



Speech by

**HOWARD HOBBS**

**MEMBER FOR WARREGO**

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Hansard 27 February 2003

**WEAPONS AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr HOBBS** (Warrego—NPA) (12.33 p.m.): I am pleased to speak to the Weapons and Another Act Amendment Bill. The shadow minister, the member for Gregory, outlined the opposition's view on this particular matter. The Leader of Opposition Business also made a very good contribution in relation to this legislation.

**Mr Shine:** He didn't seem to be too sure.

**Mr HOBBS:** I thought it was an excellent contribution. I recommend members read his contribution.

This is good legislation. I think people are getting over their fear of the gun issue to a certain degree. I know that a lot of people do not understand guns at all, and there tends to be that reaction of horror when you even mention the word. This is a piece of legislation we have to administer, and the legislation that goes through this House must be good legislation. We have to be able to modernise and move with society as society demands that change.

There are certainly some changes to be made to make the rules and regulations we live under easier and simpler and to save on administration and bureaucracy. Unfortunately, in the first instance of legislation many issues were raised. Some people saw others talking about things being an impost as wanting to totally change the rules. People had fear that it would be a case of open slather and there would be guns everywhere. That is not the case. We have had gun laws in place for quite a long time now. I believe that most people understand them. There is also a need to make the system easy enough to administer.

Amnesties allow those who have or find guns on their premises to hand them in. There are probably more guns out there than have been handed in. As years go by, if you have amnesties at the right time and provide a bit of encouragement, a lot of those weapons will probably be handed in.

One of the administrative problems addressed in this bill relates to the renewal application having to be submitted at least 14 days prior to the expiration of that licence. That was just a nightmare. I do not know of any other licence that has those sorts of conditions attached. It was just so foreign to people. Other types of licences, whether it is a drivers licence or whatever, expire on the day of expiration, not 14 days before. People everywhere were being caught out. Then people had to undergo weapons safety courses and so on. It was an absolute nightmare. I am very pleased that the minister has been able to rectify that situation.

It is very hard to access accredited officers. I know of a person who lives in Cunnamulla who wanted to renew his licence. He eventually had to go to Roma to find an accredited officer because there were just none available in the required two- or three-week period. I am not sure how we solve that—it is pretty hard to solve—but it is something the government ought to be aware of.

Obviously nobody wants to see knives in schools. We have seen some dreadful things happen overseas. We do not want that sort of thing to happen in Australia.

In the future we will need to look at a few other issues, particularly in relation to the carriage of weapons. The minister would face the same issue in his area in relation to kangaroo shooters, people on stations and so on. It is very difficult for those people to fully comply with the law of the land in relation to the carriage of weapons. An understanding Police Service in those areas probably helps, because sometimes it is just impossible not to have weapons when travelling between properties for

various reasons. There might be an instance of flooded creeks, for example, and people may have to deviate from an approved route.

There needs to be a bit of give and take. I do not think that we have had any instances—none that I can recall—where farm weapons have been used to cause such problems. Another point that is particularly important relates to when a person is officially in possession of a weapon. At the time the gun laws were first introduced into Queensland, the interpretation of the law was that, provided a person—a gun owner—was on a farm, which is fairly isolated, and that person had their weapon out of the locked cabinet or from secure premises, that person was in possession. If that person decided to leave that farm or property and went away for the weekend and that gun was left out, that person is not in possession. I understand that is the way the law still is. But there tends to be the notion that people in those situations have to have their guns locked up virtually every minute that they do have not have them in their hands. That is ridiculous, particularly as we have a dingo invasion that has been going on for quite some time and is getting worse and worse. People in those situations just cannot afford to have their guns locked up all the time. So I think that there needs to be some understanding of that law. I am not sure how the minister is going to draft the legislation to cater for that belief, but the people in the Weapons Licensing Branch need to look at that issue to make sure that people do not get caught the wrong way.

I want to refer to one case—and I am not really sure of the answer to it—of a kangaroo shooter who had a domestic violence order issued against him. I do not condone or support in any manner or form anyone who has had such an order made against them applying for a gun licence. But that DVO was issued in a divorce case. The man's wife then admitted that it was just used as a ploy. She requested that that order be struck off the register, but it was not. Then officers came out to this fellow and said, 'Son, you have got to hand over your weapons because you are now a prohibited person.' We have to change this legislation or we have to try to do something in relation to the instruction in the first place. The particular family involved then tried every which way they could to get that DVO adjusted, but they could not because the decision had already been handed down. That was a very interesting case. I do not know whether it was even solved, because it certainly was difficult. I just raise that matter for the attention of members.

I must thank the minister for allowing the use of police cameras in stations for passport type photographs. I had a lot of requests from people who had to get their gun licences renewed. Now they can go to the stations to get them. Before they had to travel 120 kilometres to try to find some town that had a camera that could get them a passport type photograph. That has worked out very well. It is practical, commonsense, and allows the job to be done.

This legislation will benefit us in Queensland. I believe that we could do a lot more. We have to keep an open mind and have a positive view towards trying to make things simpler. We have to have reasonable guidelines. As I mentioned earlier, I think that there is a fear campaign out there that probably is not justified. By the same token, we have to have the laws of the land that we live and work by and we have to make sure that they are reasonably simple and easy to follow.