction

SSAA ACT Inc. is the Territory's largest shooting sports organisation and one of the ACT's largest providers of privately funded sporting infrastructure. SSAA ACT Inc. manages a complex of more than 90 hectares containing 23 bookable shooting facilities and supports more than 24,000 visits annually through recreational shooting, organised competitions, training and community participation. The Complex is used by Territory, State and National law enforcement and security agencies to support public safety and policing capability.

SSAA ACT Inc.'s role extends well beyond the provision of facilities. SSAA ACT Inc. delivers firearms safety training and induction for new licence holders, accredits and rosters the range officers who supervise shooting activity at the Complex, maintains the participation records upon which genuine reason and licence renewal depend, and applies membership conduct standards including the refusal, suspension and expulsion of members.

SSAA ACT Inc. is, in substance, an all-volunteer organisation. Its committee, instructors, range officers, safety officers and discipline coordinators are unpaid members of the Canberra community who give their time to ensure that shooting in the Territory is conducted safely, lawfully and under supervision.

SSAA ACT Inc. has a long history of constructive engagement with ACT Government on matters relating to firearms regulation, public safety and responsible firearms ownership. It supports evidence-based policy development and recognises the important role of the ACT Firearms Registry in protecting the community through effective regulation and administration.

This submission should not be interpreted as opposition to the National Firearms Register, the ACT Firearms Registry Uplift Project or investment in regulatory capability. Nor does it seek to reduce the obligations placed upon responsible firearms licence holders.

Instead, the submission focuses on four principles that underpin good public administration:

- transparency in government decision-making,
- fairness in the allocation of public costs,
- sound long-term financial planning, and
- equity in the balance between public investment and user contributions.

These principles are relevant not only to firearms regulation, but to the broader administration of public finances. The Committee's examination of the 2026–27 Budget provides an opportunity to consider whether these principles have been reflected in the funding and implementation of significant firearms-related initiatives.

Section 3

Cost Shifting

3. Cost Shifting

Key Point: *The 2026–27 Budget shifts a greater proportion of the costs associated with implementing public policy onto responsible firearms licence holders without clearly explaining why that shift is appropriate.*

One of the most significant outcomes of the 2026–27 Budget is not simply the increase in firearms licence fees, but the broader shift in how the costs of firearms regulation are being funded.

SSAA ACT Inc. acknowledges that responsible firearms licence holders should make an appropriate contribution towards the administration of the Territory's firearms licensing system. Firearms ownership carries significant legal responsibilities, and licence holders have consistently demonstrated a willingness to comply with one of Australia's most comprehensive regulatory frameworks.

The issue raised by this submission is not whether licence holders should contribute, but whether they are now being asked to fund a substantially greater proportion of the costs associated with implementing government policy without sufficient explanation of why that change has occurred.

The 2026–27 Budget includes substantial increases to firearms licensing and associated regulatory fees. For many licence holders, the most notable change is the increase in the cost of a standard firearms licence from \$179 to \$487 for a licence, representing an increase of approximately 172 per cent. Permit to Acquire, firearm registration and user registration fees each rose by 50 per cent, from \$20 to \$30, so that acquiring and registering a single firearm now costs \$60. While the determination of statutory fees is a matter for Government, increases of this magnitude warrant careful parliamentary scrutiny, particularly where they occur alongside significant investment in regulatory initiatives.

These increases should not be viewed in isolation. Responsible firearms licence holders already bear the costs of club membership, range fees, firearm registration, Permit to Acquire fees, mandatory security requirements, equipment, training and ongoing compliance with legislative obligations. Collectively, these costs represent a significant financial commitment that is unique to participation in shooting sports and lawful firearms ownership.

The impact also extends beyond recreational participation.

Many ACT businesses employ staff who are required to hold firearms licences as a condition of their employment, including firearms dealers, armourers, security providers, instructors and trainers and pest management businesses. For these organisations, statutory licensing is an unavoidable operating cost. An occupational firearms licence is \$487 for a two-year term, an annualised cost of approximately \$243.50, compared with approximately \$50 a year for an equivalent business or employment licence in New South Wales. The increase in licence fees therefore affects not only individual licence holders but also employment costs, business sustainability and the competitiveness of industries operating within the ACT.

SSAA ACT Inc. is also concerned that the Budget measures have the effect of transferring an increasing proportion of the costs associated with implementing broader government policy onto a relatively small and highly compliant section of the community.

The National Firearms Register, Registry modernisation and broader improvements to firearms regulation are public policy initiatives that deliver benefits extending well beyond individual licence holders. They support policing, public safety, criminal investigations, court processes and national information sharing. These are public outcomes delivered on behalf of the entire ACT community.

Against this background, the Committee may wish to consider whether the financial burden associated with implementing these initiatives has been allocated appropriately. While licence holders should reasonably



contribute to the administration of the licensing system, it is less clear why they should bear an increasing share of the costs associated with delivering broader government policy outcomes.

SSAA ACT Inc. therefore submits that the Committee should examine not only the scale of the fee increases themselves, but the underlying policy question of whether the Budget represents an appropriate balance between public investment and user contributions.

Section 4

Budget Transparency

4. Budget Transparency

Key Point: *The 2026–27 Budget includes several distinct firearms-related measures that are at different stages of policy development and implementation, without clearly explaining their individual purposes, funding arrangements or relationship to increased statutory licence fees. Effective parliamentary scrutiny requires these initiatives to be considered separately.*

The purpose of the Estimates process is to enable the Legislative Assembly to examine how public funds are allocated, whether expenditure represents value for money and whether Budget decisions have been supported by appropriate planning and evidence.

To perform this role effectively, Parliament must be able to clearly understand the purpose of individual Budget measures, the relationship between different programs and the basis upon which significant financial decisions have been made.

SSAA ACT Inc. is concerned that the firearms-related measures contained within the 2026–27 Budget have become intertwined despite representing three separate policy initiatives with different objectives and funding arrangements. This makes it difficult to understand how individual appropriations have been determined, how Commonwealth funding has been incorporated and how decisions regarding increased statutory licence fees have been reached.

For the purposes of parliamentary scrutiny, these initiatives should be considered independently.

The National Firearms Register is a nationally coordinated initiative intended to improve the sharing of firearms information between Australian jurisdictions. Its objective is to strengthen national interoperability, improve firearms tracing and support law enforcement through a consistent national information platform.

The ACT Firearms Registry Uplift Project is a separate Territory initiative that modernises the ACT Firearms Registry's information systems and business processes. While the Uplift Project is necessary to enable participation in the National Firearms Register, it also represents the replacement and enhancement of an existing government information system that supports the ACT's ongoing regulatory responsibilities.

The Government has also allocated funding relating to its proposed firearms buyback measures. Unlike the National Firearms Register and the Registry Uplift Project, these measures have not yet completed the parliamentary process and remain subject to legislative consideration. They should therefore be regarded as a separate policy proposal rather than an established regulatory initiative. The appropriation of funds in support of a measure whose enabling legislation has not completed passage through the Assembly is itself a proper matter for the Committee's examination.

Each of these initiatives raises different questions for the Committee.

The National Firearms Register raises questions regarding Commonwealth funding, national implementation and intergovernmental cooperation.

The Registry Uplift Project raises questions regarding long-term planning, asset lifecycle management and investment in essential government information systems.

The proposed buyback measures raise different questions relating to legislative authority, implementation, administration and the transparency of Budget funding allocated to a policy proposal that has not yet completed parliamentary consideration.

Treating these initiatives as a single package risks obscuring the different policy decisions underpinning each measure and makes it more difficult to determine whether the financial implications of each initiative have been appropriately considered.

SSAA ACT Inc. submits that greater transparency would strengthen both parliamentary scrutiny and public confidence in the Budget process.

This is particularly important where the same Budget also introduces substantial increases in statutory firearms licensing fees. ACT Policing has advised licence holders that the new licence fee “will support the delivery of a new digital ACT Firearms Registry, improving services for licence holders, dealers and law enforcement.” That statement identifies a purpose, but it does not disclose the costing on which the fee was set, the proportion of the Registry Uplift Project it is intended to fund, or how it relates to Commonwealth funding for the National Firearms Register. Without a clearer explanation of the relationship between these initiatives, it is difficult to determine the extent to which increased licence fees are intended to support Registry modernisation, implementation of the National Firearms Register, broader regulatory reform or other government policy objectives.

SSAA ACT Inc. is not suggesting that operationally sensitive information should be publicly disclosed where doing so could compromise law enforcement or public safety. However, transparency does not require disclosure of operational details. Rather, it requires sufficient information for Parliament and stakeholders to understand the purpose of significant expenditure, the relationship between Budget measures and the policy rationale supporting those decisions.

The Committee therefore has an opportunity to improve transparency by examining these initiatives separately and seeking greater clarity regarding:

- the relationship between Commonwealth funding and Territory investment,
- the intended purpose of each Budget measure,
- how funding has been allocated across the three initiatives, and
- the extent to which those initiatives have informed decisions regarding increased statutory licensing fees.

Providing greater clarity on these matters may strengthen confidence in the Government's financial management while enabling Parliament to properly fulfil its oversight responsibilities.

Section 5

Long-term Planning and Evidence

5. Long-term Planning and Evidence

Key Point: *The implementation of the National Firearms Register and the modernisation of the ACT Firearms Registry were foreseeable developments. The Committee should therefore examine whether the financial decisions reflected in the 2026–27 Budget are supported by evidence of appropriate long-term planning.*

SSAA ACT Inc. supports continued investment in the ACT Firearms Registry and recognises the importance of maintaining modern regulatory systems that support public safety, policing and national information sharing.

The issue raised by this submission is not whether investment should occur, but whether the financial decisions reflected in the 2026–27 Budget demonstrate appropriate long-term planning for initiatives that have been foreseeable for many years.

The National Firearms Register did not emerge unexpectedly in the 2026–27 Budget. Its origins can be traced to the National Firearms Agreement of 1996, with governments continuing to examine opportunities for improved national firearms information sharing over subsequent decades. More recently, the Australian Government committed funding to support implementation of the National Firearms Register across participating jurisdictions.

Similarly, the need to modernise the ACT Firearms Registry should not be regarded as an unforeseen requirement. Like all government information systems, regulatory databases and licensing platforms have finite operational lives. They require periodic renewal, replacement and enhancement to remain secure, reliable and capable of supporting changing operational requirements.

The Registry Uplift Project should therefore be viewed from two perspectives.

First, it enables the ACT to participate in the National Firearms Register.

Second, it represents the modernisation of an existing government information system that was always likely to require replacement as technology evolved.

Both of these drivers have been foreseeable for some time.

For this reason, SSAA ACT Inc. considers it reasonable for the Committee to examine how these projects have been incorporated into previous government planning, including long-term capital investment, asset lifecycle management and budget forecasting.

The Budget papers do not clearly explain how previous planning has informed the current investment, nor do they explain the relationship between Commonwealth funding, Territory investment and the increased contribution now expected from responsible firearms licence holders.

SSAA ACT Inc. does not suggest that Government has failed to plan appropriately. Rather, it submits that the available Budget information does not provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate how these financial decisions have been reached.

The Estimates process provides an opportunity to examine these questions and to better understand:

- how long the Registry Uplift Project has been under development,
- how Commonwealth funding has influenced Territory investment decisions,
- whether the current investment reflects planned asset replacement, implementation of the National Firearms Register, or a combination of both, and
- how these considerations informed decisions regarding increased statutory firearms licensing fees.

Examining these issues is not simply a matter of understanding one Budget measure. It is an opportunity to consider broader principles of financial management and public administration.

Governments routinely manage long-term infrastructure and information technology projects through staged investment and lifecycle planning. Where significant expenditure relates to initiatives that have been foreseeable for many years, it is reasonable for Parliament to expect a clear explanation of how those projects have been planned, funded and prioritised.

Interstate experience demonstrates that there is more than one way to approach this challenge.

For example, New South Wales has undertaken significant modernisation of its firearms information management systems while maintaining comparatively stable firearms licence fees over an extended period. Between 2006 and 30 June 2026, the standard firearms licence remained \$200 for a five-year licence. From 1 July 2026, legislative reforms reduced this to a two-year licence costing \$100, maintaining an equivalent annual licensing cost of approximately \$50. Comparatively, the ACT licence fees increased 268% between 2015-16 to 2026-27.

SSAA ACT Inc. recognises that direct comparisons between jurisdictions have limitations. Different jurisdictions have different operating environments, funding arrangements and regulatory responsibilities. Annualised licence fees also vary widely across Australia, and Western Australia and South Australia currently charge more per year than the ACT. The relevance of the New South Wales comparison is therefore not the absolute level of the fee, but the manner and pace of change.

However, the NSW experience illustrates that significant investment in registry systems can be planned and implemented over time without necessarily resulting in substantial one-year increases in statutory licensing fees.

The relevance of this comparison is not that the ACT should adopt the NSW funding model. Rather, it demonstrates that long-term planning and staged investment are viable approaches to delivering major regulatory reform.

Accordingly, the Committee may wish to consider what evidence supports the ACT Government's chosen funding approach, how alternative implementation strategies were assessed and how long-term planning informed the financial decisions reflected in the 2026–27 Budget.

Section 6

Equity and Public Benefit

6. Equity and Public Benefit

Key Point: *The Firearms Registry delivers public benefits that extend beyond individual licence holders. The Committee should therefore consider whether the financial burden associated with maintaining and modernising the system is being shared equitably between Government and the regulated community.*

Throughout this submission, SSAA ACT Inc. has identified concerns relating to budget transparency, increasing financial contributions from responsible firearms licence holders and the importance of long-term planning for foreseeable government expenditure.

These issues are ultimately connected by a broader question of equity.

The ACT Firearms Registry is not simply an administrative service provided to firearms licence holders. It is a core component of the Territory's public safety framework. The Registry supports policing, criminal investigations, firearms tracing, regulatory compliance, the permanent firearms amnesty, the surrender of fireworks and flares and national information sharing. These functions exist to protect the broader community and are fundamental responsibilities of government.

For this reason, investment in the Firearms Registry should not be viewed solely as a service provided to individual licence holders.

Rather, it represents investment in essential public safety infrastructure that delivers benefits to the ACT community as a whole.

SSAA ACT Inc. accepts that responsible firearms licence holders should contribute appropriately towards the administration of the licensing system. Indeed, lawful firearms owners have consistently demonstrated a willingness to meet significant regulatory obligations and associated costs.

However, where government investment supports broader public policy outcomes, there is also a legitimate question as to whether the costs of implementing those outcomes should increasingly fall upon a relatively small and highly compliant section of the community.

This question is particularly relevant in the context of the National Firearms Register and the ACT Firearms Registry Uplift Project.

These initiatives are not being implemented solely because firearms licence holders have requested improvements to government systems. They are being implemented because governments have determined that modern, interoperable information systems are necessary to strengthen public safety, improve policing capability and support a nationally consistent approach to information sharing.

These are public policy objectives.

Like investment in police information systems, emergency services communications, courts administration or other critical government regulatory systems, the primary beneficiaries extend well beyond the individuals directly regulated by those systems.

SSAA ACT Inc. therefore submits that the Committee should consider whether the current balance between public investment and user contributions appropriately reflects the broader public benefits delivered by the ACT Firearms Registry.

Unlike many other sports, participants in the shooting sports make substantial private contributions to both the infrastructure that enables participation and the regulatory system that governs it.

This submission does not seek additional funding for shooting sports.



Rather, it asks whether the financial responsibility for implementing significant public policy initiatives has been allocated fairly and transparently.

This question extends beyond firearms regulation.

Governments routinely determine how the costs of delivering public services should be shared between taxpayers, regulated industries and individual users. Those decisions should be guided by principles of fairness, proportionality and public benefit.

The Committee's examination of the 2026–27 Budget provides an opportunity to consider whether those principles have been appropriately applied in relation to the ACT Firearms Registry and the implementation of significant firearms-related initiatives.

Ultimately, responsible firearms licence holders are not seeking exemption from contributing towards the costs of regulation. They seek confidence that those contributions are proportionate, supported by sound financial planning and consistent with the broader public benefits delivered by the Territory's firearms regulatory system.

The question for the Committee is therefore not whether responsible firearms licence holders should contribute towards the administration of the firearms regulatory system. The question is whether the 2026–27 Budget demonstrates that the balance between public investment and user contributions remains equitable, transparent and supported by sound financial planning.

Section 7

Community Benefit and Public Investment

7. Community Benefit and Public Investment

Key Point: *SSAA ACT Inc. delivers significant sporting, community and public safety benefits through privately funded infrastructure, volunteer capability and structured participation. These broader public benefits should form part of the Committee's consideration when assessing the balance between public investment and the increasing financial contribution expected from responsible firearms licence holders.*

One of the considerations relevant to the Committee's examination is the broader community benefit delivered by organisations such as SSAA ACT Inc. and how that benefit is reflected in decisions regarding public investment.

SSAA ACT Inc. is more than a representative body for firearms licence holders. It owns, operates and maintains one of the Territory's largest privately funded sporting facilities, supporting recreational participation, organised competition, firearms safety training and nationally recognised sporting events. SSAA ACT Inc.'s activities are delivered largely through volunteer effort and private investment, with very limited ongoing government support.

Importantly, SSAA ACT Inc. also contributes to the effective operation of the Territory's firearms regulatory framework. Through accredited range officers, qualified instructors and structured club activities, SSAA ACT Inc. promotes safe firearms handling, reinforces compliance with legislative requirements and provides an established mechanism through which regulatory information can be communicated to responsible firearms licence holders.

These activities complement the work of the ACT Firearms Registry. While the Registry administers the Territory's regulatory framework, organisations such as SSAA ACT provide many of the practical mechanisms through which that framework is implemented in everyday sporting and recreational participation.

The Committee may therefore wish to consider whether the broader public benefits delivered by community shooting organisations have been appropriately recognised when determining the balance between public investment and the increasing financial contribution expected from responsible firearms licence holders.

This submission does not seek additional operational funding for shooting sports. Rather, it invites the Committee to consider whether the Government's approach is consistent with its broader principles regarding public investment in activities that deliver recognised community, safety and sporting outcomes.

Section 8

Consistency in Public Investment

8. Consistency in Public Investment

Key Point: *The ACT Government has long recognised that participation in community sport delivers significant social, health and community benefits. As a result, successive governments have adopted the principle that community sporting infrastructure should not operate on a full cost-recovery basis.*

Information previously provided to the Legislative Assembly indicates that the ACT Government subsidises approximately 84–86 per cent of the maintenance costs associated with community sportsgrounds. Government has explained that this approach is intended to ensure that the cost of participating in organised sport remains affordable for individuals and families and has acknowledged that sporting infrastructure delivers benefits extending well beyond those who directly use the facilities.

SSAA ACT Inc. supports this principle.

Like many other sporting organisations in the Territory, SSAA ACT makes substantial ongoing private investment in community sporting infrastructure. SSAA ACT Inc. leases and manages more than 90 hectares of land and operates 23 bookable shooting facilities that support recreational participation, organised competitions, firearms safety training and nationally recognised sporting events. Each year, the Range Complex facilitates more than 24,000 attendances, over 5,000 individual facility bookings and in excess of 40,000 hours of booked facility use. Together, these figures demonstrate the scale of community utilisation of one of the ACT's largest privately funded sporting facilities and the substantial infrastructure that is provided and maintained primarily through private contributions, volunteer effort and user contributions rather than ongoing government funding.

Unlike many other community sports, however, shooting sports receive very limited direct government support for their sporting infrastructure while participants also contribute significantly towards the costs of the Territory's firearms regulatory framework through licence fees, Permit to Acquire fees, firearm registration fees and other statutory charges.

SSAA ACT Inc. is not suggesting that shooting sports should receive the same funding arrangements as other sports, nor is it seeking additional operational funding through this submission.

Rather, the Committee may wish to consider the apparent inconsistency between two accepted Government principles.

The first is that participation in community sport should remain affordable and that government should contribute substantially towards the infrastructure that enables participation.

The second, reflected in the 2026–27 Budget, is that responsible firearms licence holders should make an increasing financial contribution towards the operation and modernisation of the regulatory framework that governs their participation in sport.

These principles are not necessarily incompatible. However, where one sporting community is expected to privately fund the overwhelming majority of its sporting infrastructure while also meeting increasing regulatory costs, it is reasonable for the Committee to examine whether the overall balance remains equitable.

Ultimately, this submission asks the Committee to consider not only the cost of firearms regulation in isolation, but the cumulative financial contribution already made by responsible firearms licence holders to both the sporting and regulatory environments in which they participate.

Section 9

Conclusion

9. Conclusion

The Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (ACT) Inc. appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's examination of the 2026–27 ACT Budget.

This submission has not questioned the importance of maintaining an effective firearms regulatory framework, nor has it opposed investment in the National Firearms Register or the ACT Firearms Registry Uplift Project. SSAA ACT Inc. supports effective regulation, modern information systems and measures that improve public safety through information sharing.

Instead, this submission has sought to assist the Committee by examining whether the financial decisions reflected in the Budget demonstrate transparency, sound long-term planning, equity and consistency in the application of Government policy.

SSAA ACT Inc. respectfully submits that the evidence presented throughout this submission supports six key conclusions.

First, the Budget represents a significant increase in the financial contribution expected from responsible firearms licence holders. While licence holders acknowledge their responsibility to contribute towards the costs of regulation, the Committee should consider whether the scale of this increase has been adequately justified and whether the balance between public investment and user contributions remains appropriate.

Second, the Budget would benefit from greater transparency regarding the policy rationale underpinning significant firearms-related expenditure. While the Budget papers identify the relevant appropriations, the Committee should examine the reasoning that informed the Government's funding approach, including how the National Firearms Register, the ACT Firearms Registry Uplift Project, proposed buyback measures and increased statutory licence fees relate to one another and to the Government's broader policy objectives.

Third, the Committee should consider whether the current funding approach reflects appropriate long-term planning. The implementation of the National Firearms Register and the need to modernise the ACT Firearms Registry were foreseeable developments. Parliament should therefore be able to understand how these projects were incorporated into long-term planning, asset lifecycle management and financial decision-making.

Fourth, the Committee should consider whether the allocation of costs remains equitable. The ACT firearms regulatory framework delivers benefits that extend well beyond individual licence holders by supporting policing, public safety, criminal investigations and national information sharing. These public benefits justify consideration of whether the financial burden associated with these initiatives has been allocated fairly between Government and responsible firearms licence holders.

Fifth, the Committee should consider the broader community benefit delivered by organisations such as SSAA ACT Inc. Through substantial private investment, volunteer capability and structured sporting participation, the Association contributes to both community sport and the effective operation of the Territory's firearms regulatory framework. This contribution forms an important part of the broader context in which the Budget's cost-shifting measures should be considered, and the Committee may wish to examine whether the balance between public investment and user contributions appropriately recognises the public value delivered by these community organisations.

Finally, the Committee should consider whether the Budget reflects a consistent application of the ACT Government's broader policy principles regarding public investment in community sport. Successive ACT Governments have recognised that participation in community sport delivers significant community benefits

and have adopted policies that provide substantial public investment in sporting infrastructure to support affordable participation. While SSAA ACT Inc. is not seeking additional funding for shooting sports, SSAA ACT Inc. submits that the Committee should consider whether it is consistent to expect one of the Territory's most privately funded sporting communities to make increasing contributions towards both the infrastructure that enables participation and the regulatory framework that governs that participation.

Taken together, these issues are not simply questions about firearms policy.

They are questions about how Government develops, funds and explains public policy.

They are questions about transparency in public expenditure.

They are questions about long-term financial planning for foreseeable public investment.

They are questions about ensuring that the costs of implementing public policy are allocated fairly.

And they are questions about applying Government's own principles consistently across the ACT community.

For these reasons, SSAA ACT Inc. respectfully submits that the Committee's examination of the 2026–27 Budget should focus on six fundamental questions.

1. **Has the Budget clearly distinguished between the National Firearms Register, the ACT Firearms Registry Uplift Project and the firearms buyback program, including their respective funding arrangements and objectives?**
2. **What evidence demonstrates that the Registry Uplift Project and implementation of the National Firearms Register were supported by appropriate long-term planning, asset lifecycle management and financial forecasting?**
3. **How has Commonwealth funding been incorporated into the ACT Government's investment decisions, and how has that funding influenced the level of financial contribution now expected from responsible firearms licence holders?**
4. **What analysis informed the decision to substantially increase statutory firearms licensing fees, and how was the balance between public investment and user contributions assessed?**
5. **What consideration has been given to the role of volunteer-led shooting organisations as a primary control within the Territory's firearms safety framework, and to the effect of increased participation costs on the level of supervised, organised shooting in the ACT?**
6. **How does the Government intend to ensure that future investment in the firearms regulatory system remains transparent, predictable and supported by appropriate consultation with affected stakeholders?**

SSAA ACT Inc. believes these questions fall squarely within the purpose of the Estimates process. They do not seek to challenge the Government's policy objectives. Rather, they seek to strengthen parliamentary oversight by ensuring that significant public expenditure is supported by transparent decision-making, sound financial planning and clear public accountability.

SSAA ACT Inc. thanks the Committee for considering this submission and welcomes the opportunity to expand upon these matters during the public hearing.

Section 10

Matters for Examination at the Public Hearing

10. Matters for Examination at the Public Hearing

Cost Shifting

The Committee may wish to examine:

- What analysis informed the decision to increase firearms licence fees from \$179 to \$487 for a standard licence?
- What consideration was given to the cumulative financial impact of increased licence fees, Permit to Acquire fees, registration fees and other statutory charges on responsible firearms licence holders?
- Was any assessment undertaken of the impact of increased regulatory costs on ACT businesses whose employees are required to hold firearms licences?

Budget Transparency

The Committee may wish to examine:

- What policy considerations informed the Government's decision to increase statutory firearms licence fees at the same time as investing in the National Firearms Register and the ACT Firearms Registry Uplift Project?
- How did the Government determine the appropriate balance between Commonwealth funding, Territory funding and contributions from responsible firearms licence holders when implementing these initiatives?
- What policy objectives were intended to be achieved through the increase in firearms licence fees, and how were those objectives evaluated?
- What advice was provided to Government regarding alternative approaches to funding the Registry Uplift Project and associated regulatory reforms?
- How did the Government assess the cumulative financial impact of these Budget measures on responsible firearms licence holders and the shooting sports community?

Long-term Planning and Evidence

The Committee may wish to examine:

- When did planning for the ACT Firearms Registry Uplift Project commence?
- How has long-term asset planning informed the timing and funding of Registry modernisation?
- What alternative funding models were considered before increasing statutory licence fees?
- How has Commonwealth funding for the National Firearms Register influenced the Territory's investment decisions?

Equity and Public Benefit

The Committee may wish to examine:

- What principles were applied in determining the balance between public investment and user contributions for the ACT Firearms Registry?
- How were the broader public benefits of the Registry, including policing, public safety and national information sharing, considered when determining the contribution expected from responsible firearms licence holders?

- What analysis was undertaken to determine whether the current allocation of costs remains equitable?

Community Benefit and Public Investment

The Committee may wish to examine:

- What consideration was given to the broader community benefits delivered by organisations such as SSAA ACT Inc. when determining the balance between public investment and the increasing financial contribution expected from responsible firearms licence holders?
- How did the Government assess the role that community shooting organisations play in providing sporting infrastructure, firearms safety education, supervised participation and the communication of regulatory requirements to licence holders?
- What assessment was undertaken of the potential impact that increased licensing and participation costs may have on participation in organised shooting sports and volunteer-led community organisations?
- How has the Government considered the contribution made by privately funded sporting infrastructure and volunteer capability when developing policies that affect the shooting sports community?
- Does the Government consider its approach to organisations such as SSAA ACT Inc. to be consistent with its broader principles regarding public investment in community sport and activities that deliver recognised public benefits?

Consistency in Public Investment

The Committee may wish to examine:

- The ACT Government has consistently recognised that community sporting infrastructure delivers broad public benefits and has adopted a policy of significant public investment to support affordable participation. How has this principle been considered when determining the increasing financial contribution expected from participants in one of the Territory's largest privately funded sporting communities?
- Has the Government considered the cumulative private investment already made by shooting sports participants in both sporting infrastructure and regulatory compliance when determining the appropriate balance between public investment and user contributions?
- What policy principles distinguish the Government's approach to funding community sporting infrastructure generally from its approach to funding the regulatory framework that enables participation in the shooting sports?
- Does the Government consider the current funding arrangements to be consistent with its broader objectives of encouraging participation in community sport and reducing barriers to participation?



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