



MARITIME UNION OF AUSTRALIA

TASMANIA BRANCH

Redacted

29 June 2026

Dear Member of Parliament,

RE: Proposed Firearms Reform – An Evidence-Based Approach to Community Safety

I write on behalf of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) Tasmanian Branch regarding the proposed reforms to Tasmania's firearms legislation. The MUA represents hundreds of working Tasmanians from every corner of our State, including the Bass Islands. Among our membership are farmers, fishers, conservation volunteers, recreational hunters, sporting shooters and collectors.

Many of these members have been licensed firearms owners for decades and have passed that culture of responsible firearm ownership through generations of their families.

The overwhelming message we have received from members is one of disappointment.

Not because government is reviewing firearms legislation—we support sensible, evidence-based regulation—but because many of the proposed reforms appear to have been developed without meaningful consultation with the people who actually understand firearms, rural Tasmania and the operation of our existing licensing system.

Tasmania already has some of Australia's strongest firearms laws.

Tasmania has long maintained one of the most comprehensive firearms licensing systems in Australia. Obtaining and retaining a firearms licence requires genuine reasons, extensive background checks, mandatory safe storage requirements, ongoing police oversight and the ability for licences to be suspended or revoked where public safety demands it.

Licensed firearm owners are among the most scrutinised members of our community.

Before additional restrictions are imposed upon these law-abiding Tasmanians, Parliament should ask a simple question:

What evidence demonstrates that the current system has failed?

To date, we have seen very little evidence supporting proposals such as capping the number of firearms a person may lawfully own.

Arbitrary firearm limits are not evidence-based

One proposal attracting significant concern is the introduction of a cap on the number of firearms a licensed individual may possess. The MUA cannot support this proposal.

There is no compelling scientific evidence demonstrating that simply reducing the number of lawfully owned firearms held by licensed individuals improves public safety. Instead, such a measure would disproportionately impact those who use firearms legitimately for farming, conservation, competitive target shooting, clay target sports, recreational hunting and collecting. Different activities require different firearms.

A farmer may legitimately require different calibres for vermin control, livestock management and humane destruction of injured animals. Competitive shooters often require different firearms for different recognised disciplines. Hunters require different firearms depending upon species, terrain and environmental conditions and laws that apply to minimum calibres for the specific species. Many Tasmanians also own family firearms that have been handed down over generations and hold considerable historical and sentimental significance.

An arbitrary numerical limit takes none of these legitimate purposes into account.

Public safety requires targeting dangerous individuals—not responsible licence holders

The MUA fully acknowledges community concern surrounding violent offending, terrorism, radicalisation and individuals suffering serious mental health conditions who may pose a genuine risk to public safety. These are legitimate concerns.

However, they are fundamentally matters of health, policing, intelligence and the criminal justice system. They are **not** problems that can be solved by imposing additional restrictions upon responsible licensed firearm owners who have already demonstrated their suitability through one of Australia's strictest licensing systems.

History repeatedly demonstrates that individuals intent on committing serious criminal offences rarely concern themselves with compliance with firearms legislation. Criminals do not obtain firearms through lawful licensing processes. Extremists do not abandon violent ideology because additional paperwork is imposed upon licensed firearm holders.

Violent offenders are not deterred by arbitrary limits on firearms legally owned by licensed firearm owners. Public policy should focus upon identifying and managing genuinely high-risk individuals, strengthening intelligence sharing between jurisdictions, improving mental health intervention where appropriate and disrupting illegal firearm trafficking.

That is where community safety will be improved.

International experience supports targeted regulation

International evidence demonstrates that strong licensing systems can coexist with high levels of lawful firearm ownership.

Countries including Norway, Finland and Switzerland have comparatively high rates of lawful civilian firearm ownership while maintaining relatively low firearm homicide rates by international standards. Research increasingly suggests that firearm violence in countries experiencing significant increases is frequently associated with organised crime, illegal trafficking and criminal networks rather than licensed sporting and hunting communities.

This reinforces an important point:
Responsible firearm ownership is not the driver of serious violent crime.

Registration should improve administration—not create unnecessary bureaucracy

The MUA supports sensible improvements to administrative systems where they genuinely enhance public safety. However, any national registration system should improve accuracy, consistency and interoperability between jurisdictions. It should not become another bureaucratic burden imposed upon people who are already fully compliant with the law. Similarly, firearm limits will inevitably create additional complexity surrounding registration, transfers, exemptions, family inheritances and sporting participation while offering little demonstrable public safety benefit.

Our members have spoken

Since these reforms were announced, many MUA members have shared their personal experiences. Their stories are remarkably consistent.

Members describe growing up in rural Tasmania where firearm safety was taught from childhood alongside respect, responsibility and accountability. Firearms were tools used for food gathering, pest management, farming and recreation—not symbols of violence.

Others have explained that multiple firearms are essential because different calibres and platforms are required for different farming tasks, hunting activities and recognised sporting disciplines.

Many have expressed frustration that law-abiding licence holders appear to be bearing responsibility for the actions of criminals, extremists and those who have never complied with firearms laws in the first place.

These are not extremists.

These are ordinary Tasmanians.

They are farmers.

Workers.

Parents.

Volunteers.

Emergency service personnel.

Sporting shooters.

People who have complied with every requirement placed upon them by successive governments.

We are disappointed by the political discourse

The MUA is particularly disappointed that some elected representatives have adopted strong and highly emotional public positions before taking the time to genuinely engage with the licensed firearms community.

Public policy should never be driven by fear, media cycles or political expediency.

It should be guided by evidence, consultation and proportionality.

Tasmania has built a reputation for responsible firearm regulation over many decades.

That success should not be undermined by reforms that lack a demonstrated evidence base.

The Maritime Union of Australia Tasmanian Branch supports:

- Strong licensing standards.
- Thorough background checks.
- Safe storage requirements.
- Effective police oversight.
- Appropriate intervention where individuals present genuine risks.
- Improved intelligence sharing and enforcement against illegal firearms.

However, we **do not support**:

- Arbitrary caps on the number of firearms a licensed individual may own.
- Mandatory buy-back schemes targeting lawfully owned firearms.
- Measures that unfairly penalise responsible firearm owners while doing little to address criminal misuse of firearms.
- Reforms that disproportionately impact rural communities, farmers, sporting shooters and conservation activities without evidence they will improve public safety.

Parliament has an opportunity to demonstrate leadership by pursuing reforms that genuinely improve community safety rather than creating unnecessary restrictions for those who have done nothing wrong.

We respectfully ask every Member of Parliament to carefully consider the evidence, engage directly with Tasmania's licensed firearms community and ensure any legislative changes are proportionate, evidence-based and targeted towards those who actually present a risk to the community.

The MUA will continue to advocate strongly for policies that improve public safety while protecting the rights of responsible, law-abiding Tasmanians.

Yours sincerely,

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