



President's Message

SSAA Queensland has discussed and submitted to the state government its comments, concerns and where relevant support for various aspects of the Community Safety Bill 2024, particularly in relation to the proposed firearms prohibited person orders. As a key stakeholder your Association will only ever support changes to legislation where there is a clear public safety benefit and does not, adversely, either deliberately or inadvertently, disadvantage licensed, law abiding firearm owners. Submitted in February of this year, our¹ submission among other things included ensuring firearm prohibition orders only be issued to the most serious offenders who pose a risk to the public, ensuring minors are not treated unjustly and that law abiding licenced firearms owners are not held culpable for the actions of the unlicenced. We also sought clarity in ensuring that red tape does not become cumbersome in areas such as ammunition sales and online data entry for the firearms industry.

Lobbying plays a key role in what we do and it is an endless task but we are up for the challenge. As mentioned last month, we have expanded our lobbying and government relations activities to the federal arena. While most firearm laws are made at the state level, with the continuation of the Covid era National Cabinet roping in the state premiers and offering money to the states in return for agreement on areas such as the roll out of a national firearms register, it is critical we, as the largest stand-alone shooting organisation in Australia with nearly 80,000 members, are at the discussion table.

Besides ensuring the governments are held to account the next best thing we can do to ensure the prosperity of our sport and recreation is to encourage juniors into the Association and field sports. We must pass on to them our understanding of hunting, game management and conservation. Through our junior competitions we can pass on the skills of safe firearms ownership and marksmanship, which are the hallmarks of the sporting shooter. In July there are two events specifically aimed at juniors as you will read further on. I encourage you to get your grandchild, child, niece or nephew there to the competitions. I can guarantee you it will be an experience they will remember forever.

Hellen Gill

SSAA Queensland President

Junior shooting? – help them to give it a go!



Are you the parent, carer, grandparent, uncle or aunt of a child aged 11 to 17? If so SSAA Queensland is hosting two absolutely free events that will have them competing in a safe, fun environment with similar aged rimfire rifle shooters.

To be held at the Captains Mountain Shooting Complex near Millmerran, the first two-day event, the Queensland State Junior Championships, takes place from Monday July 1. Don't be intimidated by the title, the motto of the competition is to 'give it a go!'. Campsites and a variety of cabin accommodation are available Sunday and Monday nights, again, free of charge.

Competitions will be held in benchrest, field rifle and rifle metallic silhouette at distances from 25 metres to 50 metres. Parents or guardians are to be present while the junior shooter is on the range and in the case of those without a minor's firearms licence must be supervised on the range at all times. Adults will also be required to bring firearms and ammunition for the junior's use.

Then from July 4 to the 7th Captains Mountain will open up to young shooters from across the country for the National Junior Challenge. Competitions will be held in field rifle, hunting rifle, silhouette and 3 position. Entry fees, accommodation and even in this case, breakfast, lunch and dinner are provided at no cost.

The only requirement is that the junior's are SSAA members and nominations and accommodation requests have been made prior to the deadlines. Go to www.ssaqld.org.au or contact State Discipline Chairman Jon McCarthy on 0438 756 622 for further information. The youth are the future of the shooting sports and we need your support in getting them on the range.

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New firearms database in the pipeline

When, why and how will it help?

By **Tim Bannister,**

SSAA Queensland Executive Director, Strategy, Communications and Relations

A national firearms database construction will start from July requiring all state and territories to remediate or rebuild their databases. The Federal Government has said it will cost about \$160 million and take four years to achieve. Essentially it will be a ninth database that is fed from the other eight and include an 'AFIN' – an Australian Firearm's Identification Number specific to the type of firearm. This is a separate identifier from the serial number of a firearm that is unique to each firearm.

The national database and the Australian Firearm's Identification Number are two distinct projects but it is envisaged they will be integrated to help authorities identify, trace and prevent 'leakage' of firearms, or in other words firearms disappearing off a state's database and its location becomes unknown.

The construction of the national database will be a mammoth task as the lack of accuracy of the state and territories databases is obvious and a fact many firearm owners have experienced themselves. The Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission told SSAA Queensland there are 13 million firearms on the registers but there are only three million firearms in the country. States and their police firearms units to date have been ignoring the fact that their databases are imperfect and unreliable but with the offer of millions of dollars of Federal Government money (our taxpayer dollars) they have finally agreed to attempt to rebuild their records. In the case of Tasmania, it has now been revealed they don't even have a computer-based firearms database, it is still a physical paper and metal filing cabinets records system.

We recently met with the Federal Attorney-General's Department and firearms policy Director Vanessa Paterson to ask for more detail on the national database build and the unique firearms identification number.

"We are expecting the national database to offer near real time data and follow the movement of the firearm throughout its lifespan," Mrs Paterson said. "It will be a stepped process with high-level business plans to change each state's database to align with exporting into the new database. There will be no adlibbing in entering details on a firearm. Instead, it will be drop down fields.

"It is hoped the new database will identify any [illegal] diversion of the firearm."

The first question we pose as to whether we support any new legislation or monitoring of licensed firearms owners is, "Is there a public safety benefit that does not unjustly burden our members?". And given that new laws are often the knee jerk reaction to a criminal incident such as the Wieambilla religiously motivated terrorist murders of two police officers and a neighbour, would they actually have stopped the incident from happening?

The answer to the first may rely on what, if any implications it has to the licensed firearm owner. We have written to the head of Queensland's Weapons Group Mark Rhimes asking exactly that and we will report back to members on the answers provided.

Will a new and ninth database prevent crimes in the future? Given that it is incredibly rare that a crime is committed by a licensed firearms owner with a registered firearm, probably no. But it should, in theory prevent firearm locations being lost or diverted, either by poor record keeping by the

authorities or providing deliberately false information as a now gaoled rogue NSW firearms dealer was doing. He was illegally selling handguns to organised crime figures but said he had sold the firearms interstate. Authorities were none the wiser until a criminal left one of the handguns at a Sydney crime scene as an act of showing off and the firearm was traced back to the dealer.

It will be a long and expensive roll-out of the database. History says it is a sure bet that it will cost more than the budgeted \$160 million. Throughout the build we will continue to inform you of any developments and you, our members are not disadvantaged by the process and are treated appropriately. Just as we did with Police Minister Mark Ryan and the Community Safety Bill, we will also push back on unnecessary legislation where inappropriate, but support laws where they are clearly intended to stop or punish illegal behaviour of criminals or terrorists.

The below is taken from the Queensland Weapon's Licensing website:

Current average online application timeframes as at 03/06/2024

New licence applications - 10.5 weeks
Permit to acquire applications - 11 days

Any delays or extensions to these time frames may be a result of insufficient information on behalf of the applicant or where the applicant may be asked for further information as identified by the Authorised Officer.

Weapons Licensing will always proceed with the principles of individual and community safety when making decisions on applications.

A Permit to Acquire applied for using a new licence application case reference, in accordance with section 39 of the *Weapons Act 1990*, requires the determination of the licence before the Permit to Acquire is actioned.

Licences and weapons in Queensland

As at 03/06/2024, in Queensland there are -

Issued licences: 223,767
Licensees: 203,178
Total number of registered weapons: 1,051,370