



Speech by

**JOHN MICKEL, MLA**  
**STATE MEMBER FOR LOGAN**

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**WEAPONS AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr MICKEL** (Logan—ALP) (5.49 p.m.): This bill will provide assistance for weapons licensees whose licences have recently expired as a result of a person failing to renew a licence within the strict time frame mandated by the Weapons Act 1990. We are supportive of people's right to own and use weapons for legitimate sporting or business purposes. In fact, with this bill we want to improve and streamline the licensing process.

These changes will make it more efficient for law abiding firearm owners to license their weapons. Once a person is unlicensed, they have no lawful justification, authority or excuse to continue to possess any registered firearm. If a weapons licence expires as a consequence of a licensee failing to comply with the renewal requirements or by not submitting a renewal application, the person must make a new application for a licence if they wish to continue to possess firearms. The person must then lodge a new application, pay the licence application fee plus the costs of a particular type of licence.

As an additional safeguard, the person must satisfy the Queensland Police Commissioner, Bob Atkinson, that they have adequate knowledge of safety practices for the use, storage and maintenance of a weapon. Once a person is unlicensed, there is no specific provision within the Weapons Act that allows the commissioner to recognise a licensee's previously held Queensland firearms licence as an alternative proof of weapons competency.

We appreciate that there are some circumstances whereby a person may fail to renew his or her licence within the required time. The changes in this bill allow for an exemption so that in some cases people who have a weapons licence which has immediately expired and which they seek to renew should not have to pay extra in order to gain a weapons competency for a second time. These changes mean that a person whose licence has immediately lapsed will now not have to complete another weapons competency and training course.

Section 2(1)(m), Application of Act, of the Weapons Act permits the Police Commissioner to grant in the prescribed manner an exemption from the application of certain provisions of the act. Following advice from the Queensland Police Service solicitor in January 2002, the Police Commissioner issued an exemption which provided that proof of successful completion of a Weapons Act safety course would not be required provided that within the six months prior to the making of the application for a licence the applicant previously held a Queensland Weapons Act licence that had not otherwise been suspended, revoked or cancelled.

This exemption only applies to persons who are holders of a firearm's licence, a concealable firearm's licence, a collector's licence or a minor's licence within the six months immediately prior to the making of the new application. This bill enshrines this decision in legislation by inserting a new section 10(4)(b) in the Weapons Act to legislatively control these types of weapons competency exemptions. This is consistent with the character of the existing exemptions contained in section 10 of the Weapons Act. This amendment does not extend to interstate residents. Section 33, Interstate residents moving to Queensland, of the Weapons Act provides suitable controls to regulate the transfer of valid interstate licences.

We are tough on gun control in the interests of saving lives. In saying that, I am mindful of the role that easy access to weapons has in worsening our domestic violence situation. A survey carried out by the Australian Institute of Criminology in 1999-2000 found that almost half the female victims were

killed as a result of guns used in a domestic altercation, because of jealousy or termination of a relationship. Just as significant, of the 300 homicides that occurred in that study, 55 per cent occurred at the home. A 1990 women's safety survey indicated that over 30,000 women were threatened or harmed with a gun or knife in the previous year.

For these reasons, I cannot support and will never support US-style gun culture, the absurdity of which has been depicted in the Mike Moore documentary *Bowling for Columbine*. There is a scene from that documentary where a bank in the United States was offering a rifle as a prize for a person who opened a bank account. As shocking as the attack on the World Trade Centre was, where more than 2,000 people lost their lives, as unforgivable as it was, it is worth remembering that in the United States in 1994, 39,720 people died from firearm related deaths. In six states of the United States the gun death toll has now surpassed the road toll. That is why I reject out of hand any move to establish a US-style gun culture in this country.

The honourable member for Gregory was correct when he said that there needs to be more surveillance at the wharves in regard to the illegal importation of hand guns. I call on the federal government to work with our state minister who I know has been exhorting the federal government to take some action with respect to this illegal importation.

The member for Gregory also mentioned the harm done to high school students. We have to remember that in the United States it is not only high school students but also high school teachers who have lost their lives because of the absurd gun culture that exists there. That is why we need to continue to be tough on guns.

This measure is designed to protect legitimate gun owners. It does what this minister and his advisers set out to do; it creates some flexibility. These amendments are designed to streamline the licensing process so that law abiding gun owners are able to complete the relicensing process with a minimum of difficulties. For that reason, the minister should be congratulated. I also congratulate his advisers on bringing this matter to the government's attention.