



Speech By  
**Hon. Bill Byrne**


**MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON**

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Record of Proceedings, 2 November 2016

## **WEAPONS REGULATION**

### **Disallowance of Statutory Instrument**

 **Hon. WS BYRNE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services) (8.54 pm): This has been a pretty wideranging debate which has gone round and round the mulberry bush, none of which has been particularly relevant to the motion, but it has been very enlightening. It has been interesting for me to go through the speakers list. With the exception of the member for Everton, whose background and political allegiances I am a little unsure of, what we have is a whole raft of what I would classify as ex-National Party, One-Nation-exposed ultraconservative urban agrarian socialists. That is what we have out there. Not one person on the other side of the chamber who is identified as being part of the old Liberal Party that stood for something in terms of decent public policy and was not running around on the right fringe of One Nationesque—

**Mr WATTS:** I rise to a point of order. I wonder if the minister could explain where in the long title of the bill it is relevant where someone's political allegiances may have lain in the last 10 or 15 years.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I call the Minister for Police.

**Mr BYRNE:** Let us deal with the facts first before I take the opportunity to address a few other matters. What has transpired is there has been a statutory review of the regulations. There were no substantive changes to the previous existing regulations. In fact, this was remade or subject to nine extensions from 2006, so virtually for the entire period of the last Liberal National Party government they have had ample opportunities to do whatever it is they want to do with their forums with these regulations, but there have been extensions one after another up to this point where we have done the review. What happened as a result of the review? Nothing. There were no changes to the regulation.

Let me make it clear: the Queensland Police Service have advised that there was no policy change whatsoever made between the Weapons Regulation 1996 and the Weapons Regulation 2016. Nothing! There is no change. There is no change to what has effectively been in place for 20 years. The 2016 regulations were simply modernised. They are effective regulations that have been in place for 20 years since Port Arthur under the National Firearm Agreement, completely intact and completely appropriate. There have been no policy changes from government and no policy changes from police—none whatsoever. We get this nonsense tonight where the Liberal National Party, trying to appeal to the ultraright of its own political spectrum, are trying to make a political point.

Let us have a look at the changes which the Liberal National Party sees fit to waste the time of this House on and the key piece of subordinate legislation that was implemented under John Howard. The actual technical wording of this regulation has already been explained earlier by one of our speakers. The point is that this regulation has worked very successfully for 20 years. Not one of the speakers opposite could stand in this House and give one example of a heinous consequence of this

regulation not being continued with and not one single example of the nonsense being put up here tonight. You would think that, after 20 years and the Liberal National Party's vast network of associates, they could at least bring forward one example of where this claim that is being made about this regulation can be substantiated, so that just shows you what a vacuous argument this has been. We have heard their completely lightweight, helium-headed contributions. If they took their shoes off they would float away. That is what we are seeing from those opposite. There is not a skerrick of substance in anything that has been said.

For the benefit of the members opposite who clearly do not understand the effect of disallowing section 16, if you win the vote tonight what do you think is going to happen? What do those opposite think will happen if they succeed in disallowing this motion? Not one of those opposite gave an indication of what would occur. Let me tell you what will happen.

Section 16 of the Weapons Regulation 2016 provides for the automatic suspension of a firearms dealership's licence in the event the representative whose name is on the licence dies or their authority as a representative is suspended or revoked. This regulation requires that a firearms dealership must have an individual as its representative. If a representative dies, QPS Weapons Licensing would liaise with the dealership to ensure all weapons remain in storage. Furthermore, QPS would then assist the dealership's associates through the process to nominate a new representative. This is the kill shot, for anyone who is listening. QPS advises that this process is rapid and could take place—and has—within 24 to 48 hours after the death of the principal.

Those opposite have espoused this huge, horrendous concern. In the event of the death of the principal, the owner of a business, within 24 to 48 hours—that is the advice of the Queensland Police Service—the business continues under normal circumstances. Those opposite are prepared to get up in this House and make a racket about something that is not a problem at all and that has worked incredibly effectively.

What will happen if we get rid of the regulation? If the representative dies, their authority is revoked. The licence will be cancelled, not suspended. If those opposite win this vote tonight, the licences will be cancelled. A new representative will have to be nominated. They will be required to undertake an entirely new process, with the supporting information having to be provided. That will take a very long time. That is what those opposite are espousing: make sure this regulation gets knocked over and put a major jam into dealers across the state. Is that what those opposite are after—to make sure this regulation does not proceed, even though it has worked and been effective for nearly 20 years? They cannot give a single example of how this regulation has been problematic. That is the LNP's understanding of where we are at. I think it is an absolute disgrace—making a shallow, opportunistic argument simply to get on the record and talk about guns.

If the proposal of those opposite gets up, it will result in the firearms being surrendered for safe keeping for a long period of time. QPS advises that if this section were removed it would create very significant issues for dealers. The fact is that if this section is disallowed it will undo the regulation put in place by the Borbidge government which actually makes life much easier for firearms dealers. It is a good piece of subordinate legislation. It works incredibly well. There is not a single example of it not working.

Let us be clear: while nominally this debate is about technical aspects of the Weapons Regulation—even though the debate has been pretty broad—that is not really what we are debating here this evening, as my colleagues have alluded to. What we are debating is whether we want Queensland firearms laws to be dictated by certain elements of the gun lobby. That is exactly what this is about. The member for Everton earlier said that whoever he has been talking to fears retribution, that they have Defence contracts and that the defence of the realm is being threatened by this regulation. That is the most nonsensical thing I have heard among a lot of nonsense.

The Liberal National Party has form when it comes to outsourcing policy development to special interest groups. That is what they did when they were in opposition. When they were in opposition last they got their mines and environment policies written by the mining industry. The job of opposition members is to be objective, not simply outsource policy development to the key proponents of an industry that is trying to promote its own interests.

This is an orchestrated and long-running campaign by the gun lobby across Australia to put pressure on every single government to wind back gun laws since the Port Arthur massacre. Some of the comments made by those opposite this evening indicate a deep-seated resentment of those regulations and laws that came in under the National Firearms Agreement. In fact, I suspect that those opposite do not support the National Firearms Agreement. Not one of them spoke about it. Not one of them spoke about their commitment to the maintenance of the National Firearms Agreement. Not one

of them spoke about the National Firearms Agreement being the minimum standard for weapons and how weapons are managed in this country—not the maximum standard to be aspired to but the minimum standard from which any jurisdiction can make its own tougher regulations as it sees fit.

That is the position of the Queensland Labor government. We have always supported the lawful use of firearms. We have no problem with people going about their lawful business with firearms—in any way, shape or form. We had no policy settings suggesting otherwise. We will not be intimidated or bullied by or subservient to elements of industry that are prosecuting their own ends.

Yesterday I became aware of the fact that the Firearms Dealers Association, the lobby group headed by Australia's biggest gun dealer—the very dealer that has imported over 22,000 Adler shotguns into this country—has been making false allegations about changes to the Weapons Regulation to partisan media outlets. Is it a coincidence that these sorts of allegations hit the media yesterday and, lo and behold, the member for Everton has moved this disallowance motion tonight? Is it a complete coincidence that this sort of nonsense gets put out by special interest groups with a very deliberate stake in it and then the member for Everton comes in here and runs an argument that has no base whatsoever? It is a disgrace that the member for Everton would allow himself and his party to be manipulated by such elements.

This motion is proof that the LNP has outsourced the development of its own weapons policy to the gun lobby, or at least extreme self-serving interests within the gun lobby. As I said earlier, it did the same for its mines policy in opposition. While the LNP is taking advice from the gun lobby, I take my advice from principally the Queensland Police Service in the interests of all Queenslanders. That is my job. Those opposite stand up and espouse their loyalty to and support for the emergency services and the Queensland Police Service, but they are prepared to come in here and question Weapons Licensing, which is undertaking its duties in a responsible and thorough fashion. Opposition members are prepared to say in this House tonight things that Queensland police officers out there will be looking at and cringing over. They will be thinking, 'These people pretend to be a government?' This mob on the opposition benches are pretending that they are an alternative government and that they have the best interests of the Queensland Police Service at heart, yet they stand in this House and denigrate officers of the Weapons Licensing branch.

I assure members: there is no dead or heavy hand of government driving the direction of Weapons Licensing and preventing it from doing its job objectively and independently. My job is to support it and make sure it has the right choices. I do not make decisions and I do not direct the branch in that way. That is the way it is supposed to work in a democracy, particularly a parliamentary democracy. I can assure and give confidence to the House that the Queensland Weapons Licensing branch is doing exactly what every mum and dad, every Queenslander, expects it to be doing. That is its job. It is a professional part of the Queensland Police Service that is undertaking its responsibilities in a diligent and professional fashion.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Furner): Order! There is too much noise in the chamber.

**Mr BYRNE:** Let us call a spade a spade. The Firearms Dealers Association has a huge financial incentive to make guns—in particular Adler shotguns—as readily available as possible.

**An opposition member:** Irrelevant.

**Mr BYRNE:** It is completely relevant, because they are the same people who are talking to the LNP about this motion. They are exactly the same people who are putting their hand up the back of the member's shirt. They will do everything in their power, and use their deep pockets to fight tooth and nail, to resist any strengthening of the National Firearms Agreement.

I recently attended a meeting with my state and territory counterparts at which the key issue on the agenda was the reclassification of lever action shotguns, specifically the controversial Adler 12 gauge—the same Adler shotgun of which the head of the Firearms Dealers Association and one of Australia's wealthiest gun dealers has imported in excess of 22,000 units. Some 22,000 units of a dangerous weapon have been imported into this country.

As has been widely reported, all but one jurisdiction in this nation was prepared to recategorise lever action shotguns from the easy to acquire category A to category B for magazines of five rounds or less and for category D for magazines greater than five rounds. That was what every jurisdiction in Australia wanted to do with the exception of one. Who was that? That was New South Wales. The good old National Party of New South Wales is prepared to jam a National Firearms Agreement when every other jurisdiction in the country is prepared to land a consensus position for the good of the country—but not the National Party, with some of the acolytes speaking here this evening, and what a disgrace it has been. Unfortunately, that one dissenting jurisdiction—the Liberal National Party of New South

Wales—wanted to have everything free range and be as liberal as it possibly could, and I got the impression that there was not a firearm in manufacture on the planet that worried it in terms of circulation in the public domain.

The fact is that we have not seen one Liberal stand up in this House tonight and defend the position being taken by those opposite—not one—and I would look forward to it by one of the known Liberal identities. It is the same as the sugar bill, isn't it? Not one Liberal and not one genuine person who is under the threat of One Nation has stood up and said something sensible. This is a complete ambush from those opposite. What we are seeing is them doing the bidding of special interest groups in the gun sector. The fact is that their own speaking list demonstrates how completely divided they are. Half of the members opposite are so scared of losing votes—and I note that the member for Buderim has invited One Nation over.

I do not know what Liberal principles still exist on the other side of the chamber, but I can tell members this much: there is not a family in Queensland that is going to respect what has tried to be done here this evening. It is an absolute embarrassment to every single member of the opposition. They had three years. They basically rolled the regulation over. They had three years with their fantastic forums working. They did not touch it then. They did not want to know about it then. They did not want to know about it, but, no, they want to get on board and reach out to their ultra conservative and ultra right wing minority influences. The fact is that this party—the Labor Party—has no problem with a lawful weapons list. We have no weapon policies going forward that change anything. We are committed to the National Firearms Agreement.

This regulation has a direct lineage back to 1997 to Borbidge and to what Howard did. As the Minister for Education said, we completely support that. It is ironic that a Labor administration in this chamber supports the work done by John Howard. I would disagree with John Howard on quite a number of issues, but the observation needs to be made: the Liberal National Party cannot have its cake and eat it. The agenda here, which is clearly evident to anyone if you look at this openly, is about liberalisation of gun laws. It is about liberalisation and more availability of, for example, rapid fire, high-density Adler shotguns. That is what this is about.

Let us not be confused at all about this. Let us not be confused at all about what is really going on here. We have a manipulation of weapons policy in this nation being exercised by elements of the weapons industry. Those opposite have allowed themselves to lose their moral fibre and stand up for good, honest working relationships and good, honest working legislation, because that is what this has been. It is an absolute disgrace that this motion was moved and the fact that they think that it is in some way changing things, that it is in some way going to alter the way in which dealers operate, is just a reflection of their modus operandi, of their motives. This was simply about getting up and being able to belt people completely and utterly based on falsehoods—falsehoods about interpretations and misinformation that have been circulated by vested interests. This evening I have seen a disgraceful exhibition from the Liberal National Party. I oppose the motion.