



# Submission cover sheet

## Inquiry into Legislation on proposed firearms reform

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# Submission on *Firearms (Public Safety) Amendment Bill 2026*

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I am grateful to the Legislative Assembly that they are considering this Bill in a committee and inviting public submissions. It is a hallmark of liberal democracy that citizens are truly consulted on laws that directly affect them, so thank you.

## Overview

1. I am **relieved** that the Bill proposes relatively modest changes to the ACT firearms laws, rather than blindly following the rushed measures of the NSW Government.
2. I am **insulted** that governments link a hate-crazed foreign terrorist with me, a peaceful, law abiding, 4<sup>th</sup> generation proud Australian.
3. I am **exasperated** that governments do not understand or recognise the positive aspects of our shooting sports, such as our strong culture of safety and compliance with the law.
4. I am **disappointed** that most of the proposed changes are unnecessary, even downright silly, have no bearing on public safety, will waste public money and burden ACT policing with yet more tedious administration that won't prevent or solve crime.
5. I am **frightened** that the proposed (well intentioned) measures against 3D printing create a trap for innocent folk who are not masters of the digital world.
6. I am **unimpressed** by the analysis of human rights impacts. It is amateurish writing with no evidence or analysis to justify the conclusions.

## Preamble

The ACT has had strong gun laws for decades, long before John Howard's gun law reforms of 30 years ago. We have very low rates of gun crime, almost all of it by career criminals using black market firearms.

It is often said that Australia has tough gun laws. But this is only half true. The laws are harsh for decent people who make small technical mistakes where no harm is caused or intended. Yet we can lose our licence, our valuable possessions, our sport, in some cases our livelihood and our social connections.

In contrast, wilful violent criminals who use guns to harm and threaten others are almost never prosecuted under gun laws because they are so weak. When they are convicted under criminal laws, the courts invariably impose lenient sentences. Even when they have killed someone, the prison sentence is often brief.

I see this as grossly unbalanced: punishing citizens who do no harm while letting off dangerous criminals.

## 1. Relieved

There are two main points I want to make:

**Five Year Licence Renewal.** I am pleased that the ACT is not proposing to change this. NSW's blanket requirement to renew every licence every 2 years will impose an immense burden on their administration. It is a crude, wasteful, backward approach to public safety. A far better investment would be into modern sophisticated surveillance and analysis methods to tease out the tiny fraction of licence holders who may pose a risk.

**Target Shooting and Pest Control.** Practise on shooting ranges is essential to build and maintain competence in marksmanship. In turn, that acquired skill with firearms is essential to conduct ethical, humane pest control and hunting. We need to be able to practise at the range with the firearms we use in the field.

Accordingly, I want the Regulations to explicitly state that license holders endorsed for both target shooting and pest control are entitled to use **all** their firearms at shooting ranges **and** in the field.

## 2. Insulted

The automatic reaction of governments to the Bondi terror attack, blaming and punishing hundreds of thousands of innocent Australians, is an egregious insult.

## 3. Exasperated

Governments should learn about and show appreciation for the many positives of the shooting sports.

Decades of data on injury and morbidity in sports show that shooting is one of the safest recreational activities. It rates about the same as table tennis. This is a great credit to our elders, leaders and club members throughout the country. Yet it is never recognised or acknowledged by governments.

Similarly, governments seem never to appreciate the crucial role shooting organisations play in making Australia's gun laws work. We provide expert technical advice to regulators, clarify the practical steps required to comply with the law and educate our

members on those requirements. Then there is peer pressure among our members: comply or bugger off! We don't associate with anyone who doesn't follow the rules.

Gun clubs are used by police and security agencies to train and practise their shooting skills so they are ready to keep the public safe when needed. The facilities are designed, built, maintained, operated and paid for by volunteer club members.

#### **4. Disappointed**

Plucking numbers out of the air adds nothing to the existing regulations, is not justified by evidence in the explanatory memorandum and will complicate already intricate regulations for no clear benefit to public safety. There are sound mechanisms in the existing Act to manage the number of firearms owned by individuals; each firearm needs a police permit to acquire and most licensees will have only a few firearms. Dedicated enthusiasts who participate in many shooting disciplines have had to justify their larger collections and are subject to heightened security and inspection measures. The cap achieves nothing and should be deleted from the Bill.

The prohibition on belt-fed firearms is a nationwide joke. These are specialised military armaments that have never been available to civilians. Including this in the Bill underscores the rushed, ill-informed nature of government reactions to the Bondi attack. Delete it from the Bill.

Straight pull actions have been around for more than a century. They have always been seen as just a variation on the turn-bolt and never as a public safety risk. Governments' sudden fixation with this action seems like a primitive taboo reaction rather than a sober analysis of actual risk. This type of action features in several high-quality firearms so if the reclassification is made they will be expensive to buy back. Spare taxpayers by deleting this measure from the Bill.

I regret that the government did not use this review of the Firearms Act to modernise the rules around sound moderators. These are an attachment to the muzzle that diminishes the report; greatly reducing the risk of hearing damage, minimising disturbance to people and livestock in the vicinity, and enabling more efficient culls of pests. In other countries with strict gun laws like the United Kingdom and New Zealand, sound moderators are readily available, viewed as a courtesy to others and often a requirement of permission to shoot. Australian governments' obsession with banning them is irrational and out of step with international norms. The ACT should set a sensible example by removing impediments for licensees to acquire sound moderators.

## 5. Frightened

Of course I approve of measures to prevent criminals making illicit firearms. But proposed section 228A worries me as an older person who finds today's digital world increasingly alienating. My phone and computer operating systems are confusing, obscure and unintuitive. I am constantly deluged with unsolicited rubbish.

As one who doesn't know the first thing about 3D printing I see S 228A as a frightening trap. How am I supposed to know or recognise that some prohibited file has arrived on my computer? The explanatory statement has a casual, dismissive air to the strict liability provision, arguing that securing convictions is paramount. If you are innocent well bad luck but there are some defences (if you are rich enough). I am not comforted. It raises the spectre of an expensive and traumatic process to prove innocence.

This new section should have stronger safeguards to protect folk like me from being unknowingly caught out. I suggest that in addition to the mere presence of a file on a device there must be evidence that it was intentionally acquired and that an accused has some capability to do 3D printing.

## 6. Unimpressed

I found the discussion of consistency with human rights entirely unsatisfactory. No evidence is presented or discussed before asserting that the Bill is 'proportionate', 'justified', 'least restrictive' and has a 'direct rational connection to the purpose'. The existing firearms legislation has been operating for nearly 30 years so there must be a large set of data, evidence and case studies to analyse. Why wasn't this done? What real gaps in the existing legislation are addressed in the Bill? What genuine risk requires mitigating and how will the Bill do it?

Why wasn't section 12 (b) of the Human Rights Act considered: the right to an unsullied reputation? It is hard to imagine a more degrading slur than being lumped in with mass murdering racist psychopaths.

What use is the Human Rights Act if it can be so flippantly disregarded by the government?

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