

**Question on Notice  
No. 2405  
Asked on 25 November 2010**

MR FOLEY asked the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services (MR ROBERTS)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the Minister's answer to Question on Notice No. 2024 which indicated that there have been ten times more knife offences than gun offences and that 38 concealable firearm licence holders had their licences revoked—

- (1) Why is there so much scrutiny of legitimate handgun owners when there are ten times more knife offences?
- (2) Why is the same effort not being taken to reign in knife offences?
- (3) Of the 38 licence cancellations how many of them were for criminal usage of a handgun as opposed to non compliance of licence conditions?

ANSWER:

The *Weapons Act 1990* is consistent with the nationally agreed weapons controls. This Government is committed to maintaining that consistency and to striking a balance between the rights of legitimate weapons owners and the safety expectations of the community.

The nationally agreed weapons controls were developed over a number of years in response to a number of major incidents including the 1996 Port Arthur tragedy (pump action shotguns and semi-automatic rifles) and the 2002 Monash University shooting (handguns).

Those incidents clearly demonstrate the justification for regulating the possession and use of firearms in the interests of public and individual safety.

The *Weapons Act* recognises the legitimate interests of firearms owners and users. For example, the Act allows for the possession and use of handguns for competition shooting and certain occupational uses.

Due to the widespread use of knives in homes and workplaces for legitimate purposes, it would be impractical and unreasonable to introduce a total ban on the sale of knives or a requirement for the registration of all knives in Queensland.

However, sections 50 (Possession of weapons) and 50B (Unlawful supply of weapons) of the *Weapons Act 1990* (the Act) create offences for the unlawful possession and supply of certain categories of weapons, including category M weapons.

Section 7A of the *Weapons Categories Regulation 1997* contains a list of the types of weapons which fall into category M. This list includes:

*(c) any knife so designed or constructed so as to be used as a weapon that while the knife is held in 1 hand, the blade may be released by that hand ...*

It should also be noted that section 51 (Possession of a knife in a public place or a school) of the Act creates an offence for the possession of a knife in a public place or a school without a reasonable excuse. In addition, section 69 (Going armed so as to cause fear) of the Criminal Code creates an offence for going armed in public without lawful occasion in such a manner as to cause fear to any person.

As advised in my answer to Question on Notice No. 2024, the *Weapons Act* is currently under review. Consultation drafts of the proposed Bill and Weapons Regulation were distributed for public comment in August 2010, with the community's feedback to be considered in the final Bill before introduction.

As with the current legislation, the Bill provides that inert category M weapons such as ballistic knives, butterfly knives, flick knives, push knives, retractable sheath knives and trench knives may only be held under a collector's licence. The Bill further provides that star knives may also be held under a miscellaneous weapons licence as a martial arts weapon. These knives were originally designed for offensive purposes and therefore warrant the stricter controls.

It will remain an offence to possess a knife in a public place without a reasonable excuse.

With respect to Part 3 of the Member's question, the following table identifies the reasons for the cancellations of the 38 concealable firearm licences during 2009 – 2010.

<b>Reason revoked</b>	<b>Number of revocations</b>
Domestic violence	19
Weapons offence	2
Drug offence	2
Court disqualified	1
Mental health	7
Violence offence	1
Condition breach	1
Public interest (may include persons sentenced to a term of imprisonment)	5