



**Submission to Strategy and Support,
Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management**

FIREARMS AMENDMENT (MISCELLANEOUS) BILL 2026

Submitted by:

Shooters Union Tasmania Pty Ltd

Submission relating to:

The Firearms Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2026

Date of submission: 1 August 2026

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This submission is made on behalf of Shooters Union Tasmania Pty Ltd and its members. It reflects the organisation's views at the time of submission, based on the information available and the consultation timeframe provided.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
About Shooters Union	3
Scope of this Submission	4
Comments on the proposed legislation	4
1. Reclassifying straight-pull and button or lever release centre-fire rifles and shotguns to Category C	4
2. Citizenship as the default for licensing	5
4. Lending rules and the new restrictions	6
5. Notifications, storage nomination and expanded inspection powers	6
6. Suppressors	7
7. Ending reliance on Commissioner Exemptions	8
Conclusion	8
Recommendations	9

Executive Summary

Tasmanian shooters and hunters have always backed laws that actually target criminals and terrorists. We support the tougher penalties for stealing firearms and for being caught with stolen guns, including the mandatory minimum sentences. We agree, and have previously said, that this is sensible law-making targeting a real issue.

The rest of this Bill, though, goes after the wrong people. It piles on more paperwork, real-time notifications and new inspection powers aimed at owners who already follow all the rules. Meanwhile, the real issue of firearms being stolen from licensed, responsible people and ending up in the wrong hands doesn't get the focused enforcement it needs.

This fails the “pub test” for most people in regional Tasmania.

These proposals continue the pattern of firearms legislative always ending up making life harder for the law-abiding, while criminals just ignore the rules.

We also have serious concerns about the National Firearms Register elements. Multiple major government and private databases in Australia have been hacked in recent years (including Optus, Medibank, MediSecure and others), leading to personal details being stolen and costing ordinary Australians time, money and stress to fix. Putting detailed firearms ownership, location and movement data into a national near-real-time system creates a tempting target and raises real privacy and security risks for law-abiding owners, without necessarily stopping criminals who operate outside the system.

Shooters Union Tasmania:

- Supports the stronger penalties for firearm theft and possession of stolen firearms
- Opposes the reclassification of straight-pull and lever/button-release firearms,
- Opposes the new Category A/B magazine limits
- Opposes the citizenship default and broken exemption process
- Opposes the National Firearms Register (NFR) -driven notification and verification rules
- Opposes the expanded inspection powers

We believe the Bill should be dropped in its entirety, and that licensed hunters and shooters should be properly recognised in the Act as contributors to feral animal control and land management, not treated as a risk.

A full list of our recommendations can be found on Page 9 of this submission.

About Shooters Union

Shooters Union Tasmania Pty Ltd (“Shooters Union Tasmania”) is a state-based representative organisation for licensed firearms owners. Our Tasmanian membership includes sporting shooters, recreational shooters, hunters, primary producers and security personnel.

Our members operate within one of the most highly regulated civilian firearms frameworks in the world. They are subject to:

- Background checks
- Fit and proper person assessments
- Secure storage requirements
- Ongoing compliance obligations
- Revocation and suspension powers
- Firearm Prohibition Orders (where applicable)

Shooters Union Australia Ltd, of which Shooters Union Tasmania Pty Ltd is a subsidiary, has extensive experience engaging with firearms legislation and regulatory reform at both state and federal levels. Our submissions are informed by legal review, practical operational knowledge, and direct feedback from licence holders affected by proposed reforms.

Scope of This Submission

This submission focuses primarily on the provisions of the new legislation. However several recommendations are made on what Shooters Union Tasmania sees as important amendments to the Bill.

Shooters Union Tasmania acknowledges and supports measures directed at:

- Creating stronger penalties for firearm theft
- Increasing penalties for possession of stolen firearms
- Directing legislation and penalties at those who seek to use firearms for criminal purposes

Our submission is directed at promoting the concept of legislation that defines criminality rather than creating it through laws that adversely affect the legitimate pursuits of licensed individuals.

Comments on the proposed legislation

1. Reclassifying straight-pull and button or lever release centre-fire rifles and shotguns to Category C

- 1.1 This is one of the biggest problems in the Bill. These actions are popular with hunters because they work well for follow-up shots in the field and for practical pest control. There's no Tasmanian evidence that they are a public safety risk when they're in the hands of licensed, fit and proper people with a genuine reason – ie, anyone who has a firearms licence.
- 1.2 Forcing these firearms into Category C (essentially banning them for the overwhelming majority of Tasmanian shooters) and pushing them into a “buyback” because of national pressure after the Bondi incident is a significant over-reaction. It punishes owners who have done nothing wrong. Hunters and primary producers are part of the solution for feral animals and putting game meat on tables; they are not the problem and never have been.

- 1.3 Straight-pull rifles have been widely produced since the 1880s and are widely owned and used in Australia, particularly by Service Rifle match shooters and vintage rifle enthusiasts. The majority of straight-pull rifles in Australia pre-date WWII, have limited magazine capacities (typically 5 rounds) and many of them are more than a century old. Essentially banning them will not only result in the destruction of irreplaceable historical items, but makes Tasmania appear to be irrationally scared of what are essentially antiques as far as the average person is concerned.
- 1.4 We believe concerns about straight-pull shotguns are similarly unfounded and fed by a fundamental ignorance of firearms. Australia is, to the best of our knowledge, the only Western country which treats repeating shotguns as a serious public safety issue. Even the United Kingdom does not prohibit the ownership of repeating shotguns by hunters and target shooters.
- 1.5 Our recommendation here is simple: drop the proposed reclassifications. If there are real safety concerns, deal with them through the existing genuine reason and fit and proper tests instead of blanket reclassifications. Further, any “buyback” must be confirmed at no less than 1.5 times market value, *and* include ammunition and accessories; as these are often worth significant sums of money (in some cases more than the firearm) but are essentially useless (and thus worthless to the owner) without the associated firearm.
- 1.6 Any “buyback” scheme must also involve a simple, timely process and no retrospective penalties, and be upfront about compensation rates and how the scheme would actually work.

2. Citizenship as the default for licensing

- 2.1 Making Australian citizenship the default for a firearms licence adds a barrier that isn't needed in Tasmania. There have been responsible non-citizen owners ever since the current licensing system was introduced, and they have been proven to be as law-abiding and responsible as their Australian citizenship-holding counterparts. The exemptions are too narrow and the buyback for current compliant holders is unfair.
- 2.2 Several countries, including Japan, Singapore, China and India prohibit their nationals from having dual citizenship. People from these countries residing in Tasmania would essentially be prohibited from ever obtaining a firearms licence unless they renounce their original citizenship which may not be possible due to family, legal, or reasons. This raises serious Human Rights issues which are not addressed in the Bill.
- 2.3 Tasmania does not properly recognise firearms licences from other countries, and it should. Many visitors who hold equivalent licences from places like New Zealand, the UK, Canada, the US or Europe would come here to hunt or compete in shooting competitions if the system allowed it. The current exemption process does not work. The Commissioner has refused exemptions based solely on her own liability concerns rather than assessing the individual applicant. That leaves genuine, experienced shooters locked out.
- 2.4 This state of affairs costs Tasmania real money. People who come to Tasmania to hunt or sports shoot also stay in regional towns, buy fuel, food and gear, and support local businesses in places that need the tourism dollars. Blocking them over citizenship and a broken exemption system hurts regional economies for no clear safety gain.
- 2.5 The Government must keep sensible pathways open for genuine applicants, recognise equivalent overseas licences where appropriate, fix the exemption process so it is not blocked by pure liability concerns.

3. Magazine limits on detachable magazines

- 3.1 The Bill proposes new magazine capacity limits for some Category A and B firearms. For Category A it limits detachable magazines to no more than 10 rounds for rim-fire rifles and no more than 5 rounds for shotguns. For Category B it limits centre-fire rifles with detachable magazines to no more than 10 rounds. Lever-action shotguns keep their current capacity. Firearms with inbuilt or tubular magazines are excluded. We do not support these restrictions.
- 3.2 These are new restrictions. Under the current Firearms Act, detachable magazine limits only apply to self-loading firearms in Categories C and D; reflecting the tighter controls on those categories of firearm. Standard manually-operated Category A and B rifles have not previously faced these exact detachable magazine limits, and introducing them now negatively impacts practical hunting and pest-control firearms without proven safety benefit in Tasmania. Criminals don't care about magazine capacity rules, as they obtain guns (and magazines) through illegal means such as smuggling and the black market.

4. Lending rules and the new restrictions

- 4.1 While the idea of stopping casual on-lending makes sense for accountability, we reject the current proposal and question if it is a real issue which needs addressing.
- 4.2 Lending firearms to someone else who also has a firearms licence should not need a ridiculous verification and check system based on the NFR. The Register itself is a national security risk given Australia's history of major database hacks. Tying everyday lending between licensed mates to an NFR portal creates unnecessary red tape and data exposure. We note there are no "extra" requirements for someone to borrow a car – they simply need to have the appropriate driver's licence, and the owner's permission. Police can see who the vehicle is registered to, and take action if it turns out the driver should not have the vehicle. Considering cars are a lot more dangerous to the general public than firearms, it seems ridiculous to place extra layers on bureaucracy on the act of lending sports or hunting equipment to a licensed person, but not on lending a car or 4WD to someone.
- 4.3 The solution should be to fix the underlying legislation that misinterprets the trafficking of firearms. In April 2025 the Department of Public Prosecutions issued updated guidelines stating that unlawful trafficking charges under section 110A of the *Firearms Act 1996* (which cover licensed shooters lending a gun to another licensed shooter) is reserved for serious cases and it is highly unlikely that any person lawfully borrowing or transporting a firearm for another licensed person will be charged with trafficking. That is a band-aid. The proper fix is clear legislation that allows responsible lending and borrowing between licensed people without treating ordinary cooperation as trafficking. We reject the proposed lending regime as written.

5. Notifications, storage nomination and expanded inspection powers

- 5.1 The Bill requires notification if firearms are stored at a location other than the registered owner's residential address for more than 24 hours. The Q&A clarifies that if someone is hunting and the firearm is in their possession, no notification is required, which appear sensible. However, the rule is still ridiculous for multi-day pest control, farm work across properties, or leaving a rifle securely stored at a camp or hut. Forcing real-time notification of every storage absence over 24 hours is pure bureaucracy that does nothing to stop criminals.

- 5.2 It is also ridiculous to cut the window for interstate Category A&B licenceholder transfer applications from three months (for Category A and B) down to seven days. Once an application is lodged, the interstate licence is recognised until the Tasmanian application is finalised, but the seven-day trigger itself creates an unnecessary compliance trap for people relocating for work or family – people who almost certainly have considerably more pressing matters to attend to than what is essentially an administrative task.
- 5.3 Expanding the power so any person in possession of a firearm must produce it for inspection when requested by a police officer (new section 82A) broadens the net beyond registered owners. These changes tilt further toward more compliance checks on lawful owners without clear evidence they catch more criminals.
- 5.4 We support the increased penalties for firearms theft or possession of stolen guns. Recent incidents where owners have been bashed and had their guns stolen show exactly where the legislative and enforcement focus should be – which is on criminals. We support mandatory minimums and stronger action against those who steal firearms from licensed people or put guns into criminal hands.

6. Suppressors

- 6.1 There are many benefits to hunting with sound suppressors, the most important being protecting the hearing of hunters and observers. The loud report of a gunshot can cause permanent hearing loss or tinnitus, which suppressors mitigate by significantly reducing the sound of the muzzle blast to safer levels. It is important to note suppressors do not completely silence a gunshot.
- 6.2 Suppressors act similarly to a muzzle brake by redirecting gasses, which helps manage both sound and recoil. This makes the firearm more comfortable to shoot, especially with high-powered rifles, and helps the hunter maintain a clear view of the target after the shot for potential follow-ups.
- 6.3 By reducing the loud noise and heavy recoil, suppressors help prevent flinching and allow hunters to focus on proper trigger control. This results in more accurate and humane shots.
- 6.4 The minimised noise prevents the widespread alarming and dispersal of other animals in the vicinity. This can increase a hunter's chances of seeing more game or getting a second shot if needed, and reduces overall ecosystem recovery time from the disturbance.
- 6.5 A suppressed firearm makes the overall hunting and target shooting experience more pleasant for everyone nearby and lower the overall noise pollution, which benefits neighbours and others in the area who might otherwise be disturbed by the sound of shooting.
- 6.6 Suppressors do not work as depicted in movies/TV/video games and do not completely silence the gunshot. A suppressed centrefire rifle (such as a .243 or .308 rifle) gunshot is still about 130db, well in excess of the level need to cause hearing damage. The idea suppressors used on hunting rifles enable completely silent shooting, and could therefore be used for criminal or nefarious activities, simply is not supported by science or reality and should not be used as a reason to restrict or prohibit what is ultimately a piece of occupational health and safety (OH&S) equipment.

7. Ending reliance on Commissioner Exemptions

- 7.1 Many aspects of Tasmania's current firearms legislation – such as allowing licensed hunters from interstate to legally use their firearms while visiting the state – rely on Exemptions to the Act currently provided by the Police Commissioner
- 7.2 The person making Exemptions was changed from the Police Minister to the Police Commissioner in 2023. This places an important legislative power in the hands of an unelected and unaccountable civil servant, who is able to implement or remove Exemptions on a whim without consultation or recourse by those affected.
- 7.3 We strongly believe that activities which might currently be covered by an Exemption (such as interstate and international hunting and shooting licences being recognised in Tasmania) should be explicitly covered under the Act, rather than relying on tenuous Exemptions provided by the Police Commissioner or Minister.
- 7.4 We further believe the power to issue Exemptions should be returned to the Police Minister, who is an elected Member of Parliament and therefore accountable to the citizens of Tasmania. We submit it is not appropriate for this power to rest wholly with the Police Commissioner, and especially not in its currently wide-ranging form.

Conclusion

Law abiding firearms owners and hunters are not the problem. We are part of keeping feral numbers down, putting affordable protein on tables and managing land responsibly. Laws should recognise this fact, instead of treating every firearms owner as a potential risk.

We believe this Bill should be dropped immediately. It creates the ability for ill-founded, uneducated changes to the *Firearms Act*.

Further, it is deeply disturbing to think what further changes may be made if the Bill is presented to Parliament and opened up to amendments from those with an agenda against law-abiding owners and hunters.

Shooters Union Tasmania is more than willing to meet and engage with Government and Ministerial representatives or Tasmania Police/Firearms Services staff to talk through the practical impacts of this Bill, as well as suggest changes which would actually make Tasmania safer, without punishing the people who have done nothing wrong.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1	Drop the reclassification of straight-pull and lever/button-release actions to Category C. Any buyback must be confirmed at no less than 1.5 times market value with a simple, timely process.
Recommendation 2	Keep practical pathways open for genuine applicants regardless of citizenship, recognise equivalent overseas licences
Recommendation 3	Remove the new detachable magazine limits for Category A and B firearms.
Recommendation 4	Reject the proposed lending regime. Fix the trafficking legislation properly instead of relying on NFR checks and the current DPP bandaid guidelines.
Recommendation 5	Scrap the impractical 24-hour storage-away notification requirement for hunters and rural users, restore a workable interstate mover timeframe (the previous three months for Category A/B), and do not expand inspection powers beyond registered owners.
Recommendation 6	Keep and strengthen the penalties for theft and possession of stolen firearms, and put real effort into recovery and prosecution.
Recommendation 7	Address the real privacy and security risks of the National Firearms Register given Australia's history of major database breaches.
Recommendation 8	Properly legitimise hunters in the Firearms Act. Recognise hunting and pest/feral animal control as core genuine reasons with clear pathways, expand practical Category C access for hunters and primary producers who need it for effective control work, support suppressor access for hearing protection, and treat licensed hunters as contributors to land management and game-meat utilisation rather than an afterthought or risk.
Recommendation 9	Provide proper data: how many Tasmanian firearms and owners are affected by the straight-pull/lever-release reclassification, the new Category A/B magazine limits, and the citizenship changes? What are the projected safety outcomes?
Recommendation 10	Expand consultation with Shooters Union Tasmania and other groups which represent licence holders prior to the passage of any legislation.
Recommendation 11	Legalise and make available the use of sound suppressors for recreational hunting.

Recommendation 12	Replace blanket Exemptions for activities with explicit allowances or permissions in the Act or Regulations itself.
Recommendation 13	Return the power to make and issue Exemptions to aspects of the Act the Police Minister.