

Submission  
No 17

**INQUIRY INTO GAME AND FERAL ANIMAL  
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (CONSERVATION  
HUNTING) BILL 2025**

**Name:** Name suppressed  
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Partially  
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## Submission: The Importance of Firearm Suppressors for Health and Safety — A Vital Tool for Humans and Hunting Dogs Alike

To Whom It May Concern,

This submission highlights the critical occupational health and safety benefits of firearm suppressors, particularly in the context of hunting, wildlife management, and other outdoor professions. Suppressors—also known as silencers—are often misunderstood, but their primary function is to reduce the damaging noise generated by gunfire. Their proper use aligns directly with established workplace safety principles and provides protection not just for human users, but also for working animals such as hunting dogs.

### 1. Suppressors Reduce Harmful Noise Exposure

Gunfire from unsuppressed firearms typically exceeds 160 decibels, well above the threshold for immediate and irreversible hearing damage. Suppressors can reduce this sound signature by 20–35 decibels (still 120 decibels far from silent), significantly mitigating the risk of both short- and long-term hearing loss. This benefit is vital for hunters, guides, conservation officers, and others routinely exposed to gunfire in their chosen recreation.

### 2. Hierarchy of Control: Prioritizing Engineering Controls Over PPE

Under occupational health and safety frameworks—including Safe Work Australia’s model WHS Regulations and internationally recognized standards—the Hierarchy of Control requires that risks be managed using the most effective measures first. This hierarchy ranks engineering controls above personal protective equipment (PPE).

In the context of firearm noise:

- Suppressors are an engineering control that directly reduces noise at the source.
- Earplugs and earmuffs are PPE—less effective, especially when users must remove them for communication or situational awareness in the field.

By introducing suppressors, we are taking a proactive, engineering-based step in line with best practice safety management, rather than relying solely on PPE, which should be the last line of defense.

### 3. Protecting Hunting Dogs and Other Working Animals

Hunting dogs are essential partners in many outdoor occupations, yet they cannot wear hearing protection. They often work within meters of gunfire and are highly susceptible to noise-induced trauma, which can result in:

- Permanent hearing loss
- Elevated stress and anxiety
- Reduced working lifespan

Suppressors offer the only viable noise-reduction method that protects these animals. Reducing blast volume helps safeguard their health and enhances their performance, which is critical for the success of the hunt or operation.

### 4. Improved Field Communication and Reduced Stress

Quieter gunfire also leads to safer and more efficient operations. Suppressors allow for better verbal communication among team members and handlers, which is vital in dynamic, high-concentration environments. Reduced acoustic shock also benefits overall control and concentration, lowering the risk of secondary incidents.

(We have seen many accidental shootings in the field that could have been avoided if suppressors were used instead of earplugs or muffs)

### 5. Conclusion

Firearm suppressors are an essential tool for modern occupational safety in environments where firearms are regularly used. They align directly with the Hierarchy of Control by reducing risk through engineering, not merely compensating for it with PPE. They are also the only effective way to protect the hearing of nearby hunting dogs, who are critical to many professional and recreational hunting operations. We urge policymakers to recognize suppressors as safety equipment—not a threat—and to support regulations that facilitate their responsible and lawful use.