



# Submission cover sheet

## Inquiry into the Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026

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Submitter: Paul Webster

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A.C.T. Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026 – inquiry submission.

I submit my writings purely as a concerned citizen of Australia and have no connection with any political group or gun control or gun advocacy organisations. But, will say I've been a long time firearms owner. I'm a 69 year old Aussie with a lifelong background of hard work via part time employment during my schooling years, progressing through a successful banking career with no academic achievements, to a successful (now retired) self employed gardening business of 30 years and currently a primary producer....looking to retire (finally). I'm a self funded retiree and intend staying that way and apart from prescription medicines, I'm not and never been a drain on the public purse. I've patronized Australia so much so that I haven't even been overseas to spend any of my savings. Some of my comments here may not bring pleasure to the reader initially, but I implore of you to read the submission in it's entirety as I feel the complete picture will fall together. I'm not here to write what the audience wants to read....I prefer to think my perspectives are the way things are! And I refuse to run it through AI for editing or formatting, so you see it raw.

Firstly, let me say that I have received correspondence from Andrew Barrs and Marisha Patersons offices which has helped in the leadup to this submission. They state in that correspondence that it was the Bondi terrorist attack of 14 Dec.'25 that inspired this review of the firearms laws. So, as there was so much more than the firearms laws that led to the Bondi incident, I have taken the liberty to include some of those 'outside' factors.

It's a sad time for democracy in Australia when we have governments that make its own decisions to strip nearly one million of its citizens of their privileges. Obviously throwing up a smokescreen to create a distraction from the truth and that is to cover up their own failings leading up to the Bondi attack. All too quick to blame the laws relating to firearms and only because one of the terrorists was a legitimate firearms owner.....when he shouldn't have been. He shouldn't have been because he slipped through the cracks of the authorities....not the laws. How quickly Albanese and Minns responded in announcing an overhaul of the gun laws and over a week later, all we heard was matters relating to the gun laws. The intriguing thing is, the attackers had and used homemade explosive devices, obviously highly illegal, yet they go for

the jugular of the law abiding gun owners. Why? Because it's such a tightly controlled industry these days and therefore an easy target. Albanese has already admitted to their failing by stating that from now on only Australian citizens may be granted a firearms license. This is an admission in itself. It goes without saying that that should have been the policy already. He also stated that people can be radicalized over time and therefore licenses given in perpetuity will need to cease and therefore allowing the opportunity to regularly 'review' previously granted licenses. I'm not sure of our prime ministers source of information, but he seriously needs to 'review' just that. There are no states in Australia that grant licenses in perpetuity! Licenses are granted for a maximum period of 5 years (and I think 10 in Qld) and rather than being renewed, they are treated as a new application would be, therefore subjected to all the costs, police checks and hurdles.....or put simply, they are already 'reviewed'. Now let's hype it up and outlaw 'belt fed' firearms.....their words, not mine! This confirms that they have absolutely no idea of what they're talking about.... There are no legal belt fed firearms in Australia except that used by our military forces. I'd be surprised if there's even any illegal guns which are belt fed. What they are referring to is a cartridge belt worn around the waist of Sajid Akram where rounds are one by one removed by hand from the belt and one by one fed into the magazine tube attached to the gun. God help us if our military are stripped of weapons with belt fed magazines if that's what they're referring to.

General public, media and government ministers, amongst others, have asked the question lately, why would someone have and need 10 firearms, or say multiple firearms? For the record, here's the answer to that question. Apart from a collector, which needs no clarification, since the inception of the John Howard gun reform, a new sense of firearm ownership has evolved. One comment from a past era that would resonate with most people is that "Dad and/or grandpa used to have an old rifle or two in the bedroom wardrobe". Strike a chord? Well due to Howards doing, those days are long gone. With all the hoops, hurdles, obligations and costs associated with gun ownership today, owning one or two cheapies is simply not worth it and it takes passion and a sense of seriousness to participate in the activity these days. Apart from the capital expense of purchasing the firearm, it really doesn't cost any more by owning multiple guns than it does one or two. Now we have the mathematical

equation out of the way, we now move on to the reason or cause. Most hunters take pride in achieving a clean and ethical kill. Yes, most if not all have compassion towards mitigating animal suffering and don't want to be seen to be the cause of a slow and painful death. Plus, if harvesting meat for their own consumption, a slow and stressed kill taints the meat. In order to achieve an ethical kill, one needs to employ the appropriate firearm. Shotgun, rifle, gauge, caliber and size and distances which will be encountered all play a part. Then there's firearms set up for daytime and others for night. Depending on the quarry and situation, dictates the appropriateness. Throw in target shooting with all the different disciplines involved these days such as short range, long range, standing, prone and so on, it doesn't take much more explanation to point out why people can have the need to accumulate a number of firearms, and fair enough. It's akin to the tools of a keen fisherman. He has a blackfish rod, surf rod, one for off the rocks, a boat rod, a snapper rod, jigging rod and multiple trout rods and doubling up on some rods but have different reels. This just names a few, but the point is, like firearms, he has a rod and reel for every occasion that he is likely to encounter. Now ask a fisherman of what he or she will lose if they're caught breaking the law. The answer will be they'll lose their license and possibly have the fishing gear used in the crime confiscated. The authorities without any doubt, will not confiscate all of the gear that's stashed at home. Now ask firearms owners what would they lose. Like fishermen, they will lose their license and not only the offending firearm, they will confiscate the whole contents of the gunsafe. Gun owners have built a considerable investment in the contents of their gunsafe which leads me to the question, who in Australia would be least likely to do the wrong thing? The answer to the question is, the gun owners, because they have too much to lose! Especially with now that the offending firearm can be traced back to its legal owner compared to the pre John Howard gun law reform. A.C.T., South Australia and Western Australia have seen little change in this regard as every firearm was individually registered to its owner. Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania on the other hand have gone through a significant change in that previously, one simply purchased a shooters licence and the authorities had no idea who owned what and how many firearms the licensees had. If a firearm was sold across the border from say A.C.T. to N.S.W., due to the differing systems, the system lost track of it.

Today's laws have a strict tracking and tracing policy in place. Since John Howard's reform, every legal firearm is registered to an owner by make, model, type of action and serial number. Legal firearms owners also need to restrain themselves from acts of violence and aggression for fear of having an AVO slapped on them, because once again, their firearms will need to be surrendered. Legal gun owners have a passionate activity to protect and they would find this most difficult should they flaunt the laws that govern it and do anything that would bring firearms into disrepute. Should hunters be severely restricted to the number of firearms they own, then rest assured that appropriate calibres will not be employed and animals will suffer on possibly numerous occasions. This will be a consequence that politicians will need to live with.

Now, having experience as a primary producer following my earlier years as a very active hunter and consider myself well qualified to speak out. By no means do I wish to be interpreted as I speak for all primary producers. Going back, my experience as an active hunter on numerous farm properties, some being high profile farmers. Something I noticed over all those years is that the property owners left it to me to attend to their animal control as they had their hands full as it was with farming activities and didn't have the time. As my passion for the activity increased, so did word of mouth and property access increased. Different terrain, game to hunt and situations overall. I too fell prey to the obligations and challenges that farming places on one. I only required two centrefires to manage my animal control. A small one for the foxes and hares and a larger one for the feral deer. I didn't have a rabbit problem, or ducks, nor buffalo, goats, camel or quail. My point is that as a primary producer, I didn't have a need for 10 firearms like the proposals are limiting to. But they are limiting the recreational hunters to 5. Like myself in my past, they hunt on various properties and therefore, it is them that need the multiple firearms more than I did.

We're told that there are more guns in Australia now than there were before the Port Arthur shootings. Given that our population has grown more than 50% (from 18.3 million) and the ownership sense previously explained, this is little reason to be alarmed. Especially now that the Howard reform has created such a strong control of the industry.

Rather than the obvious knee jerk reaction of the governments the real cause of Bondi needs to be identified. The cause is not from law abiding gun owners. Yes, I know, Sajid Akram (the father of the duo) had the weapons registered in his name, but they shouldn't have been. ASIO had Naveed Akram (his son) in their sights and subsequently the father was granted his firearms license by NSW Police. It's a well-known fact that policing and other vital authorities in Australia is under resourced. Sadly lacking in the resources needed TO DO THEIR JOB PROPERLY! This fellow fell through the cracks of that not caused by firearms owners. Who fulfills the needs of these departments.....Governments! They scrimp and save on these necessities but not when it comes to lining up to pay for a first class flight for them and their families. And, every time there's a disaster overseas, I sit back and wonder "How much is this gunna (pardon the pun) cost us?" In closing of this paragraph and more to think about, it's not gun laws that govern the countrys immigration policy!

Moving on to the next failure. The types of actions used in the Bondi attack are what you call 'button release' and 'straight pull'. Without going into detail of the mechanical workings of them they are what could be deemed as a rapid fire action. The John Howard gun laws 'specifically' outlawed semi-automatic firearms and pump action shotguns. Consequently, designers and manufactures came up with the 'button release' and re-marketed the old 'straight pull' actions, therefore testing the waters of the legislation and this is what we got. Straight pull actions were the thing until semi-automatic firearms stole their thunder and subsequently these were restricted under the Howard reform. Undoubtedly, there wouldn't have been the volume of victims and casualties should 'bolt actions' have been used.....much slower in cycling a round. In hindsight, the legislation should have banned 'rapid fire' mechanisms. This flaw wasn't at the hands of Australias legal gun owners.

One would have to be delusional to think that Israels campaign in Gaza and West Bank isn't inciting fanatical hatred from factions around the world and therefore there is an extraordinarily high chance that if Israels atrocities in Gaza wasn't as extreme, then the Bondi massacre just may not have happened! And yet, here we have Benjamin Netanyahu having a crack at our prime minister. So, there's every chance that Mr Netanyahu can also be blamed for the Bondi attack. In saying this, he's not stupid. Quite the opposite actually. He's just like

our government in throwing up smokescreens to take the attention away from himself. Jewish Australians are also slamming the Albanese government for not acting new and enforcing current laws. What difference would new laws relating to anti-semitism and hate make I ask. Does it really need pointing out to these people that it's already against the law to discharge a firearm in a public place let alone shoot people dead. Did this stop the Bondi murderers? It seems apparent to me that they can point the finger at the doings of their mother country as these acts of terrorism, with increasing intensity, has only really ramped up here in Australia in the past two years. I now ask, how long is it since Israel commenced its offensive in Gaza?.....about 2 years isn't it?.....Well hello?! With Albanese not acting on current antisemitism laws, I'd like to suggest that before the Bondi incident, these acts and protesting have been somewhat of a minor nature and should people be arrested for protesting, then consequential resentment and retaliation would result. I'd like to think that Albanese has Australia's best interests at heart in this respect. As do I feel that Albanese is of the correct sentiment when it comes to hoping for a two state solution as this would be our (Australia's and the rest of the world for that matter) only hope of stemming the anti-semitism but the Israeli government has dug their own hole so deep that even this would be highly unlikely now. In any case, it wouldn't disappear completely but at least if Palestinians and Israelis could strike a harmonic balance, it just may carry some momentum into the years ahead.

Here's another failure to think about. The category of license that the terrorist had was a recreational hunting license. In order to have this, one needs a letter of permission by a rural land holder to hunt on the property. The only situation outside of that in NSW is to have an R License. The R license is issued by the Department of Primary Industry (following the disbanding of the NSW Game Council) and its purpose is to allow the licensee to hunt on public land....namely State Forests. Now here's the punchline.....ANYONE IN AUSTRALIA CAN APPLY FOR ONE!!!! I bet pounds to peanuts that Sajid Akram had an R license! If this is the case, then his letter of permission was literally provided to him by the NSW government. I would think that this loophole constitutes a massive failure!!! A way of circumventing this would be a radicalized group of terrorists to purchase some rural acreage then sign multiple 'letters of permission'. However, this would easily be detected by

including a register on which landholders are signing such consents and therefore raising alarm bells. And, in any case, should he have had a letter of permission from an average everyday primary producer that he may have had the benefit of knowing, then the finger would also be pointed to the landowner. This then begs the question, would the same finger be pointed to the NSW government if it were an R license? I for one would feel for the farmer. Imagine his feelings knowing that the permission he gave in good faith, led to this. It'll probably be the last consent the poor bugger will ever give and he'll have to cope with his animal control problems himself. By no means am I advocating to have this system extinguished because there's no doubt, once again that numerous law abiding firearms owners that enjoy the benefit. I am suggesting however that it needs to be closely monitored and scrutinized.

There are close to one million law abiding current firearms licensees in Australia and adding to Albanese's claim of people being radicalized over time, if 1/10,000th of 1% of them committed a terrorist attack then it's an extreme exaggeration to say that there would be one terrorist attack per year in Australia which we know simply doesn't happen. Throw the number of illegal guns in the mix, a high percentage of which would be connected to criminal activity, and it still doesn't go within a bulls roar of one attack per year. That then begs the question, why are 99.9999999999% of law abiding firearms users being punished for something that is largely caused by government failures. Albanese has consistently advocated against holding the entire Australian Muslim community responsible for the actions of two. Well if that's not the pot calling the kettle black, I'm mystified. Isn't this hypocrisy to the extreme. He wishes to hold close to one million of his own citizens accountable for the actions of one licensed firearms owner....and a not so law abiding one at that!

I trust that all the above dispels any concerns you may have about gun ownership by legal means. In saying all that's being said, in reality one can never guarantee that there won't be breaches of the laws by licensed citizens. A simple comparison I guess with granting a drivers license or any permit.....they're given on the understanding and trust that laws won't be broken.

Upon Albanese announcing that only Australian citizens may apply for a firearms license, it was also revealed that there would be no right of appeal if a license application is rejected or if a current license is cancelled. So, as it would only be Australian citizens applying, what kind of modern day democratic government would strip its very own citizens of a right to appeal? A very arrogant one, that's who! Think about this scenario. A responsible firearms owners wife was diagnosed with a mental health condition that concerned him enough to remove his firearms from the residence and have them stored at the local gun club. Because of the diagnosis, his license was cancelled and consequently the police rolled up to seize his firearms, despite him taking it upon himself to do what he did.....more than a responsible person would be expected to do because the firearms are locked away in a safe that she wouldn't have access to anyway. This would be akin to a next door neighbor being diagnosed with the same condition and they will revoke ones license.....with no right of appeal under the proposed law. Most un-Australian. It's a democratic right to have a process of appeal. Even criminals have the right to appeal! And, I ask again, where's this country heading with regards being a democracy ruled by governments that blatantly strip its citizens of their privileges and rights.

This government is the very government that has said that they won't give in the terrorism. Well; here we have it that they've gone back on that already and the terrorists have won this one as Australian citizens are being stripped of their freedom, liberty, rights and privileges as a result of the Bondi incident. People also hold firearms of high sentimental value and family heirlooms not to mention the historical value that will simply vanish into thin air. Small business throughout Australia which deal in firearms and associated equipment will suffer immensely, more than likely leading to their demise in remote rural areas causing huge inconvenience to rural land owners.

I refer to a recent interview on 2CC radio in Canberra with Steve Whan, Labors Member for Monaro, where he admitted being approached by gun owners enquiring as to why they are being blamed for crimes they haven't committed. He rejected the claim and went on as to how they aren't being 'blamed'. Well, if gun owners aren't being blamed, then they are certainly being 'punished' for

it. Punished for something that they're not even blamed for. Given the minimal threat risk to the community that legal gun owners pose, by abandoning the gun buyback would save the taxpayer one billion dollars. A one billion dollar saving.....just like that, with a stroke of the pen. In any case, one billion dollars spent on compensating law abiding firearms owners for handing in legally registered firearms??....items that they know who owns what in the tightly controlled and governed industry. Who will be the ones who complies with the proposed restrictions? The law abiding citizens of course. So far, the laws put in place by N.S.W. and that proposed by the A.C.T. will have the criminal world laughing their heads off all the while saying, the wrong people are being targeted. The government's proposals have been far from thought out and in no way, despite their claims, has the proper consultations, evidenced by the announcements being made the day after, taken place and therefore substantiating the knee jerk reaction claim.

And, if the government is so cashed up that they can spend a billion dollars on a buyback scheme, well try this for size. DO YOUR JOB PROPERLY and provide that one billion dollars to the agents and authorities so they CAN DO THEIR JOB PROPERLY, and LEAVE THE LAW ABIDING CITIZENS ALONE! Now that would go much further in providing a safer community. Especially when they realise that the one billion buyback was a total waste and find that things haven't changed, then provide the agencies and authorities what they need....probably less than one billion!!!!

I, like many, don't have a problem with the proposed national firearms register although the need would be questioned if ASIO and the like are given adequate resources. The limiting of numbers of firearms that one can hold and the consequential buyback is ludicrous not to mention, unnecessary. If the reclassification of straight pull and button release makes them feel better, then so be it. I don't believe however that lever actions need inclusion as they are very handy to feral pig hunters in the heat of the moment. Pigs are one of the, if not the most, environmentally damaging feral animals and are prolific breeders. I won't go into facts and figures here. But can I suggest that you Google search.....'Why are feral pig numbers difficult to control in Australia' and treat the result as an annex to this paragraph. Take away one method of

control, namely lever actions from Recreational Hunters, then this would only add to the problem

The crackdown on means of 3D printing of firearms, increased scrutiny of firearms licensees, citizenship restrictions and reliance of Austrac all make sense.....because these are targeted towards mitigating criminal behavior but to drag law abiding firearms owners into the net is wrong!

If there's something blatantly obvious that I'm missing here and I can't see the trees for the forest, then tell me. Has there been numerous incidents where licensed firearms owners have been apprehended for breaches of the law? If so, tell us. Tell us of the major crimes that licensed firearms owners are committing such as menacing the public and their safety with a licensed firearm. But please spare us matters of a petty nature like a farmer being pinged for leaving a live round (bullet) on the floor of his ute contrary to the law stating his ammunition is to be stored under lock separate to the firearm.

All of those pushing for this reform have adopted the rhetoric of in the name of public safety. Do we see them calling for a reduction in the cars people can own, yet there are so many drivers out there speeding and breaking road rules every day, making our streets unsafe. Compulsory 12 monthly registration checks were relaxed years ago...just renew and pay on-line and bugger the condition of the vehicle! And, vegetation growth in every day household gardens such as oleanders and white cedar trees that are fatal to people if consumed. One doesn't even require a license to grow them. Gas bottles can be weaponized....and the list goes on....and on....and on. The point is, all of these things are a danger to the public's safety, but only when they're in the wrong hands! In all that's been written, I'll agree with one thing. Sure, to someone that has criminal intent, a firearm fits the bill due to its convenience with regards suitability to do the job. To achieve the impossible in removing all firearms, including illegal, from our streets, will that result in the potential offender melting down into a sulking session and simply go home? I don't think so. People who go out to murder someone else have hatred in their mind.....intense hatred. So much so, that these terrorists have no intention of coming out of their acts alive, such as Bondi and the Twin Towers / Pentagon. They'll find another weapon that fits the bill which is complimented by the next paragraph.

Oh, and what timing! The Australian Institute of Criminology last week released homicide statistics for the year ending June 2025 and shows A.C.T. homicides - Nil. Australia's leading weapon....knives and sharp instruments, followed by hands and feet then vehicle impacts and then down the line we have firearms at 9.3%. Unfortunately, the breakdown of what number of the 26 gun related homicides were at the hands of illegal firearms and unlicensed criminals. I think we all know the answer to that one without saying that historical data shows that a high majority is attributed to criminals and illegal firearms. I think our federal, NSW and ACT governments had best provide some very convincing evidenced based justification for their direction on this one!

And I can't help myself in closing without something of a jovial nature and at the same time, makes a powerful statement. My wallet contains evidence of which I strongly value, that I am of good character and of sound mind, via a firearms license. What do you have?

And another light hearted analogy, but also carries a message. Law abiding firearms owners bring less threat to the community than what a brown or a tiger snake does. Now let's put this into perspective. All people that make up the public, meet and greet law abiding firearms owners in everyday life activities. Amongst other things, they embrace, kiss, cuddle and shake hands with them.....and live to tell the story. Try kissing or extend your hand to a brown or tiger!. And those snakes are protected!

Thanking you in anticipation of your understanding of my take on this topic.

Paul Webster

