

Queensland Community Safety Bill 2024

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Community Safety & Legal Affairs Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4001

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Dear Committee Members,

RE: Queensland Community Safety BILL Submission

I write to express my concerns around the consultation process for the Queensland Community Safety Bill and to request a deferral to consideration of the legislation through Parliament to allow for further engagement with interest groups and stakeholders.

NIOA supports a Community Safety Bill in principle, however, the legislation could be improved and made more effective through further consultation and engagement. The Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee (CSLAC) is not providing industry and community with sufficient time to review and comment on complex issues associated with this Bill.

If approved in the current form, the legislation will have far reaching consequences for industry and the wider QLD community. I respectfully request that the CSLAC reconsider their decision not to extend the close date for submissions. This is an important issue for all Queenslanders.

1. Changes to the Weapons Act

The BILL includes several complex changes to the Queensland *Weapons Act*. These changes will require additional resources and or systems within the QLD Police Weapons Licensing Branch (WLB) to administer licensing processes and character checks on applicants.

Firearms dealers work hours that are much longer than WLB, including weekends. If additional resources or reliable systems are not provided to facilitate the new processes outlined in the Bill, it will place hard working, small businesses at risk. This is not mentioned in the Bill, the funding required to administer the changes. It would be a greater public safety issue if these systems and processes were to fail.

2. Reading Speech Extract states:

"Queensland has experienced an increase of more than 60% in the number of registered firearms within the community since 2013, with the number of registered firearms increasing to over 1 million firearms in early 2024. The increased availability of firearms within the community grants further opportunities for these deadly weapons to be misappropriated. The rate of firearms reported as stolen has also increased by at least 21% within the last decade, with over 779 firearms reported stolen in 2023. Coupled with continuing challenges in recovering stolen firearms and the longevity of a functioning firearm, there is a corresponding increase in the risk that these weapons come into the possession of high-risk individuals and are used in the commission of an offence. The risk to the community is apparent when considering the increased number of reported offences involving firearms in Queensland, which has risen at least 30% in the last decade, with approximately 3,352 reported firearm offences in 2023."

The statistics provided in the above paragraphs do not seem to provide a clear picture of the actual situation. For example, data presented indicates a 60% increase in registered firearms over the last decade. In the same period, it is reported that firearms offences have risen 30%. With the number of firearms now in the community, the number of firearms offences per for the number of firearms in the community has decreased in the last decade.

These figures do not differentiate between replica firearms, gel blasters, licensed or non-licensed persons. What is the real breakdown for the aforementioned Weapons Act Offences? The Committee cannot expect industry or the community to take figures on face value without time to analyse the details.

NIOA will always support harsher penalties for persons stealing firearms but seeks through some modest amendments to the proposed legislation to protect and support authorised firearms dealers and users.

3. **Verification of Ammunition**

The verification of ammunition to legitimate licensed firearms holders will not reduce the risk to Police or the community. The verification system will only provide an administrative burden for Dealer and ammunition sellers across the State. Before the Bill is passed, Firearms dealer and ammunition sellers have a right to know how the proposed legislation is likely to affect trade.

It does not cover a program outage, which is the REAL issue for trade.

- What if the QPS Server is still running and the program is down?
- What if Telstra goes down and there is no internet?
- What if the NBN goes down for the dealer's suburb for a week?
- How does a dealer know if the program is not working, if the server is down or up, they do not have access to the sever status only the front face of the program?

4. **Drafting of the BILL**

As previously mentioned, the Bill would benefit from more time for community consultation and does not appear to address the actual problems in society. There have been no debates or public forums to address the systematic social problems associated with crime in Queensland. The additional time we are requesting to the passage of the Bill would allow for broader community engagement and further feedback to make the draft legislation more effective.

5. **Other points of concern that have not been addressed that may affect the firearms industry.**

introduce a firearms prohibition order scheme in Queensland.

reform the 'fit and proper person' test in the Weapons Act 1990 by expanding the types of serious offending captured, introducing a new category of disqualified persons, and, in certain circumstances, extending the exclusionary period to 10 years.

introduce a framework for removal of online content depicting conduct that constitutes a prescribed offence, create an offence for publishing such material, and increase the maximum penalties for a range of related offences.

extend the maximum period before a police protection notice must be first mentioned in court.

allow the Police Minister to subdelegate compensation powers to the Commissioner of Police.

attach a licence disqualification of 2 months to a penalty infringement notice.

There is a rational argument to delay this BILL until a more appropriate time.

NIOA sincerely thanks the CSLAC for the opportunity to provide a submission for the Queensland Community Safety Bill. I hope with a modest extension to the period where submissions can be made, we can provide a comprehensive and thorough contribution to this debate and support the passage of better constructed and more effective legislation.

Yours sincerely,



Ben James
CEO
NIOA Australia and New Zealand