

**Submission
No 154**

**INQUIRY INTO PROVISIONS OF THE FIREARMS AND
WEAPONS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (CRIMINAL
USE) BILL 2020**

Name: Mr Aaron Millard

Date Received: 6 August 2020

Dear Members of Parliament.

Regarding - Significant concerns over the “Firearms and Weapons Legislation Amendment (Criminal Use) Bill 2020”, currently before the NSW Parliament.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on this topic.

As a law-abiding firearms licence holder, and a part owner of a 50+ year old business that supplies firearms and ammunition to legal and law abiding firearm owners Australia wide, as well as the Department of Defence and many Law Enforcement agencies including DFAT, AFP and so on I absolutely support legislation that helps to prevent the criminal use of firearms, however I have great concern in regards to the lack of industry engagement that is carried out before the proposal of new legislation around firearms.

Unfortunately, the current legislation draft contains numerous issues that are likely to cause unintended consequences to law abiding firearm owners.

I will list some of the issues below, however in my eyes there are many other issues that need to be reviewed, and I would be most happy to provide more feedback on these issues as an industry professional whom has spent their entire life working around the firearms industry.

Section 51J establishes the offence of “take part in the manufacture a firearm or firearm part”. Subsequent paragraphs explain the meanings of “Take Part” and what constitutes a “precursor” but they do not determine what constitutes “manufacture”.

- Does the alteration of a stock to allow the fitting of a cheek support, a sling or a bipod constitute manufacture? As a company supplying the sling or bipod, are we guilty of an offence?
- If I alter or adapt a component that allows me to fit, for example, a modern telescopic sight to an older firearm is that illegal “manufacture of a part” under this proposed legislation?
- If I modify a screw to secure the sight or grip to my firearm, because an original component is not available and or faulty, am I guilty of illegal “manufacture of a part” under this proposed legislation?

These are common options on legal firearms as used for sport and target competition and are not currently illegal but could be under this proposed legislation. As written, this could easily lead to misinterpretation.

Section 51J, (2), (d) establishes the intent that “the person possesses a firearm precursor for the purposes of manufacturing a firearm or firearm part” but does not differentiate between legal (by licenced firearms users, as mentioned above) or illegal possession. As mentioned above, there are many alterations/additions/parts/substances that are commonly used legally on firearms by licenced users and pose no increased public risk, in fact many items that are built onto a modern rifle such as a telescope sight, or a cheek support actually allow the firearm to be more accurate, more safe and deliver more humane feral pest eradication in some cases.

These items may also offer support to people whom shoot for sport and may be impacted by a disability, such as a bipod that would allow a licenced shooter in wheelchair to more accurately and comfortably shoot off a table at a target range.

Or for example, an older shooter who no longer enjoys shooting with open sights on a firearm may modify their firearm and install a telescope sight, allowing them to continue shooting more comfortably and more accurately.

In the interest of fairness and respect to law abiding firearm owners I urge you to engage with industry professionals like myself to further understand improvements that can be made to our firearm laws to make productive and accurate assessments to decrease the criminal access to firearms and help promote safe firearm use, and furthermore educate Australians on the safe and ethical use of firearms.

In my opinion too often Australian Licenced firearm owners are viewed as criminals, whereas in truth licenced firearm owners are the most law abiding people in our community.

It is in the interests of companies like ours to ensure appropriate laws are established to protect our community, industry and shooting sports nationwide.

It is estimated that deer hunting alone contributes over \$120m AUD to the NSW economy, most of which is injected into rural communities.

A wider hunting contribution for other species outside of deer is over \$400m AUD

These numbers alone indicated the dedication and importance of the shooting / hunting enthusiasts in the economy.

I include these above facts because if a bill is passed and law abiding firearm owners in Australia have unnecessary restrictions applied to them it in turn impacts the economy nationwide, when in fact we need to be targeting the criminals, educating and training our ABF staff and police more widely to understand firearms and sporting shoots, and giving them the skills to crack down on illegal firearm imports – not legal firearm owners.

I would be pleased to discuss these topics further and remain at your service to supply any additional details or feedback.

Yours Sincerely

Aaron Millard.

NSW