



»« Firearm Owners United »«

To,
Committee Secretary
Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee

We would like to thank the committee for the invitation to provide a submission on the Corrective Services and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. Our organisation operates nationwide to advocate for the shooting community. We are a purely volunteer driven Not-For-Profit with a diverse membership ranging across sporting shooters, hunters, primary producers, professional pest controllers, armourers, security guards and dealers.

As a group focused on firearms ownership our concerns with the bill relate entirely to the provisions affecting the *Weapons Act 1990 (Qld)* and the *Weapons Regulations 1996 (Qld)*.

We are fully supportive of the provisions of this bill with respect to an amnesty for the registration or surrender of unlawfully held items. The proposed move to a permanent amnesty strikes us as a reasonable measure that will enhance public safety. We find the requirements to either provide details or otherwise surrender anonymously, with the firearm to be surrendered to the police only, and to call the dealer/police in advance to be well reasoned and justified. This is a sensible proposal and will undoubtedly help reduce the problem posed by illicit firearms in Queensland.

We do however have concerns with the proposal to regulate the possession of deactivated category A,B and C firearms. Whilst we understand that QPS has had increasing concerns with regards to call outs involving replica firearms, we seriously doubt that there is a significant issue relating to deactivated firearms. These items pose no public safety risk in terms of unlawful reactivation, as the incredibly brutal deactivation standards brought about in the early 2000s have ensured this will not be a problem. It seems that deactivated firearms have been grouped together with concerns nearly entirely driven by the recent proliferation of 'gel ball blasters'.

Whilst the bill makes an allowance for those with a Collectors License to possess deactivated Category A,B and C firearms this is vastly more restrictive than may be anticipated. Collectors Licenses are relatively uncommon, evidenced in the last RTI release which in 2018 indicated that only 1264 had been issued. Whilst this figure may have risen since 2018 we doubt it has seen a substantial increase. In contrast there were 172,580 general Firearms Licenses and 196,303 licenses of all types under the Weapons Act. Furthermore, the legislative requirements placed on holders of a Collector's license are more onerous than generally realised. A Collector broadly must store their firearms to a higher standard than a general firearms licensee. The higher standards include the need for a Collector to use an official registry book to document their firearms, maintain an association

United We Stand



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membership and in some cases are subject to at-will inspections by the Police reflecting the same inspection right as Dealers and Armourers. Suffice to say Collector's licenses' are not suitable for someone who merely desires to have a deactivated .303 SMLE to use as a mantle piece.

Of further issue with this change is that there are an unknown number of deactivated Category A,B & C firearms within the community. Given the popularity of these items as 'wall hangers' and the unrestricted way in which they have been sold over the years we believe there could be a substantial number in homes around Queensland.

Our concerns over this would be alleviated if the bill was amended to clarify that this type of harmless decorative use of deactivated firearms constituted a 'reasonable excuse' for possession.

In relation to gel blasters, we believe that more focus should be given to developing and promoting a public education campaign to prevent their misuse in public places, rather than the proposed restrictions. Furthermore, we believe that the requirement for people to be members of an incorporated association to participate in events that involve gel blasters have been cynically suggested as a self-serving aim of these associations who intend to offer such events and negate the end goal of improved public safety.

We are also concerned about the de-facto requirement this legislation creates for some form of secure storage for what is essentially a toy. Whilst this requirement is not explicitly defined in the bill, in a multi-resident household where one occupant owns a gel ball blaster and has a reasonable excuse to possess such, but another does not, it seems entirely possible that the person who does not own the article could nonetheless end up in a situation where they were in unlawful possession of it where the item not stored in a safe. This is not something that we believe has been adequately factored into the decision making process for this bill.

We believe that our concerns for gel ball blasters and deactivated A, B and C firearms could be significantly alleviated. This could be achieved by modifying the offence of possession of a restricted replica firearm without a reasonable excuse to instead only apply to possession in a public place, instead of possession more generally.

Yours truly,
Kirk Yatras
Vice-President

