




Speech by

Trevor Watts

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH


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WEAPONS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (5.28 pm): I rise to speak in favour of the Weapons and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I was a member of the committee to which the bill was referred and we looked at several aspects of it. Principally, the bill removes red tape for good people and increases punishment and penalty for bad people. We all agree that firearms need to be treated with respect. It is the right of landowners and recreational shooters to have access to weapons, as well as people who are training for the Olympics and so on.

At the moment we have a situation where they are bogged down in red tape and regulation. All of the rules and regulations surrounding firearms are in fact inhibiting good people who want to use their weapons in a lawful way and enjoy them—fathers and sons, fathers and daughters, mothers and sons going out and having a good time.

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 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (7.40 pm), continuing: I rise to continue speaking in support of the Weapons and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. As I was saying, this bill principally goes to the true difference between the LNP and the ALP. One believes in ridiculous legislation that wraps people up in red tape and is designed to make good people frustrated and to keep them honest and does nothing to punish bad people. The amendments that we are proposing here will allow good people to use their firearms in responsible ways for sporting, recreational and agricultural purposes and will ensure that people who use firearms in illegal ways are punished severely with minimum mandatory sentencing for people who treat their firearms in a dangerous way.

Mr Rickuss: Like the bikie gangs.

Mr WATTS: Absolutely. I take that interjection. If someone is in a bikie gang and they are using these firearms they will be punished accordingly and there will be a minimum mandatory sentence for them. The bill amends the Weapons Act to introduce a minimum mandatory sentence of imprisonment where a person unlawfully and without a reasonable excuse either carries on a business of trafficking weapons where one of those weapons is a firearm, supplies firearms where one of those firearms is a short firearm, possesses a firearm that has been used in the commission of an indictable offence, possesses a firearm for the purpose of committing or facilitating an indictable offence, and possesses a short firearm in a public place including a vehicle.

I fail to see how any of this is breaching someone's rights. As a father of four children, I am very pleased to know that if someone is committing one of those offences with a firearm they will receive a minimum mandatory sentence. I might just add that as a safeguard this does not apply to someone under the age of 18. They will be dealt with through the normal course. I think it is a good amendment. Red tape and bureaucracy is lifted off the backs of people who want to use their firearms for recreational purposes, while ensuring, of course, that there are safeguards in place. People who want to use firearms for intimidation, for committing criminal acts, for intimidating police and generally causing havoc and lawlessness in our society will be punished accordingly. And so they should. This bill sends a very strong message to those people who wish to commit crimes using these weapons in our society. It also sends a

very strong message to those people in our society who want to use them responsibly. That is fundamentally the difference between the two parties. We would like to facilitate people who want to be responsible and take responsibility for their actions to be able to do that in a sensible way and we want to punish people who are committing serious offences and acts of intimidation and trafficking in firearms.

The introduction of mandatory sentencing for firearm offences will act as a strong deterrent for those members of society who unlawfully use firearms to engage in criminal activities. I am sure of that. I commend the minister for that. The bill also contains a series of provisions that will streamline the process for legitimate firearm owners to go about their business without compromising the safety of the general public. I think those are the two key issues: good people will have their lives simplified and bad people will be severely punished.

In closing, I thank my fellow committee members for their work and also thank all of the staff of the committee in preparing the report. I congratulate the minister on bringing forward a strong bill that serves the purpose it was designed for. It will help control the bikie gangs, it will help get these guns off the street and it will put bad people who are committing these offences behind bars where they belong. I commend the bill to the House.