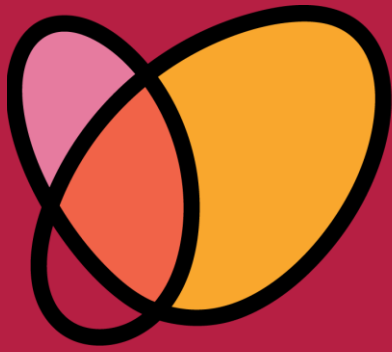




Tasmanian
**Family and
Sexual Violence**
Alliance

Submission on the Firearms Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2026

August 2026

**Working together for a
Tasmania free from family
and sexual violence**



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians and first peoples on the land on which we live, work and play in lutruwita (Tasmania). We pay our respects to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, to elders past and present and to all those who continue caring for country, sharing stories, and upholding rights. We acknowledge the impacts of colonisation and dispossession, and the contemporary disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We also acknowledge the devastating impacts of family and sexual violence and child removal in Aboriginal communities and recognise the power of truth telling and ongoing leadership by Aboriginal communities in addressing and preventing family and sexual violence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO VICTIM-SURVIVORS

We acknowledge Tasmania's victim-survivors of family and sexual violence. Victim-survivors hold the insights, knowledge, and expertise to inform primary prevention and systems change, and authentically embedding the lived expertise of victim-survivors is vital in addressing family and sexual violence in Tasmania. We acknowledge children and young people who are victim-survivors also hold expertise that must be valued and respected alongside that of adult victim-survivors. And we recognise the life-long impacts of trauma and acquired disability as a direct result of family and sexual violence.

ABOUT THE TFSVA

The Tasmanian Family and Sexual Violence Alliance is the peak body for family violence, sexual violence, and child abuse and maltreatment services and represents the sector across the continuum of primary prevention, early intervention, response, and healing and recovery. We amplify the voices of lived experience and practice knowledge to improve the family violence, sexual violence and child safeguarding systems, influence policy, and drive cultural change to end gendered violence and child abuse.

SAFETY WARNING

This report explores family and sexual violence and may be distressing and traumatic. We advise readers to consider their personal contexts before proceeding and assess whether it is the right time to read about these matters.

© Tasmanian Family and Sexual Violence Alliance 2026

Suggested citation: Tasmanian Family and Sexual Violence Alliance (2026) *Submission on the Firearms Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill*. Hobart: TFSVA.



PREAMBLE

The Tasmanian Family and Sexual Violence Alliance (the Alliance) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Firearms Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2026 (The Bill).

The Alliance supports the intent of the Bill and welcomes measures that strengthen firearm regulation, improve information sharing through the National Firearms Register, reduce unlawful access to firearms, and enhance community safety. The proposed reforms represent an important opportunity to modernise Tasmania's firearms framework while strengthening national consistency and improving law enforcement's ability to monitor and respond to firearms-related risks.

As Tasmania's peak body for family violence, sexual violence and child sexual abuse, the Alliance's role is not to provide detailed legal analysis of the Bill, but rather to consider how the proposed amendments may operate in practice for victim-survivors of family and sexual violence, and those currently living with violence. While we support the intent of the reforms, we consider there are several areas where further clarification and implementation safeguards would strengthen the Bill and improve its operation in practice.

Firearms occupy a unique position within the context of family violence. While firearms are rightly regulated because of their capacity to cause serious physical harm, their role in family violence extends far beyond fatal incidents. Firearms are frequently used as instruments of coercive control, intimidation, threats, and psychological abuse. The presence of a firearm within an abusive relationship can significantly increase victim-survivors' fear, restrict their choices, and create ongoing risks long before, or regardless of whether, a weapon is discharged.

These risks are particularly relevant in Tasmania, where firearm ownership is relatively common in rural and regional communities. Victim-survivors in these communities often face additional barriers including geographic isolation, longer police response times, fewer specialist services, and increased social visibility, all of which can compound the risks associated with firearms.



The Alliance welcomes the Government's commitment to improving public safety through stronger firearms regulation. However, legislative reform alone will not necessarily achieve these outcomes. To fully realise the intent of the Bill, family violence must be recognised as a core public safety issue throughout the implementation of these reforms.

The Alliance considers the implementation of the National Firearms Register presents an important opportunity not only to strengthen firearms regulation, but also to strengthen Tasmania's response to family violence.

RESEARCH EVIDENCE

FIREARMS AS TOOLS IN COERCIVE CONTROL AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

Firearms are used as tools of coercive control, not only physical violence.

Public discussion about firearms in the context of family violence often focuses on homicide. While the presence of a firearm significantly increases the risk of fatal violence, research demonstrates that firearms are also commonly used as instruments of coercive control long before they are ever discharged.¹

A systematic review of the international literature found that approximately 4.5 million women in the United States have been threatened with a firearm by an intimate partner, while almost one million women have been shot, or shot at, by an intimate partner.¹ The authors argue that focusing solely on firearm homicide overlooks the far more common non-fatal use of firearms to intimidate, threaten and control victim-survivors. Rather than being used only in acts of physical violence, the presence or threatened use of a firearm creates a climate of fear and coercive control that enables chronic and escalating abuse.¹

Research has also identified a broader relationship between firearm ownership and intimate partner violence, even where a firearm is not directly used during incidents of

¹ Sorenson, S.B. & Schut, R.A. 2018, Nonfatal Gun Use in Intimate Partner Violence: A Systematic Review of the Literature. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse*, 19(4), 431-442.



violence. Firearm ownership may reinforce existing dynamics of power and control within abusive relationships, increasing victim-survivors' fear and limiting their ability to safely leave or seek support.²

More recent qualitative research examining post-separation abuse found that perpetrators' continued ownership of, or access to, firearms remained a significant mechanism of coercive control long after relationships had ended. Victim-survivors described ongoing fear associated with firearm ownership, unsafe storage practices, direct and symbolic threats involving firearms, the involvement of children in firearm-related intimidation, and the ongoing need to modify their behaviour to remain safe.³

Similarly, research involving women whose abusive partners had threatened them with firearms found that those who had been held at gunpoint experienced significantly higher levels of coercive control, intimidation, physical violence and sexual violence than women whose abusive partners had not held them at gunpoint.⁴ Importantly, only around half of the women who had experienced firearm threats disclosed those threats to police, and even fewer sought protection orders. Among those who did engage with the justice system, many did not disclose the firearm-related threats they had experienced.⁴ These findings suggest that the prevalence of firearm-related coercive control is likely to be substantially underreported.

Collectively, this evidence demonstrates that firearms should not be viewed solely through the lens of criminal offending or homicide prevention. They are also powerful tools of coercive control that may influence victim-survivors' behaviour, decision-making and safety long before a criminal firearms offence occurs. This broader understanding has important implications for firearms regulation, information sharing, risk assessment and victim safety planning.

² Brown, M.E. 2024, From Guns to Intimate Partner Violence: The Impact of Power and Control. MA Thesis, University of Florida.

³ Spearman et al., 2024, Firearms and Post-Separation Abuse: Providing Context Behind the Data on Firearms and Intimate Partner Violence. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 80(4), 1484-1496.

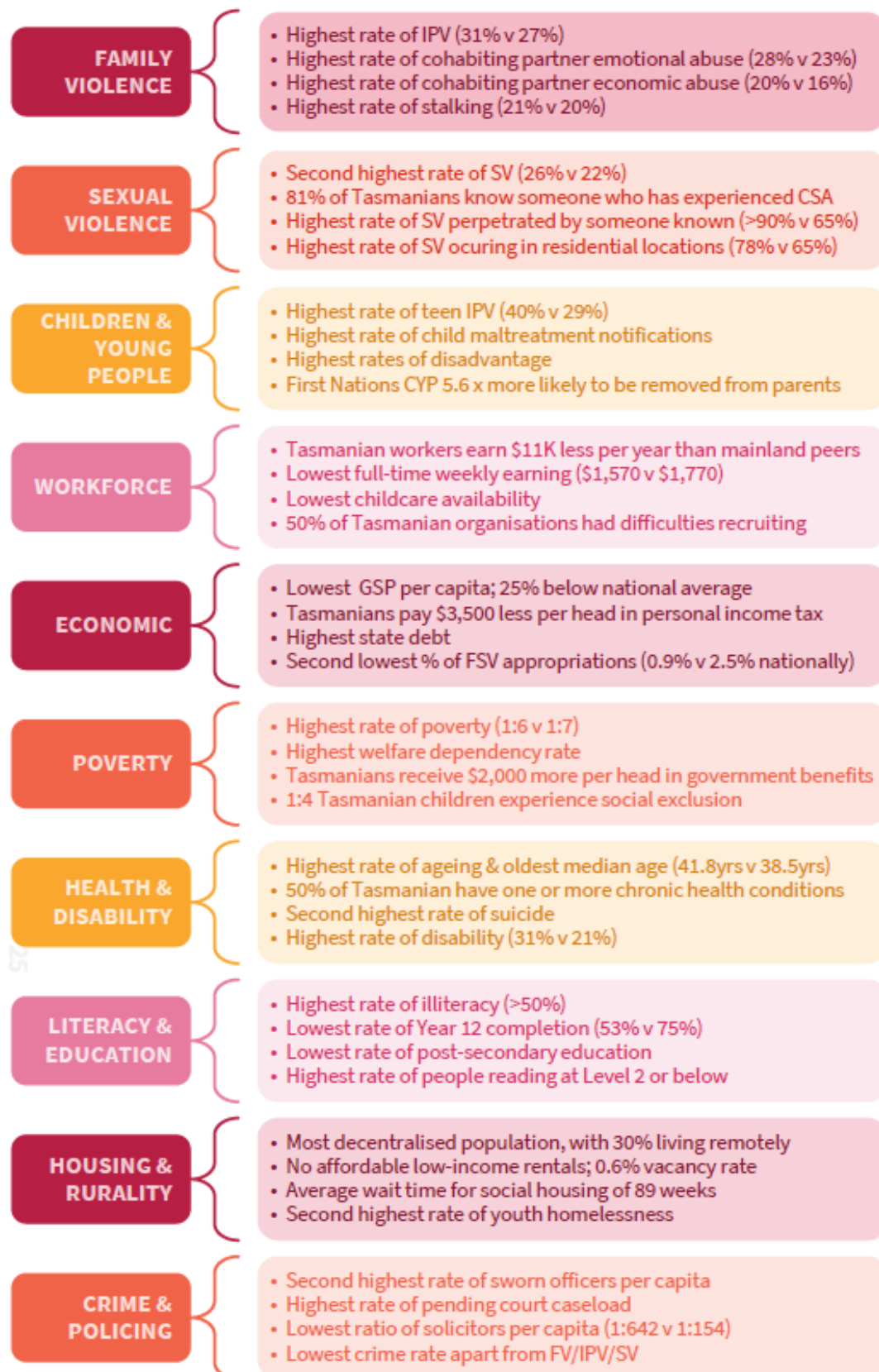
⁴ Logan, T.K., Lynch, K. and Walker, R. 2022, Exploring Control, Threats, Violence and Help-Seeking among Women Held at Gunpoint by Abusive Partners. *Journal of Family Violence*, 37, 59-73.



These findings are particularly relevant in Tasmania, where firearm ownership is comparatively common, particularly in rural and remote communities. Firearms may be present in homes for legitimate occupational, agricultural or recreational purposes. However, within the context of family violence, those same firearms may become powerful instruments of coercive control, intimidation and fear. Accordingly, strengthening firearms legislation presents an important opportunity not only to reduce unlawful firearm use, but also to strengthen protections for victim-survivors of family violence.



THE TASMANIAN CONTEXT





Tasmania is consistently regarded as one of Australia's safest places to live. For many Tasmanians, this is undoubtedly true. However, for women and children experiencing family and sexual violence, the reality is markedly different.

Tasmania records some of the highest rates of family and sexual violence in Australia, including the nation's highest rates of intimate partner violence, emotional abuse, economic abuse, stalking and child maltreatment notifications. The state also experiences disproportionately high rates of sexual violence, alongside significant levels of poverty, disability, housing stress and educational disadvantage.⁵

At the same time, Tasmania has one of Australia's largest registered civilian firearm populations relative to its size. As at May 2026, there were 152,186 registered firearms and 37,960 individual firearms licence holders across the state.⁶ Firearms are an important part of life for many Tasmanians and are used responsibly every day for primary production, recreational hunting, sporting purposes, and animal welfare.

The Alliance does not suggest that lawful firearm ownership causes family violence, nor that all responsible firearms owners contribute to violence against women and children. However, effective public policy requires governments to consider where known risk factors intersect and to ensure appropriate safeguards are in place.

This is particularly relevant in rural and remote Tasmania. Firearm ownership is generally more common within farming and remote communities, where firearms are routinely used for legitimate occupational and recreational purposes. These same communities often face additional challenges for victim-survivors of family violence, including geographic isolation, reduced access to specialist support services, longer police response times, limited transport options, and increased visibility within small communities where anonymity can be difficult to maintain.⁷ These factors can significantly compound the impacts of coercive control and increase barriers to seeking help.

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2024, Personal Safety Australia 2021–22. Canberra: ABS.

⁶ Tasmania Police Firearms Dashboard. (www.police.tas.gov.au/firearms-dashboard/)

⁷ Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) 2017, *Seeking help for domestic violence: Exploring rural women's coping experiences: Final Report*. Sydney: ANROWS.



Research demonstrates that firearms should not be viewed solely as instruments capable of causing physical harm. Within the context of family violence, they are also used as powerful tools of coercive control, intimidation and psychological abuse. The presence of a firearm may influence a victim-survivor's decision-making, restrict their ability to leave, increase fear for themselves, their children, pets or livestock, and contribute to ongoing compliance with the person using violence, even where the firearm is never discharged.⁸

The coexistence of comparatively high rates of firearm ownership and some of Australia's highest rates of violence against women and children does not mean one causes the other. It does, however, reinforce the importance of ensuring Tasmania's firearms legislation explicitly incorporates a family violence lens. Where these two known public safety issues intersect, governments have an opportunity—and a responsibility—to strengthen safeguards that protect victim-survivors while maintaining an appropriate regulatory framework for responsible firearm ownership.

The Firearms Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2026 presents an important opportunity to do precisely that. By embedding contemporary understandings of family violence, coercive control and victim-survivor safety throughout firearms licensing, information sharing, risk assessment and enforcement, Tasmania can further strengthen both public safety and its response to family and sexual violence.

THE IMPACT ON VICTIM-SURVIVORS

The following de-identified case studies have been collected by TFSVA from victim-survivors in Tasmania. They illustrate not only the use of firearms themselves as tools of coercive control, but also how the systems surrounding gun ownership can also be used as weapons. These cases reinforce the need for firearms licensing and regulatory systems to better recognise coercive control, and to include safeguards capable of

⁸ Sorenson, S.B. & Schut, R.A. (2018). *Nonfatal Gun Use in Intimate Partner Violence: A Systematic Review of the Literature*.



identifying situations where a licence application or firearm ownership may not genuinely reflect who holds power and control within the household.

ALLISON

Allison was in a same gender relationship for five years. For much of that time, Allison and her partner lived separately and had a long-distance relationship. But when Allison became unwell, she was forced to give up her job and move back to Tasmania. Without an income and with high medical costs, Allison was reliant on her partner for everything, including housing.

Allison and her partner lived a remote property in rural Tasmania, with few neighbours and a 30km gravel road in and out of the property. Allison did not have the capacity to leave the property because of her disability, but also because she did not have access to a car.

Her partner refused to allow Allison to apply for government benefits to enable her financial independence and would pay for everything because she didn't want Allison to claim joint property if the relationship ended. This meant Allison was forced to ask for even the most basic support, including transport to, and payment for, medical appointments.

Allison's partner was a licensed firearm owner and had three firearms on the property. On a weekly basis, Allison's partner would take the guns out of the safe to shoot off a couple of shots "to remind the neighbours that she also had a gun". Allison felt that in the context of ongoing coercive control, emotional abuse, and financial abuse that it was also to remind her that her partner had the resources and power to control her.

Although no direct threats were made with the firearms, Allison described them as a constant reminder of her partner's capacity to use lethal force. Their presence reinforced the coercive control already occurring within the relationship and significantly influenced her day-to-day decision making, including complying with the demand that Allison stop using a medicine her partner felt she did not need and cost her too much.

It was only after leaving the relationship that Allison reflected on the role that the firearms played in controlling her, and how dangerous the situation was for her. To this day, Allison is nervous around firearms and anxious when engaging with police who are armed.

CASSIE

Cassie was living in an abusive relationship with a man who had previously been subject to a Family Violence Order interstate. After relocating to Tasmania, he was unable to obtain a firearms licence himself. Instead, he coerced Cassie into applying for a firearms licence and registering firearms in her own name.

Although Cassie was the legal licence holder, she had little control over the firearms once they entered the home. Her partner assumed ownership and control of the weapons, using them as another means of exercising power and coercive control within the relationship. The licensing arrangements enabled him to retain access to firearms despite his own history of family violence.

Following a serious incident of violence, the perpetrator reported Cassie to police, claiming that she was mentally unstable and that he feared for his own safety. As a result, Cassie's firearms licence was cancelled and the firearms were removed. The perpetrator then used these events to reinforce a false narrative that he was the victim, including making reports to Child Safety questioning Cassie's mental health and parenting capacity.



Cassie's experience demonstrates how firearms licensing systems can be manipulated by people using family violence. It illustrates that the legal licence holder is not necessarily the person exercising control over a firearm, and that perpetrators may coerce victim-survivors into obtaining licences or registering firearms in their own names in order to circumvent restrictions or distance themselves from legal responsibility.

KEY CONCERNS & SUGGESTED ACTIONS

RECOGNISING FIREARMS AS A FAMILY VIOLENCE ISSUE

The proposed reforms appropriately strengthen Tasmania's firearms regulatory framework. However, the Alliance is concerned that family violence is largely considered within the legislation as one component of determining whether an individual is eligible to obtain a firearms licence. In practice, the relationship between firearms and family violence is significantly broader.

Firearms may be used to threaten victim-survivors, intimidate children, threaten pets and livestock, facilitate coercive control, restrict a victim-survivor's ability to leave, or reinforce an ongoing pattern of fear. Many of these behaviours never result in criminal firearm offences, yet they represent some of the highest-risk indicators for future serious violence.

Public reporting significantly underestimates the prevalence of firearm-related coercive control. Victim-survivors frequently disclose that firearms were used to intimidate or threaten them without those incidents ever being reported to police, often because of fears of escalation or concerns that they will not be believed.

Compliance with firearm storage requirements should not necessarily be understood as evidence that risk is absent. Within coercively controlling relationships, control over firearm storage, keys, combinations and access may itself become a mechanism of power. Regulatory and family violence risk assessment processes should therefore consider who has **effective access and control**, rather than relying solely on who is legally responsible for the firearm or whether storage requirements are technically met.



The Alliance considers that recognising family violence as a core public safety issue throughout implementation would strengthen the effectiveness of the proposed reforms.

Suggested Action 1: That the implementation of the Firearms Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill explicitly recognises family violence and coercive control as core public safety considerations alongside broader firearms regulation.

ENSURING THE INTENT OF THE REFORMS IS REALISED IN PRACTICE

The Alliance strongly supports the implementation of the National Firearms Register and the improved information sharing that it is intended to deliver. The ability for law enforcement agencies to access accurate, near real-time information regarding firearm ownership and movements has significant potential to improve community safety.

USING FIREARMS INFORMATION TO IMPROVE FSV RESPONSES

The Alliance considers that the National Firearms Register presents an important opportunity not only to strengthen firearms regulation, but also to improve Tasmania's integrated response to family violence.

Where Police Family Violence Orders, Family Violence Orders, or other significant family violence risks are identified, information regarding firearm ownership, licensing status and storage arrangements should routinely inform risk assessment, safety planning and case management. Similarly, where firearms licences are suspended, cancelled or surrendered because of family violence concerns, this information should be routinely communicated to relevant Tasmania Police Family Violence Units and Safe at Home practitioners. Doing so would strengthen risk assessment, improve victim-survivor safety planning and support a more coordinated whole-of-system response.

The proposed lending provisions also reinforce the importance of timely family violence information sharing. Where either the registered owner or a person borrowing a firearm subsequently becomes subject to a PFVO, FVO or other significant family violence concern, there must be a clear mechanism to identify the firearm, its current



location and who has effective possession of it, and to ensure any necessary suspension, surrender or recovery occurs without delay.

The Alliance considers that the National Firearms Register should be viewed not only as a regulatory tool, but also as an opportunity to strengthen Tasmania's integrated family violence response. Improved information sharing should support earlier identification of escalating risk, improve coordination between agencies and enhance the safety of victim-survivors.

Suggested Action 2: That firearm ownership, licensing status and storage information be routinely incorporated into family violence risk assessment processes undertaken through Safe at Home and specialist Family Violence Units.

Suggested Action 3: That implementation of the National Firearms Register include clear operational protocols regarding information sharing between Firearms Services, Family Violence Units and Safe at Home practitioners where family violence risk has been identified.

AVOIDING UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES FOR VICTIM-SURVIVORS

The Alliance supports stronger penalties for serious firearm offending and acknowledges the proposed introduction of mandatory minimum imprisonment for possession of stolen firearms and stealing firearms. However, consideration should be given to the unintended impacts these provisions may have for victim-survivors experiencing coercive control.

Family violence frequently involves perpetrators compelling victim-survivors to engage in behaviour against their will through threats, intimidation, fear, or ongoing coercion. Specialist family violence services have heard examples of victim-survivors being forced to obtain firearms licences on behalf of perpetrators who may themselves be ineligible to hold a licence, register firearms in their own names, transport or store firearms, or conceal weapons within the home.

Similarly, perpetrators may manipulate criminal justice processes by portraying victim-survivors as unstable or dangerous while maintaining control over firearms themselves.



Without appropriate recognition of coercion and family violence, mandatory sentencing provisions may inadvertently capture victim-survivors whose offending occurred directly as a consequence of their victimisation.

The Alliance notes that the proposed mandatory sentencing framework provides scope for the minimum sentence not to apply where a court considers it unjust in the circumstances. The Alliance considers that guidance should make explicit that offending occurring as a consequence of family violence, coercive control or threats may be relevant to that assessment, particularly where a victim-survivor has been compelled to carry, conceal, store or otherwise possess a stolen firearm.

The Alliance is not suggesting that serious firearm offending should be treated less seriously. Rather, the legislation should ensure sufficient consideration can be given where offending has occurred in the context of coercion, family violence or victimisation.

Suggested Action 4: That legislative or implementation guidance explicitly recognise family violence, coercive control and threats as circumstances relevant to determining whether application of a mandatory minimum sentence would be unjust.

Suggested Action 5: That implementation guidance support police, prosecutors and the courts to recognise the impacts of coercive control when responding to firearm offences involving victim-survivors.

Suggested Action 6: That firearms licences be subject to mandatory review whenever a Police Family Violence Order, Family Violence Order or recognised interstate domestic violence order is issued, or where significant family violence risk is identified.

STRENGTHENING THE ‘FIT AND PROPER PERSON’ FRAMEWORK

The Alliance welcomes the continued emphasis on ensuring firearms licences are granted only to individuals who are fit and proper persons. The proposed amendments strengthen the Commissioner's ability to consider historical interstate domestic violence orders when determining whether an applicant should be granted a firearms licence. This is a positive and practical improvement that reflects the increasingly mobile nature of Australian communities.



However, contemporary understandings of family violence extend well beyond the existence of formal protection orders. Many perpetrators of family violence have never been convicted of criminal offences or been subject to protection orders. Coercive control often occurs over many years before formal intervention occurs. Many victim-survivors report repeated police attendance, escalating intimidation and ongoing patterns of coercive control long before any protection order is made or criminal offence is prosecuted.

The Alliance considers the proposed reforms provide an opportunity to review whether existing "fit and proper person" assessments adequately recognise contemporary family violence risk factors, including patterns of coercive control, repeated police attendance, intelligence holdings, and other indicators of escalating risk.

The Alliance also notes that access to firearms is not limited to private ownership. Some individuals may have lawful access to firearms through their employment, including policing, security or other authorised occupations. Family violence risk management should therefore consider not only private firearm ownership, but also occupational access to firearms, with clear protocols for restricting access where PFVOs, FVOs or other significant family violence concerns arise.

Similarly, consideration should be given to the broader family context surrounding firearm ownership. Specialist services have heard from victim-survivors who were coerced into applying for firearms licences or registering firearms in their own names despite exercising little or no control over those weapons.

A licensing framework that assumes all applicants are acting freely may fail to identify circumstances where coercive control is present.

Suggested Action 7: That the operation of "fit and proper person" assessments and associated risk management processes be reviewed to ensure contemporary understandings of family violence and coercive control are explicitly recognised, including circumstances where an individual has lawful access to firearms through their employment.



Suggested Action 8: That firearms licence application and renewal processes include consideration of known family violence involving intimate partners or other household members, including circumstances where there are indicators that an applicant may be acting under coercion or where another person may be exercising effective control over the firearm.

IMPLEMENTATION WILL DETERMINE IF REFORMS IMPROVE SAFETY

The Alliance recognises that legislative reform alone will not achieve the intended outcomes of the Bill. Successful implementation will require operational guidance, workforce capability, consistent application across Tasmania, and ongoing collaboration between firearms regulatory agencies, Tasmania Police and specialist family and sexual violence services.

Evaluation will also be important. Understanding whether the reforms improve safety for victim-survivors, reduce firearm-related coercive control and strengthen perpetrator accountability should form part of future review processes.

Suggested Action 9: That implementation of the reforms include consultation with specialist family and sexual violence services in the development of operational guidance and training.

Suggested Action 10: That the operation and impact of the reforms be evaluated following implementation to assess their effectiveness in improving safety for victim-survivors of family and sexual violence.

CONCLUSION

Firearms are not only instruments capable of causing death—they are also powerful tools of coercive control. Ensuring Tasmania's firearms legislation recognises both realities will strengthen public safety, improve victim-survivor safety, and better support the Government's broader commitment to ending family and sexual violence.

The proposed reforms present an important opportunity to reduce firearm-related harm and strengthen public confidence in Tasmania's firearms system. However, family violence represents one of the highest-risk contexts in which firearms are used.



Without explicit consideration of coercive control, victim-survivor safety and the practical operation of these reforms within Tasmania's family violence response, there is a risk that opportunities to further strengthen community safety will be missed.

The Alliance considers that embedding contemporary understandings of family violence and coercive control throughout Tasmania's firearms framework will not only strengthen firearms regulation, but also save lives, improve victim-survivor safety, and contribute to a more effective whole-of-system response to family and sexual violence.

If the issues raised in this submission are addressed, the Alliance considers the Bill has the potential to improve not only firearms regulation, but also the safety of victim-survivors, strengthen perpetrator accountability, and support a more coordinated, whole-of-system response to family and sexual violence across Tasmania.