



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR CUNNINGHAM

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WEAPONS ACT

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham—NPA) (12.10 p.m.): I wish to bring to the notice of members of this House and the people of Queensland some suggestions in relation to the Weapons Act. I shall preface my remarks by mentioning the changes that Russell Cooper was able to implement in the early stages. That followed a large number of public meetings held by either himself or a large number of backbenchers. Information gathered at those meetings and the concerns of the public, particularly those in rural areas, were fed back through the system to Russell Cooper, who was then able to implement changes in relation to the 28-day cooling-off period and some aspects of C-class weapons. I believe that Russell Cooper's hard work improved what could only have been described as a totally impractical situation.

Those improvements were a great help, particularly the dropping of the 28-day cooling-off period for existing licence holders wishing to purchase a replacement firearm or an additional firearm. However, before members of the anti-gun lobby start jumping up and down again, let me outline how that 28-day cooling-off period affected both legitimate gunsmiths and people whose livelihoods depend on the use of firearms. I refer in particular to kangaroo shooters, farmers, graziers and other people on the land who need and use firearms in the course of their everyday work.

I wish to quote a Toowoomba gunsmith who is a very sensible, sound, rational person in whom I have great faith. Last time I called in to have a yarn with him about the whole gun situation, he told me what had happened to him in Toowoomba prior to Christmas. As a gunsmith, he is a licensed gun dealer. Many roo shooters with gun licences walked into his place of business and said that they wanted to purchase rifles for their kangaroo shooting operations. They thought that they could walk in there, put their money on the table and say, "That is the gun I like. I want to buy it." He would then have say, "Hang on a minute. Have you got your permit to acquire?" They would say, "Yes, I picked it up on the way down." But then he had to tell them, "You have to wait 28 days." As members can imagine, those people were absolutely disgusted. Many of them had driven in from Charleville. Now, members might ask why those people did not know about the relevant legislation. But I challenge those members to tell me how many members of the public pick up legislation, read it, understand it and are aware of all the regulations. Very few people understand that.

Mr Pearce: Didn't they change that by regulation?

Mr ELLIOTT: I am coming to that. So the changes to the legislation improved that situation considerably.

I will give honourable members an analogy. In the past, a person who was selling cattle at a saleyard and moving cattle around had to get from a stock inspector a permit that described all that stock, and the inspector had to sight them. Those stock were then able to be moved from A to B. Quite reasonably, members on our side of politics decided that that situation was unnecessary and that the amount of red tape involved was over the top.

Let me take the example of the roo shooter or the legitimate farmer who lives in the bush and visits Toowoomba in order to conduct business. The gunsmith has been appropriately checked out under the terms of the legislation. The person who wants to purchase the firearm already has a gun licence, so he has been checked out, too. With computerisation today, there is nothing to stop that gunsmith from going to his computer and checking to ensure that that person does not have a current domestic violence order against him or that he is not a person who has been prohibited from owning a firearm. If all of that is in order, why should those two people not be able to do business?

I am not talking about someone who is going to buy a gun so that he can go down the road and shoot someone. I put it to members that, if a person was going to do that, he would probably

already have 20 guns at Charleville or wherever he comes from. Many people have up to 20 or 30 guns because they operate under varying conditions and use different guns for different purposes. So it is an absolute nonsense to say that that person is going to walk into a gunsmith's business, purchase a gun and then go down the road and shoot someone. That is absolutely ludicrous. I am suggesting that the gunsmith should have a permit book on his premises.

What does this legislation seek to do? It seeks to record the serial number of a firearm when it is purchased. I personally do not agree with this because, to me, it smacks of Big Brotherhood. However, the legislation is in place and the reality is that we will be outvoted by those people in Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra and Brisbane who do not understand guns and are totally opposed to them. Those people have no understanding of what people really need guns for or how they use them. As I said, the legislation requires the serial number of a firearm to be recorded together with information on the type of firearm it is, so that the authorities know where that firearm is. But what is to stop a gunsmith from writing out a permit and then immediately recording that information on a computerised register? The system would then contain all the information that the authorities require and there would be no need whatsoever to involve bureaucratic red tape and all the other rubbish. For some unknown reason, people in our society today seem hell-bent on doing that more and more.

This is a very important point to consider. I believe that it is practical and necessary. We should stop creating impediments for those legitimate businesspeople who are trying to go about their business. We are making life more and more difficult for them. If members wonder why people in the bush are angry, it is because of situations such as this which really get up their noses. Records of various crimes in this State reveal that very few farmers or kangaroo shooters are involved in robbing banks. I cannot remember the last time when a farmer robbed a bank.

Mr Robertson: There are not enough banks to rob out there.

Mr ELLIOTT: We are left with none; that is right. The whole process of government seems to be encouraging banks to close more and more branches.

I turn now to the situation pertaining to C-class weapons. Despite the irrational statements from the Prime Minister, the facts regarding self-loading shotguns with restricted magazine capacity are little understood by the public. Large numbers of both lady clay pigeon shooters and disabled shooters need to use those types of guns. The greater part of the recoil of a semiautomatic or self-loading shotgun is involved in the reloading process. As a former clay pigeon shooter, I know that when one does a lot of practice or is shooting in a competition for a long period, that constant recoil from an under-and-over or a side-by-side sometimes becomes quite difficult and one gets bruises. This applies particularly to those people who have light frames or those who are disabled. The same thing applies to junior shooters. The best thing to do when training junior shooters is to give them a more suitable gun that does not have a tremendous recoil, because then they are able to handle it better.

I turn now to a subject that is of great concern to many people. On a number of occasions the courts of Queensland have upheld a person's right to defend himself or herself under extreme circumstances. There have been a number of cases in which people have used firearms to defend themselves in extreme circumstances and they have been vindicated by the courts. I believe that we have to revisit the Weapons Act to ensure that people of good character, without a history of domestic violence, are able to own basic weapons. But I am not suggesting that we return to the situation where people have SKS rifles in their houses and things like that.

Time expired.
