



Firearm Owners United
Official Policy Statement

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Firearm Owners United

Firearm Owners United was born out of a need to unite the shooting community and address the discrimination toward Law Abiding Firearm Owners, misconceptions and myths about firearms in Australia. It was also formed to fight for balanced, reasonable and common sense firearm laws – where the common sense has been completely cast aside in this country.

Unfortunately, it is our view the Australian public has been quite deliberately socially engineered the past 20 years by the media and [certain political groups](#), to hold irrational, unreasonable and completely inaccurate perceptions about firearms and their capabilities and place in society.

‘Debate’ on this subject in Australia has degenerated into a puerile one. The [pre-existing decline in the homicide rate](#), [the fate of firearms surrendered](#), illegal importation, mass murders that have occurred after 1996 and daily firearm crime perpetrated by prohibited persons with illegal firearms as well as [knife crime](#), domestic violence and [home invasions](#) are all completely ignored in favor of an emotion based, sensationalist prohibition argument; based almost entirely on the actions of one individual that acquired firearms illegally, victim parades and a cavalcade of self-appointed experts and [pseudo intellectuals](#) with no real knowledge on the topic.

The most intellectually dishonest of these perceptions being the persistent presentation of a false dichotomy comparison to the United States, while ignoring a plethora of western liberal democracies and other nations with far more liberal firearm laws than Australia and lower or equivalent violent crime and per capita homicide rates. The mention of New Zealand, Canada, Switzerland, Czech Republic, etc and their systems is almost always absent from the discourse in Australia for obvious reasons – its inconvenient to the pre-established narrative.

Further firearm restrictions on license holders will make absolutely no impact on the increasing violent crime we are seeing or illegal firearms. It will certainly not prevent another mass shooting, as Man Monis clearly proved at the Lindt Café in 2014. Indeed, all it will do is over inflate the black market and drive money and firearms further into criminals’ hands.

Australia has always had a strong firearms culture. It was not born out of rebellion of government such as the United States, and it is completely invalid to compare us to such. Sure, there was the Eureka Stockade, but firearms in Australia have arguably long been associated with tenure of the land, hunting and sport.

Perhaps the only benefit to come out of the infamous 1996 National Firearms Agreement was a licensing and vetting system. The rest of the current system is ineffective, inconsistent, irrational, contradictory, wasteful and born out of an emotional response. It was devised by individuals who clearly lacked the subject matter knowledge and expertise, other than position or self-appointed ‘credentials’, to make accurate and valid assessments on a complex subject. It punished the overwhelming law abiding majority, for the actions of one person.

Firearm Owners United

Firearm Owners United believe that the current system is in need of a much needed overhaul to bring it into line with international standards in other western liberal democracies, increase efficiency and dispel public perceptions and myths about firearms in Australia.

We stand for a balanced, evidence based, rational and inclusive approach by subject matter experts and stakeholders – including the primary stakeholders, firearm owners. We do not stand for decisions made on emotion, exploitation of tragedies or collectivist punishment based ideologies or vague appeals to ‘the public good’.

The core philosophy of devising firearm law should be **regulating the individual not the object.**

Stand together or fall alone.

James Buckle

President

Firearm Owners United

Licencing

FOU is in favour of a much simplified licencing system. As stated previously, the core philosophy of FOU remains regulating the person and not regulating objects.

The minimum criteria to be satisfied in order to obtain a license are:

- No criminal history, particularly criminal violence (criminal background check)
- No serious mental health issues
- No domestic violence orders
- Police interview
- Completion of a firearms safety course

FOU support the waiver of the safety course requirement for serving or ex-law enforcement and defence personnel who can provide evidence of completion of such training within the last 5 years (if discharged), especially defence personnel who serve or have served in combat roles.

FOU also support doing away with arbitrary waiting periods. FOU instead propose that there should be a maximum timeframe, from date of application to decision, for an application to be either approved or denied by Police. FOU also support the extension of licensing period to 10 years and that firearm safety courses be expanded and cater either individually or collectively for extended license classes. Simplified, you may apply for one or more licenses concurrently provided you meet the requirements and complete the relevant safety courses.

FOU Recommendations:

- Licence period to be 10 years
- Licence applications to be determined within 28-35 days (can be determined faster if all requirements met)
- Licences to display name, photograph, date of birth, signature and license categories
- Licences should not display the licensee's storage or residential address
- Licencing to provide for the ability to roll several licenses into one license (i.e. one card instead of four)
- Appeals process for licence applications that are declined
- Changes to be grandfathered in. I.e. current licence holders do not have to go through new process if they keep their licences valid. New applicants from a determined date to be subject to new system

Children's Licences

FOU strongly supports firearm education and participation in shooting sports for children. FOU recommends no licences for children under the age of 12 when in direct supervision of an adult and child's licences should be for a period of 6 years from age 12-18.

Firearm categorisation

FOU believe that the current system of firearm categorisation is inconsistent, contradictory, ineffective and impractical and was born out of an emotional response, rather than practical and rational analysis, consultation with relevant stakeholders and development.

The Adler A110 lever action shotgun debacle, where a 7-shot version of the shotgun was restricted because of 'fears it may be used in terrorism' but the 5-shot version allowed for import, being a case in point of nonsensical and irrational application of law.

Unfortunately, these policies and laws for the most part have been devised by individuals who do not possess the requisite knowledge or experience available to make an informed decision about these matters, and/or have an inherent bias against firearm ownership. Personal biases about firearm ownership should not form the basis of policy decision making.

FOU recommends the categorisation of firearms into a more streamlined and practical process.

FOU Recommendations:

Category A	Category B	Category H	Category R
Air rifles Muzzle loading and black powder firearms Bolt action rifles Single shot rifles Pump action rifles Lever action rifles Single, double and triple barrel shotguns Pump action shotguns Lever action shotguns Semi-automatic shotguns Semi-automatic rim fire rifles	Semi-automatic centrefire rifles	All handguns	Automatic firearms Ordnance/Explosives Grenade/Tear Gas Launchers

*Category R = restricted (not available for private ownership)

“Genuine Reason” Requirement

FOU would like to see the removal of the “genuine reason” requirement. If an individual has been vetted as fit and proper to own a firearm then it is of no significance what that firearm is purchased for. The focus should be on vetting the person, not the firearm.

However there are, of course, **lawful and unlawful uses of a firearm**. Firearms use outside of these prescribed uses is considered unlawful.

FOU believe and support the following as lawful uses of a firearm:

- Sports Shooting (all forms)
- Pest Control
- Primary Production/Farming
- Hunting (recreational and professional)
- Collecting
- Home Defence

FOU believe that **a firearm that is purchased by a license holder and used for any lawful purpose, may be used for any other lawful purpose**. For example, a handgun that is purchased for sports shooting, maybe also be used for livestock or pest destruction and vice versa.

FOU also supports that regulations concerning the use of firearms on private property in rural areas be relaxed.

Semi-Automatic Self Loading Centrefire Rifles

Unfortunately 20 years of, in our opinion, very deliberate social engineering has convinced the public, and sadly some firearm owners, into believing that semi-automatic self-loading centrefire firearms are some ‘evil tool’. This is nothing but hyperbole. It also appears ridiculous when semi-automatic handguns are acceptable to be purchased by licence holders in Australia but semi-automatic long arms are highly restricted or banned.

Many countries, such as New Zealand, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Serbia, Canada, Finland, etc allow licence holders to purchase semi-automatic centrefire rifles and do not experience elevated levels of violent crime. **New Zealand allows licence holders to purchase semi-automatic centrefire rifles and has not experienced a mass shooting since February 1997.**

Semi-automatic centrefire rifles are a valuable asset to recreational hunters and rural landowners in the effort against feral species eradication, a battle Australia is quite clearly

losing. LAFO's are incredibly hindered by the inability to purchase the correct tools for the job or must go through incredibly onerous procedures, the current Category D regulations, just to obtain one and even then are in no way guaranteed of obtaining one. It is also a ridiculous state of affairs when serving defence personnel are entrusted with automatic firearms and ordnance, yet in their civilian capacity are not deemed trustworthy to own a semi-automatic firearm.

Semi-automatic centrefire rifles are also a legitimate sporting use of a firearm. **The sport of "3-gun" or "Multigun" is arguably the most popular shooting sport in the world.** It is legal in New Zealand and was previously legal in Australia before 1996. It is currently banned in Australia as our laws do not allow for the purchase of this type of firearm for sporting use.

As the New Zealand experience has shown, we do not accept as credible, that a person who has been found as a fit and proper person to own a firearm and has passed the necessary background checks is any more dangerous with a semi-automatic centre fire rifle than they are with a bolt action rifle, double barrel shotgun or otherwise.

FOU Recommendations:

- Minimum age 18 years old
- Applicant must complete a safety course
- Safety course requirement waived for serving and ex-defence force personnel who can demonstrate evidence of service

Handguns

FOU supports the removal of the minimum attendance requirement for the possession of a handgun licence. FOU also supports the removal of 'provisional' licences and the six month minimum waiting period for purchase of a handgun. As the New Zealand experience shows, these are of **no proven benefit and do not add value** to the vetting process.

FOU supports the re-introduction of handguns for hunting and primary production/pest control. Handguns are an incredibly useful tool for hunters, farmers and pest controllers, particularly in situations when confronted with a large group of animals that can quickly turn hostile and endanger the hunter. It also allows shooters to be humane when euthanizing fallen prey without jeopardizing personal safety with large calibre rifles and shotguns at close range.

FOU also strongly recommend that serving Police members receive additional and regular handgun training and that minimum requalification standards be lifted. Police members should also gain concessions or be encouraged to apply for a handgun license.

FOU Recommendations:

- Removal of “minimum shoot” requirement – clubs have greater ability to terminate membership
- Re-introduction of handguns lawful for hunting, pest control and primary production
- Removal of provisional licence system
- Removal of calibre restrictions, particularly for IPSC and other sports shooting competitors

Firearms Registration

FOU supports the complete abolishment of the firearms registry.

Firearms registration is nothing more than an extremely expensive public relations exercise to appease the fears of a section of the community. In actual fact, **it does absolutely nothing to prevent or solve crime and does absolutely nothing about illegal firearms.**

Further to that, as recent examples have shown from Greens MP David Shoebridge it jeopardises community safety as registry details and information are no longer secure. As we are currently seeing in Australia, the minority of firearms stolen from licenced owners are targeted thefts that have occurred when license holder details have found their way into the criminals. Simply put, firearms registries are essentially a one stop shop for criminals.

Canada abolished their firearms registry in 2012 after it was determined to have no proven benefit for the \$1 billion a year cost. New Zealand abolished theirs years ago for the same reason. There is no reason Australia cannot do the same.

It is estimated this would deliver a budget saving to each state government in the range of \$30-\$50 million a year, which would be better spent on front line policing of illegal firearms or mental health. It is estimated this would allow for up to 500 extra police officers to be deployed with the money saved.

FOU Recommendations:

- Complete abolishment of all state and territory firearms registries
- Licence holder’s records to be responsibility of state police in respective jurisdiction, allowing for information sharing between AFP and State Police

Permit to Acquire System

FOU strongly advocates doing away completely with the permit to acquire (PTA) system. The permit to acquire system is bureaucratic overreach and provides **no proven safety or security benefit** to the community or already vetted license holders, for the substantial financial cost. Once a person has been vetted as fit and proper to own a firearm, they do not need repeated “permission” to purchase firearms and associated parts while their license is valid.

Safe Storage

FOU are in favour of retaining safe storage requirements for firearms with some adjustments to the current regulations. Currently, there is too much variance in storage requirements between classes of firearms. This needs to be streamlined.

Further, FOU believe that mandatory Police inspections are an unnecessary, time consuming and costly exercise for front line police who would be far better served on other duties. It also does absolutely nothing to stem the tide of illegal firearms. These should be ceased and Police resources should be redirected at dealing with illegal firearms instead of monitoring the law abiding.

FOU Recommendations:

- Standardisation of safe minimum thickness to a “one size fits all” thickness
- Firearm owner must provide proof of purchase of safe at initial purchase before being able to purchase firearms
- Safe to be secured to premises, any safe over 150kgs does not have to be secured to premises
- Removal of firearm separation requirements, i.e. firearm can be stored loaded and without bolt removed in case of an emergency
- Allowance for sale of biometric and ‘quick release’ style safes to allow firearm owners to deploy in case of an emergency
- Cessation of mandatory warrantless police inspections for firearm storage

Paintball, Laser Skirmish and Airsoft

FOU fully support the deregulation of Paintball, Laser Skirmish and Airsoft in Australia. They are legitimate sporting pastimes enjoyed internationally by large numbers of professional and recreational competitors.

FOU do not accept as credible that both Paintball, Laser Skirmish and Airsoft equipment should be classified as firearms. **They are toys** and should be treated as such. Australia is currently one of only three countries where the sport of Airsoft is virtually illegal.

Paintball, Laser Skirmish and Airsoft are also valuable training tools for members of the Australian Defence Force and Police jurisdictions and are utilised as such. There is no reason that adults in New Zealand, Canada, UK, USA, Europe and the rest of the world can be trusted to play these sports while Australian citizens cannot.

FOU recommendations:

- Full deregulation of Paintball, Laser Skirmish and Airsoft
- Declassification of Paintball, Laser Skirmish and Airsoft from firearm licenses

- Paintball, Laser Skirmish and Airsoft guns available for purchase without licence to adults age 18 years or over, or 16 years with parental consent
- Strong penalties for criminal misuse of Paintball, Laser Skirmish and Airsoft equipment

'Military Appearance' Clauses

Military Appearance Clauses are an unfortunate part of firearms legislation in Australia.

In reality, 'Military Appearance' Clauses are nothing more than an arbitrary way for often uninformed assessors to ban or restrict firearms purely based on appearance. It is a reality that just about every firearm ever designed, with exceptions to some very sports specific firearms, have had military or law enforcement application somewhere in the world at some point throughout history.

For example, a Tikka bolt action rifle chambered in .308 with a barrel shroud, pistol grip stock and spray painted in camouflage **is still a bolt action rifle**.

FOU believe that classifying a firearm purely based on its aesthetic or cosmetic appearance is in no way a credible or valid assessment of the capabilities of a firearm, and that military appearance clauses should in no way form part of firearms legislation or regulation.

FOU strongly recommend that "Military Appearance Clauses" be removed from firearms legislation and do not support these types of clauses in any way, shape or form.

Hunting

Hunting is an ancient cultural tradition which has existed as long as human beings have walked the earth. This is exactly the case in Australia, beginning with indigenous Australians and continuing to today.

In modern Australia, hunters and pest controllers play an invaluable part in the defence of our native species and controlling levels of and eliminating invasive species. Although other methods of pest control are just as important, targeted hunting with firearms remains the most cost effective and humane as opposed to the environmentally deleterious effects of 1080 aerial spraying, a strategy championed by the Australian Greens. Hunting also protects farmers and farmlands from destruction, the damage from which accrues close to \$1 billion nationally every year.

Australia unfortunately has the title of the fastest native species loss in the world. Contrary to popular perception, restriction of access to Australian national parks for hunters creates protected enclaves for pest and invasive species such as cats, wild dogs, pigs, goats, etc to thrive and destroy our native flora and fauna. Park rangers are grossly under resourced to effectively deal with this issue. Opening up these national parks to recreational hunters

would assist this problem being effectively addressed and encourage tourism.

Hunting is also an ethical and organic source of meat for many people. Recreational and professional hunters contribute hundreds of millions of dollars to the Australian economy annually.

FOU Recommendations:

- Deregulation and re-introduction of semi-automatic centrefire rifles for hunting
- Deregulation and re-introduction of handguns for hunting
- Seasonal hunting and access for hunters across Australian national parks

Home Defence

FOU strongly support the rights of citizens to be safe in their home and to be able to defend their lives and their property inside their own home with whatever reasonable force deemed necessary, up to and including a firearm. Australian law states you can defend yourself with reasonable force. However, for many Australians, particularly the elderly, women and the infirm/disabled, the interpretation and reality of what constitutes 'reasonable' is greatly varied.

The average Police response time in Australia is around 14-20 minutes. Police are mostly a reactionary force, not a preventative one. It is not reasonable or rational to expect that Police assistance is always available immediately, when it is needed immediately. This is even more valid for citizens in rural areas where police assistance may be up to 2 hours away, an unfortunate fact of rural life which many of the urban majority fail to realise.

Current firearm storage laws also make it difficult, if not impossible, for occupants of a home to effectively neutralise a potential threat using a firearm. As we have seen with recent cases of violent home invasions, law abiding citizens are at a disadvantage when it comes to self-defence. Australian citizens are currently precluded from owning any item expressly for the purpose of self-defence and the mere act of preparation for a potential home invasion situation is looked upon unfavourably in the eyes of the courts.

There is no reason why a licenced, vetted firearm owner cannot use a firearm to protect their home and loved ones in a life threatening emergency.

FOU also fully support the implementation of the Castle Doctrine in Australia. If Australians' cannot be safe in their own homes, then where can they be?

FOU also recommend the development and implementation of appropriate training courses to educate and prepare citizens for the practicalities and legal implications of home defence scenarios.

Suppressors/Sound moderators

Suppressors or Sound Moderators is a cosmetic feature of a firearm designed to moderate the sound of a gunshot by redistributing the gases produced in the barrel. Suppressors are currently available for purchase for licensed firearm owners in Switzerland, Czech Republic, New Zealand, USA, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Serbia and several other countries.

Contrary to deliberate media misrepresentations, Suppressors are not designed to achieve “James Bond” style assassinations. They are designed for the safety of the hearing of the operator of the firearm. As a guide, the best Suppressors on the market will generally reduce the noise of an average 150db gunshot from a .308 round (one of the most common rounds in use in Australia) by around 40dbs. Current methods such as earmuffs and earplugs are not as effective as Suppressors and when used in combination with Suppressors can provide total hearing protection to firearm owners.

The hysteria generated over Suppressors by certain factions in Australian political circles and the media is not based on any fact. There has been no evidence produced that the availability of Suppressors has any impact on crime or firearm crime, or increase potential for misuse.

Suppressors are a legitimate Occupational Health and Safety concern for recreational and professional shooters and should be treated as such. It is an unfortunate circumstance that now many older shooters have severe hearing loss at great expense to themselves and the public health system. This can easily be avoided by the deregulation and legalisation of these devices. It is also of particular concern with regard to child’s licenses.

Suppressors also greatly reduce noise pollution for members of the public who reside near firearms ranges and in rural areas. It is a somewhat absurd state of affairs when it is illegal to remove a muffler from your motorbike to make it louder but it is also illegal to add a Suppressor to quieten your 150db rifle to 110dbs.

FOU strongly recommends and supports deregulation and legalisation of suppressors for all categories of firearm use.

Magazine Capacity Restrictions

A magazine is a cosmetic feature of a firearm. Unfortunately, there has been much deliberate ‘blurring of the lines’ on what constitutes ‘high capacity’ and what constitutes ‘standard capacity’. It is FOU’s view, that standard capacity is the size of magazine that is issued with the firearm. For example, most semi-automatic centrefire handguns have a standard magazine capacity of 17 rounds. The capacity can only be altered by purchasing a higher capacity magazine.

Magazines are not difficult to acquire for unlicensed individuals and are not difficult to manufacture. The number of magazines already in circulation (literally billions) makes it almost impossible to efficiently regulate.

Magazine capacity restrictions only hurt licensed firearm owners, particularly hunters and pest controllers. The ever increasing numbers of feral pests in Australia, particularly those that congregate and travel in large numbers such as pigs, dogs, rabbits, etc make it impractical for licensed firearm owners to control this problem effectively and humanely with capacity restrictions. It also prevents sports shooters from participating in certain events, i.e. 3-gun.

It is less so the cosmetic feature of a firearm such as a magazine that determines it's efficiency – it is the skill and efficiency of the operator which does so.

FOU do not support magazine capacity restrictions for licensed shooters in any way and support the removal of such restrictions. **They are of no proven benefit or value.**

Calibre Restrictions

FOU do not believe that calibre restrictions are effective nor practical and only serve to hurt the licensed shooter. **They are of no proven benefit or value.** This is particularly relevant to feral pest control, hunting and sports shooters, where certain calibres are restricted for use that could be of great benefit to pest controllers and hunters in being humane and able to perform their tasks effectively. It also unnecessarily prevents licensed sports shooters, especially IPSC, from competing in international events.

The Ammunition Bill introduced into NSW in 2013 has been completely ineffective in preventing the ever increasing numbers of shootings being committed in Sydney every week by prohibited persons, and has only hurt licensed firearm owners. It has been an immense expense to the taxpayer for no proven benefit.

FOU support the **full repeal of the Ammunition Bill** in NSW and oppose any future proposals to this extent to 'control' ammunition.

Non-lethal self defence

FOU supports the full deregulation and legalisation of non-lethal self-defence items such as pepper spray, tazers, acoustic anti-personnel devices, extendable batons, etc for adults and children over the age 16 with parental consent, to carry for the purpose of self-defence.

Australian law currently prohibits the importation, sale and use of these items and carrying an item on your person for the express purpose of self-defence is essentially illegal. FOU believe this is unconscionable in today's society. Western Australia allows citizens to purchase pepper spray and has not experienced any issues with its administration.

Self-defence items are simply force equalizers for those who unfortunately find themselves in a violent crime situation, and are unable to deal with a threat appropriately. This particularly includes women, the elderly, the physically smaller and weaker and the disabled/infirm for which such a threat cannot be dealt with effectively without an appropriate tool. These are tools and nothing more.

FOU fully support the proposal of allowing off duty police and appropriate ADF personnel to conceal carry a handgun when not on duty. The security environment of the world has unfortunately changed for the worse and the ability of law enforcement and military to respond to potential threats is vital. Allowing police and selected soldiers to carry is an inexpensive force multiplier and should be implemented.

Enforcement of firearm crime

FOU support further funding of Police and Australian Border Force to combat illegal firearms and firearm crime. With 24,000kms of mostly unprotected coastline and large volume of shipping and air freight that is largely unexamined, the capacity for the importation of illegal firearms is vast.

FOU do not support mandatory sentencing of firearm crime but support stronger penalties for firearm crime. In reality, there is no need for further laws regarding firearm crime; **the existing laws on the books need to be enforced.**