www.sifa.net.au

Shooting Industry Foundation Australia

Tasmania: Submission on the Firearms Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2026

7 August 2026

Contact

James Walsh *Chief Executive Officer*

[redacted]

Overview

The Shooting Industry Foundation of Australia (SIFA) condemns the atrocities that occurred at Bondi, and any actions that are antisemitic or undermine social cohesion. Since this terrible incident SIFA has been working with the federal and state and territory governments to provide an industry perspective on the various proposed legislation and regulatory reforms that have flowed from National Cabinet directives.

In this spirit, SIFA has been engaging with the Tasmanian Parliament and other local stakeholders over the past six months. We acknowledge that the purpose of this Bill is to ready the *Firearms Act 1996* for the introduction of the National Firearms Register (NFR) which aims to introduce measures to improve community safety. However, we do have some concerns which are outlined in this submission.

These concerns include the proposed reclassification of firearms, the introduction of citizenship requirements, alternative storage notification requirements and several of the new compliance obligations surrounding lending and possession.

Further consultation with industry stakeholders is recommended to ensure that these reforms achieve their intended outcomes while remaining practical, proportionate and workable in the real world. By focusing regulatory efforts on criminal misuse of firearms while preserving the ability of law-abiding citizens to legitimately own and use firearms, Tasmania can achieve a balanced and effective legislative framework.

In addition, the submission also highlights SIFA's concern around any potential introduction of firearm ownership caps. While the proposed Bill does not include this recommendation, ownership caps have been proposed as amendments to the Bill.

SIFA would oppose any attempt to introduce this unevidenced, costly and rejected Canberra based policy as the Bill passes through the parliamentary process. SIFA also has concerns around any proposed gun buyback scheme and has outlined potential fiscal impact to the Tasmanian economy drawing on recent economic analysis.

Overview of SIFA's position on the proposed Bill

Issue	SIFA position	Recommended outcome
Reclassification	Opposed in current form	Remove the measure unless supported by a published evidence base.
Citizenship requirement	Requires amendment	Broaden exemptions for permanent residents and genuine occupational, primary production and land-management needs.
Magazine limits	Clarification required	Retain clear distinctions between detachable and inbuilt magazines and avoid changes that create uncertainty for compliant owners.
Borrowing, lending and alternative storage	Requires amendment	Define key terms, set a realistic verification standard, and adopt a longer or exception-based notification period.
Dealer and NFR reforms	Supported subject to implementation design	Co-designed electronic systems with dealers.
Criminal firearms activity	Supported	Proceed with targeted measures against theft, stolen firearms, trafficking and unlawful possession.
Ownership caps	Opposed	Existing risk-based assessment, genuine reason tests, storage compliance and permit-to-acquire safeguards remain adequate.

Reponses to proposed amendments

Reclassification of Straight Pull and Button or Lever Release Firearms

The proposed amendments state that centre-fire rifles and shotguns that have a self-ejecting mechanism and only require the pressing of a button or lever release mechanism to complete the reloading cycle, and centrefire rifles and shotguns that have a straight pull action will be reclassified to the more restricted Category C licence.

SIFA does not support this. These firearms have been lawfully acquired and used by licensed firearm owners for many years, and are commonly employed for recreational shooting, hunting, pest animal control and primary production activities. The consultation material does not provide evidence demonstrating that these firearms present a heightened public safety risk warranting their reclassification.

The proposal would result in substantial impacts on existing firearm owners who may no longer be eligible to possess these firearms under the more restrictive Category C licensing framework. While a buyback scheme is proposed, details remain uncertain and subject to ongoing negotiations between the Tasmanian and Australian Governments. This creates considerable uncertainty for firearm owners, retailers and importers. In the absence of clear evidence that the proposed reclassification will deliver meaningful public safety outcomes, the amendment should not proceed in its current form. Any reform should be supported by a transparent evidence base and a detailed assessment of its impacts on lawful firearm users.

Citizenship Requirements and Their Effect on Primary Production

The proposal to make Australian citizenship a default requirement for firearms licensing represents one of the most significant departures from Tasmania's existing firearms framework. While national consistency is a legitimate policy objective, the practical consequences of this reform appear to have been insufficiently considered.

Across rural Australia there are numerous permanent residents who own and operate agricultural businesses, manage livestock and undertake pest control activities. Many have lived and worked in Australia for extended periods yet may not be Australian citizens. Some individuals originate from countries that do not permit dual citizenship, meaning that obtaining Australian citizenship may require them to surrender their citizenship of birth. For these individuals, the proposed changes may create an unreasonable barrier to the continued lawful possession of firearms.

The implications extend beyond firearms regulation and raise genuine animal welfare concerns. Landowners and farm managers require access to firearms to humanely euthanise injured or distressed livestock and to manage pest animals that threaten agricultural production. Restricting access to firearms for permanent resident landholders or agriculture workers may undermine their ability to meet animal welfare obligations and effectively manage their properties. While the proposed exemptions for New Zealand citizens and certain occupational purposes are welcomed, the scope of these exemptions should be broadened to ensure that all genuine primary producers and landholders can continue to access firearms where a legitimate need exists.

Further consideration should also be given to the impact of these provisions on hunting tourism and associated businesses. Where interstate experience has demonstrated difficulties for overseas visitors and guided hunting operators, Tasmania should ensure that lawful hunting tourism and temporary permit arrangements remain available and practical. Such businesses contribute to regional economies and should not be adversely affected by reforms that are not directed at criminal misuse of firearms.

Proposed changes to detachable magazine limits

We acknowledge that the Act already imposes limits on the size of detachable magazines. The government states that this Bill makes the limits more consistent within the Act and with other jurisdictions. For Category A the proposed limit is a detachable firearms magazine with a capacity of no more than 10 rounds for a rim-fire rifle, and for a shotgun to have a magazine capacity of no more than 5 rounds, this includes shotgun and rim-fire rifle combinations.

For Category B the proposed limit is for a centre-fire rifle that has a detachable firearms magazine with a capacity of no more than 10 rounds. The Bill proposes to keep the magazine capacity for lever action shotguns as it currently is.

SIFA would like to see clear distinctions between detachable and inbuilt magazines and avoid changes that create uncertainty for compliant owners.

Borrowing, Lending and Storage Requirements

The proposed borrowing and lending provisions appear intended to improve accountability and enable more accurate recording of firearm possession. The objective itself is understandable; however, the legislation introduces several practical concerns that require clarification.

The prohibition on "on-lending" firearms raises questions regarding the operation of the provision and the precise meaning of "third party" lending. Although the explanatory material suggests that firearms may continue to be lent between licensed individuals provided the firearm is returned to the owner before being lent again, the legislation should clearly define key terms including "lend", "borrow", "on-lend" and "verify". Without clear definitions, lawful firearm owners may face uncertainty regarding their obligations and expose themselves to criminal liability despite acting in good faith. We would like to see more clarity around what the government seeks to prevent though these proposed changes.

The proposal requiring a lender to satisfy themselves that a borrower possesses compliant storage facilities also warrants further consideration. It is unclear what level of inquiry or verification will be expected of the lender and what evidence will be sufficient to demonstrate compliance. A person lending a firearm should not be expected to undertake extensive investigations into another licence holder's personal storage arrangements. This is a requirement of the licence holder not the person lending the firearm. Clear guidance should be developed to ensure that compliance obligations remain practical and proportionate.

Additional concerns arise from the requirement to notify Tasmania Police when firearms are stored at an alternative location for more than twenty-four hours. Such a short notification period appears unnecessarily restrictive and may create an administrative burden for lawful firearm owners who travel for competitions, hunting activities or recreational purposes. Comparable arrangements in other jurisdictions are generally more practical.

Administrative Notification Requirements

The Bill proposes that firearm licence holders notify Tasmania Police seven days before changes to personal particulars, rather than within fourteen days after such changes occur. This amendment appears difficult to justify and may create compliance difficulties for many licence holders.

In practice, many life events occur with little advance notice. Residential moves, changes in employment and other personal circumstances are not always known seven days beforehand. Requiring advance notification risks creating technical breaches by otherwise compliant licence holders without delivering a corresponding improvement in public safety.

Dealer Reforms and the National Firearms Register

The proposed dealer reforms are broadly supported. Allowing firearms dealer employees to possess and handle firearms, and to undertake sales and purchases in the absence of the dealer licence holder, appears to be a sensible administrative change that reflects the practical operation of firearms businesses.
Likewise, the transition to electronic records represents a positive modernisation initiative. The move away from paper-based processes has the potential to improve efficiency, reduce duplication and enhance data accuracy. However, meaningful consultation with the firearms industry and licensed firearm dealers will be essential to ensure that systems are designed around actual business workflows rather than administrative models. Dealers should have input throughout the development process to ensure the final systems are practical, efficient and proportionate.

Support is also expressed for the proposed Licence and Permit Verification Service. The ability to electronically verify that a licence is valid at the point of sale should strengthen compliance and reduce opportunities for unauthorised transactions. Nevertheless, the service must include robust contingency arrangements. Government systems inevitably experience outages from time to time, and dealers cannot reasonably be expected to cease trading because a verification platform is unavailable. Appropriate backup procedures and service continuity measures should therefore be implemented before the system becomes mandatory. Furthermore, verification systems should be limited to confirming licence validity, rather than transferring regulatory enforcement responsibilities onto licensed dealers. Enforcement remains a function of government agencies rather than private businesses.

Measures Targeting Criminal Firearms Activity

Increased penalties for possession of stolen firearms, the introduction of offences relating to firearm theft, expanded firearm prohibition orders and provisions enabling alternative convictions where possession of stolen firearms is proven all represent sensible measures that focus on criminal behaviour rather than lawful firearm ownership. These reforms are likely to enhance public safety by targeting those who unlawfully acquire and traffic firearms and should be supported.

Ownership caps

Arbitrary firearms ownership limits lack any evidentiary basis for increasing public safety. Tasmania already has a regulated firearm system. Owners must be licensed, firearms must be registered, and additional purchases already require approval by Tasmania police. The existing permit-to-acquire process gives the regulator the ability to assess whether a person has a genuine reason for each firearm. This system has been in place since the implementation of the National Firearms Agreement, and to date, no evidence has been provided as to why this needs to change.

The biggest problem with caps is that they target the wrong people. Criminals and terrorists who use illegal firearms will not be affected by ownership limits, as they operate outside the law. Licensed owners, on the other hand, are known to police, must remain fit and proper, be subjected to ongoing probity checks, and are required to meet storage and compliance obligations.

Arbitrary limits will only punishing responsible, licensed firearm owners, farmers, hunters and competitive shooters, while doing little to address criminal misuse.

For Tasmania's primary producers, firearm caps would create genuine operational problems. Farmers need different firearms for different purposes, including pest control, crop protection, managing wildlife, dealing with feral animals, and humanely euthanising injured livestock. Farmers may also be sporting shooters and hunters, requiring several different firearms to fulfil these requirements. TasFarmers has said feral species and browsing wildlife are major issues affecting farm profitability, and that farmers need the right tools for different conditions and species. A blanket cap does not recognise the difference between unnecessary accumulation and legitimate agricultural need.

Sporting and recreational shooters would also be significantly affected. Different shooting disciplines require different firearms, and recreational hunters use different firearms depending on terrain, target species and conditions.

The fact is, taking firearms off farmers and sporting shooters does nothing to prevent criminals, terrorists or the illicit use of firearms. A stronger public safety approach would focus on illegal possession, stolen firearms, trafficking, theft prevention and enforcement. Recent Tasmanian Government reforms have focused on stronger penalties, intelligence sharing, the National Firearms Register and action against illegal firearms rather than ownership caps.

<u>Potential economic impacts of caps</u>

Limiting firearms ownership and use across farming, pest control, hunting and sports shooting risks significantly damaging a lawful industry that contributes significantly to the state economy. A Tasmanian Government commissioned study found recreational hunting and sport shooting contributed $88.4 million to Gross State Product in 2022 and supported 676 full-time equivalent jobs. Reducing lawful participation will affect firearm dealers, ammunition suppliers, shooting clubs, outdoor retailers, accommodation providers, service stations and rural stores.[1]

In December 2025, the state had more than 37,000 firearms licences and over 155,000 registered firearms. Most firearms are registered in Categories A and B, and hunting is by far the most common genuine reason for holding a licence, recorded against approximately 34,500 licences in 2024. A further 5,000 licences were associated with sport or target shooting. These figures reflect the importance of firearms not only for recreation, but also for primary production, pest management, animal welfare and established rural and regional lifestyles.[2]

The introduction of arbitrary limits will increase costs for farmers. Firearms are used as part of pest and wildlife management, including control of wallabies, possums, deer and other browsing animals. Tasmania's environment department says browsing wildlife causes significant costs to primary producers and that shooting is part of an integrated control strategy. If farmers cannot access the right firearms for different pest species or farm conditions, crop damage, pasture loss and livestock welfare costs will increase.

Government figures reported for 2023 to 2024 showed 675,685 animals were culled under Property Protection Permits[3], and TasFarmers has estimated that animal predation costs agriculture around $16 million a year in lost production[4]. Restricting firearms ownership will make this harder and more expensive to manage.

The fiscal cost of a ***gun buyback****.*

Assuming average compensation of $2,000 per firearm, including associated accessories and equipment but excluding ammunition, and a total reduction of registered firearms by 20 percent, the direct compensation cost is estimated at **$62.2 million in nominal terms**. In present-value terms, this equates to approximately $58.1 million in 2025–26 dollars.[5]

As outlined the 31 July 2026 economic report "Flash in the Pan: by Tulipwood Economics, the economic costs of the proposed Tasmanian gun buyback extend beyond the direct fiscal outlay. Funding the scheme diverts household consumption and investment towards an activity that does not generate offsetting productivity or output gains, while reduced firearm sales and participation affect dealers, suppliers and other businesses connected to hunting and sports shooting.

The modelling shows that under full Tasmanian Government funding with supply-chain impacts, Tasmanian GSP declines by $39.5 million, employment falls by 119 FTEs in Tasmania and private

[1] Recreational Hunting Tasmania Contribution.pdf
[2] "Flash in the Pan: Estimating the impacts of the Tasmanian Firearm Amendment Bill 2026", Tulipwood Economics, 31 July 2026
[3] Cull figures show scale of challenge | Tasmanian Country Newspaper
[4] Food security at risk: Farmers push for sustainable wildlife management In Tasmania - TasFarmers
[5] "Flash in the Pan: Estimating the impacts of the Tasmanian Firearm Amendment Bill 2026", Tulipwood Economics, 31 July 2026

expenditure declines by $10.4 million in Tasmania. Under a 50/50 funding split with the Commonwealth, Tasmania experiences a $25.4 million reduction in GSP, 64 FTE job losses in Tasmania and a $8.6 million fall in private expenditure in Tasmania.[6] Consideration also needs to be given to the regional economy, across small businesses and jobs. Hunting and sport shooting spending includes fuel, groceries, ammunition, firearms, vehicles and other equipment. Much of this spending flows through regional towns, meaning the impact of limiting access to people's legal pursuits would not be limited to firearm dealers, but also many of the regional communities that host these activities.

A better solution is to remain with current risk-based regulation, with authorities remaining focused on whether each additional firearm purchase is justified by a genuine need or reason. This approach protects public safety while recognising the legitimate role firearms play in Tasmania's farming, sporting and regional life.

Recommendations

1. Do not introduce firearm ownership limits. Retain Tasmania's case-by-case assessment of genuine need or reason under existing permit-to-acquire controls.

2. Remove the proposed reclassification of straight-pull and button or lever-release firearms. If the government proposes to proceed, it should first publish the evidence base, complete a detailed impact assessment, consult affected industry and user groups, and provide clear transitional, compensation, grandfathering and review arrangements.

3. Broaden the citizenship provisions so that permanent residents, primary producers, landholders, farm employees, professional pest controllers and other genuine occupational users can obtain or retain licences where they meet all suitability, storage and genuine-reason requirements.

4. Ensure lawful hunting tourism, interstate participation and temporary permit arrangements remain available, clear and practical, with appropriate compliance and supervision conditions.

5. Amend borrowing and lending provisions to define key terms and adopt a simple verification process. A lender should be able to rely on a valid licence and a standard declaration rather than being required to investigate another person's storage facilities.

6. Replace the 24-hour alternative-storage notification trigger with a more practical model, such as a longer notification period or an exception-based system for competitions, hunting trips, repairs, temporary farm work, emergencies and other ordinary lawful activities.

[6] Ibid.

7. Retain post-event notification for changes to personal particulars, preferably within seven or 14 days after the change occurs, rather than requiring notification seven days before a change that may not be foreseeable.

8. Proceed with dealer IT systems modernisation only through genuine co-design with the firearms industry and relevant business stakeholders. Systems should support real workflows, include bulk and correction functions, operate reliably in regional areas, and include clear outage and contingency procedures.

9. Ensure the Licence and Permit Verification Service confirms only the information necessary for lawful transactions and does not shift regulatory enforcement responsibilities to private dealers.

10. Proceed with measures that target criminal firearms activity, including theft, possession of stolen firearms, unlawful trafficking and firearm prohibition orders, and support those measures with appropriate enforcement resources.

11. Include a statutory review clause requiring a review of the operation, cost and public-safety outcomes of the reforms within two years of commencement.