




Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

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WEAPONS AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (3.38 pm): I rise to speak to the Weapons Amendment Bill 2011. The draft of the Weapons Bill 2010 was released for public comment and the majority of submissions fiercely criticised it. This bill has been rushed, and was not released for public comment. It should have been brought to the public's attention before it was tabled in parliament.

Mr ROBERTS: I rise to a point of order. The member is misleading the House. All of the provisions in this bill were part of the draft bill which was released to the public for consultation.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Order! There is no point of order. I call the member for Dalrymple.

Mr KNUTH: Back in the late 1990s, the John Howard gun law reforms were a whopping big issue that caused a great impact across rural and regional Queensland. In the past we saw people rise up to the point where there was a lot of anger and angst. I can understand why, at the moment, certain interest groups are very concerned about this bill and I will bring up a number of amendments in relation to that. When the first reforms were introduced, a number of members of parliament lost their seats over what was a very emotional issue. I believe that those gun law reforms were among the toughest in the country, if not the world.

I will give members an example. A gun owner has to have those guns in a safe. If a criminal was breaking into my home while I was away, the first thing my wife and children would have to do would be to find the key. After finding the key, they have to open the safe. Then they have to grab the guns. Then they have to go to another room to grab the bullets. Then they have to go to another room—

Mr Schwarten: You ring 000.

Mr KNUTH: A lot of people do not live close to cities. They have to put the bullets in the magazine, load them up and then use the gun. I feel that that is as tough as you can get.

Mr Roberts: Do you want to keep a loaded gun in the house? Is that what you are saying?

Mr KNUTH: No, I use this example to show how tough are the laws. I cannot see any problems with the penalties, such as for the possession of knives in schools. There is no issue with that. However, some people are concerned about the classification of folding knives, which will not be classed as ordinary pocketknives. This has to be addressed. The removal of licensing requirements for deactivated monuments deserves acknowledgement. It is plain commonsense. The bill reviews the rights of the RSL to display deactivated and imitation arms.

However, the majority of the amendments within the bill increase the penalties for responsible licensed gun owners, do little to enhance community safety and do nothing to address the criminal element involved in weapon ownership. The bill takes the focus off weapons for criminal activities by treating everyone who owns a weapon like a criminal. Alternative deterrents, such as heavy sentencing, will do much more to effectively target criminals than will increasing the penalties for recreational and sporting shooters, gun club members and law-abiding citizens. An essential aspect of our democracy and a necessity of our environment is that Australians have the right to own and operate firearms, with the

exceptions contained in a prohibited person's register. However, targeting law-abiding gun owners with unjustifiable penalties and loading them up with so much red tape that legal gun ownership becomes impossible is a small step towards prohibition.

I grew up with guns, as did many members who have contributed to this debate. I know that if you grow up around guns, you learn how to treat them with respect. This is why rural gun owners and sporting shooters recognise that we need sensible regulations and do their best to comply with the existing legislation.

One of the big issues with this bill is clause 44, which inserts section 68CA regarding the possession of a large-capacity magazine for lever and pump action or centre fire rifles. This section has caused a lot of concern in the community regarding lever or pump action and centre fire guns that have built-in tubular magazines with a high capacity of more than 10 rounds. We need clarification on this point: if you have a gun that has a tubular magazine of more than 10 rounds, does the whole gun have to be handed in? That needs to be clarified. When the minister sums up the debate, I would like further clarification on the criteria for obtaining a special provision to own a large-capacity magazine for category B weapons. If you have a magazine that has more than 10 rounds, this bill says it has to be handed in. According to this bill, I have to tell my friends and people who live in rural and regional Queensland who have a magazine that has more than 10 rounds that they have to hand in that magazine.

It is important to recognise that further regulation of weapons licensing is no longer effective in deterring the criminal use of weapons, but is casting a burden of bureaucracy on law-abiding firearm owners. The truth is that those who wish to carry out criminal acts will obtain firearms in the illegal firearm trade, which has no restrictions and no regulations. As a gun owner who complies with the current legislation, at a significant cost, I sympathise with gun owners who feel that they are being demonised simply because they own a gun. I believe that the legislation has no relevance to criminal activity or public safety. The draft weapons bill, which was released for public comment, takes the focus off the use of weapons for criminal activities by treating everyone who owns a weapon like a criminal. There are alternative deterrents, such as effectively targeting criminals rather than law-abiding citizens. I have a lot of concerns with this bill. It goes against the Australian way of life. It goes against personal firearm owners and law-abiding citizens. I cannot support the bill.